

The Institute of Conservation
Impact Report 2025-26

icon

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION



About Icon

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) is a charity championing cultural heritage, and the professional membership body for the conservation profession.

Icon's Vision

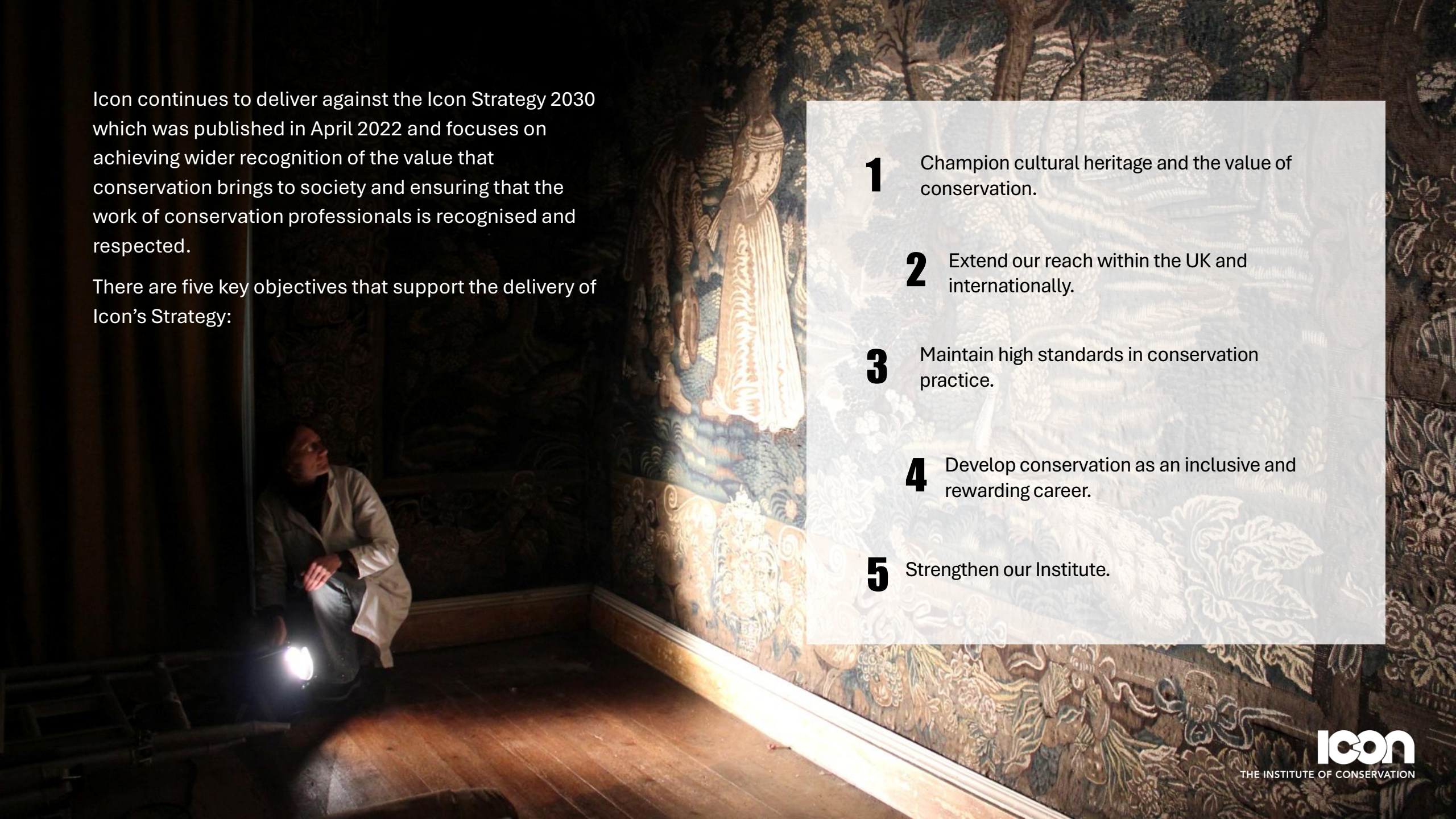
Icon's Vision is to protect, preserve and promote our treasured cultural heritage through cultivating skilled conservation professionals, supporting meaningful collaboration across the cultural heritage sector, and delivering public benefit through engagement and advocacy.

Icon's Mission

Icon's mission is to represent and support the practice and profession of conservation by promoting the public value of caring for cultural heritage and upholding high standards and ethics in conservation practice. Icon ensures that the guardians and owners of objects, buildings and collections can access knowledgeable and passionate professionals who will help them safeguard the physical remains of our past for the future.



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Icon continues to deliver against the Icon Strategy 2030 which was published in April 2022 and focuses on achieving wider recognition of the value that conservation brings to society and ensuring that the work of conservation professionals is recognised and respected.

There are five key objectives that support the delivery of Icon's Strategy:

- 1** Champion cultural heritage and the value of conservation.
- 2** Extend our reach within the UK and internationally.
- 3** Maintain high standards in conservation practice.
- 4** Develop conservation as an inclusive and rewarding career.
- 5** Strengthen our Institute.



2025-26 marked an important milestone for Icon as we celebrated our 20th anniversary. An invaluable opportunity to reflect on the incredible community of friends, colleagues, and peers brought together through Icon, our mission to champion conservators and conservation feels every part as vital now as in 2005.

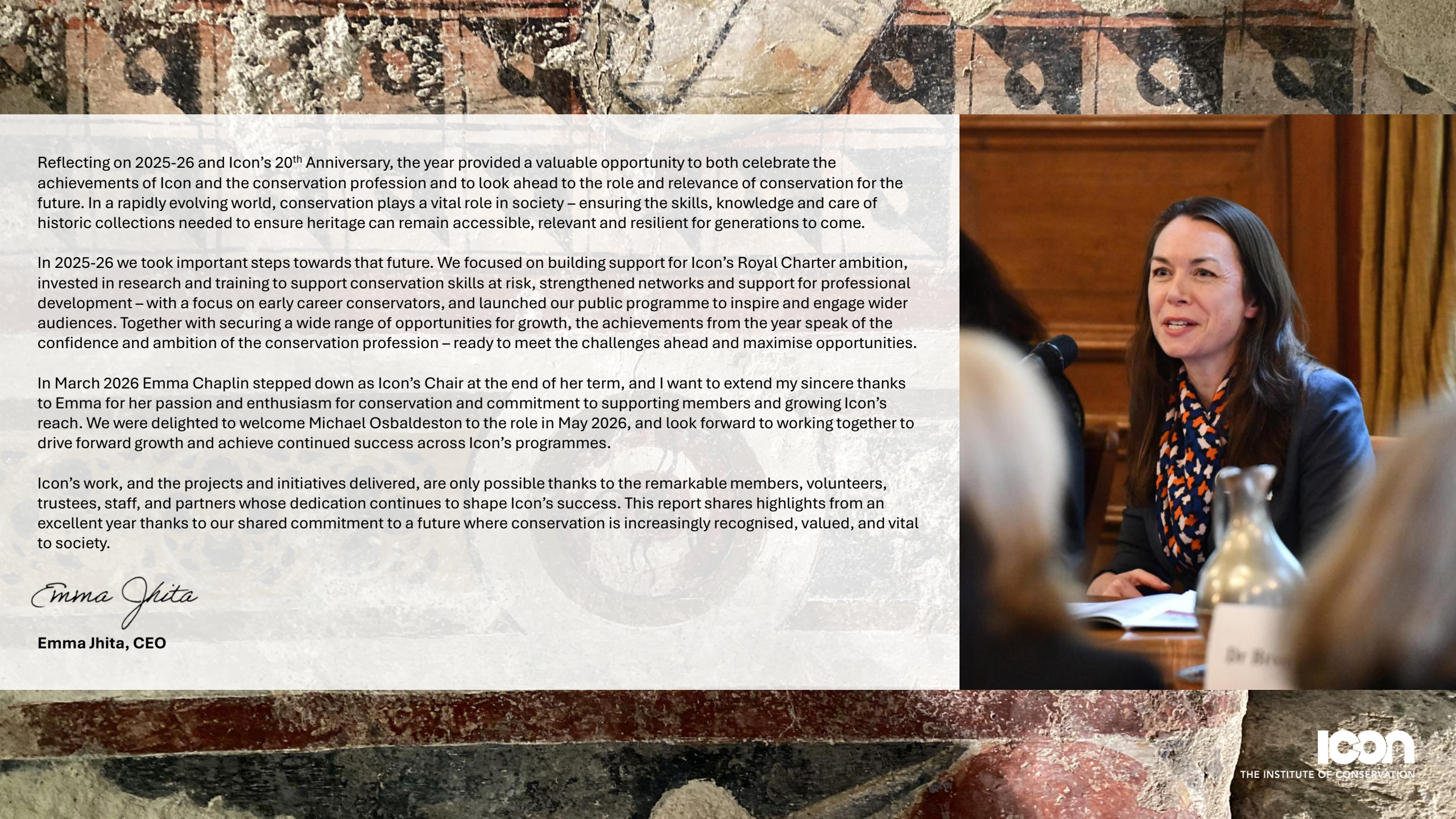
While the challenges facing the heritage sector continue to evolve, from financial pressures to increasing demand for specialist skills, Icon has remained focused on supporting conservators, advocating for the profession, and demonstrating its vital role in society. Over the past year, we have strengthened our support for members, expanded our advocacy work and invested in the future of conservation through research, training and professional development.

Securing overwhelming support for our Royal Charter petition, launching major new research into skills at risk, growing our networks across the UK and securing funding to build a more resilient and engaging future for conservation all point towards an exciting future for Icon.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of our incredible volunteers to whom we owe our gratitude. This report highlights the progress we've made together and the difference our community continues to make for people, and for heritage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Michael Osbaldeston'.

Michael Osbaldeston, Chair of the Board of Trustees

The background of the entire page is a detailed ancient Egyptian wall painting. It features a frieze of lotus flowers in the upper section and larger figures, possibly deities or royalty, in the lower section, all rendered in traditional Egyptian style with red, black, and white pigments on a textured surface.

Reflecting on 2025-26 and Icon's 20th Anniversary, the year provided a valuable opportunity to both celebrate the achievements of Icon and the conservation profession and to look ahead to the role and relevance of conservation for the future. In a rapidly evolving world, conservation plays a vital role in society – ensuring the skills, knowledge and care of historic collections needed to ensure heritage can remain accessible, relevant and resilient for generations to come.

In 2025-26 we took important steps towards that future. We focused on building support for Icon's Royal Charter ambition, invested in research and training to support conservation skills at risk, strengthened networks and support for professional development – with a focus on early career conservators, and launched our public programme to inspire and engage wider audiences. Together with securing a wide range of opportunities for growth, the achievements from the year speak of the confidence and ambition of the conservation profession – ready to meet the challenges ahead and maximise opportunities.

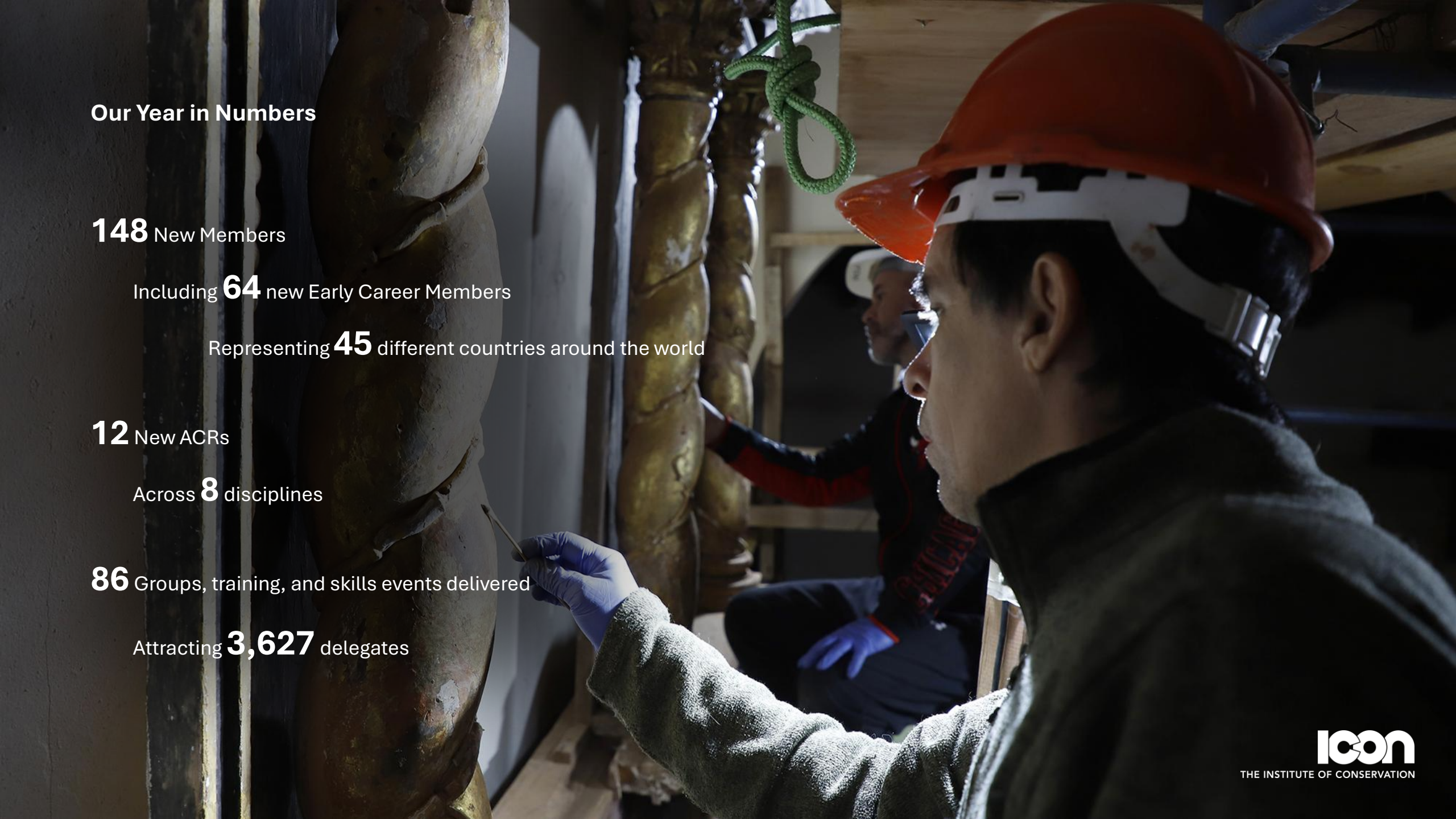
In March 2026 Emma Chaplin stepped down as Icon's Chair at the end of her term, and I want to extend my sincere thanks to Emma for her passion and enthusiasm for conservation and commitment to supporting members and growing Icon's reach. We were delighted to welcome Michael Osbaldeston to the role in May 2026, and look forward to working together to drive forward growth and achieve continued success across Icon's programmes.

Icon's work, and the projects and initiatives delivered, are only possible thanks to the remarkable members, volunteers, trustees, staff, and partners whose dedication continues to shape Icon's success. This report shares highlights from an excellent year thanks to our shared commitment to a future where conservation is increasingly recognised, valued, and vital to society.

Emma Jhita

Emma Jhita, CEO





Our Year in Numbers

148 New Members

Including **64** new Early Career Members

Representing **45** different countries around the world

12 New ACRs

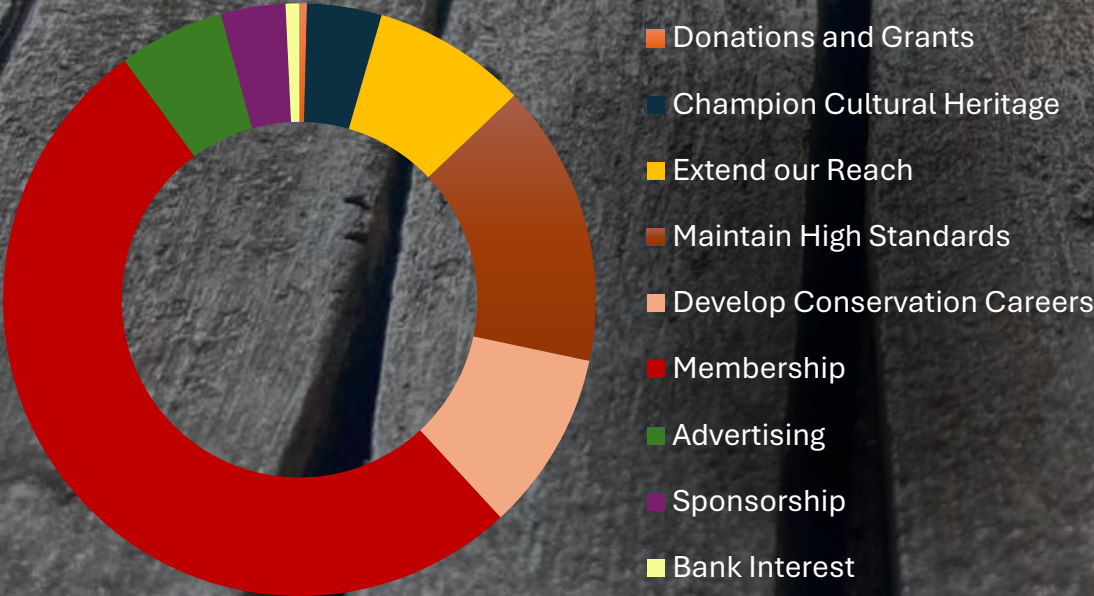
Across **8** disciplines

86 Groups, training, and skills events delivered

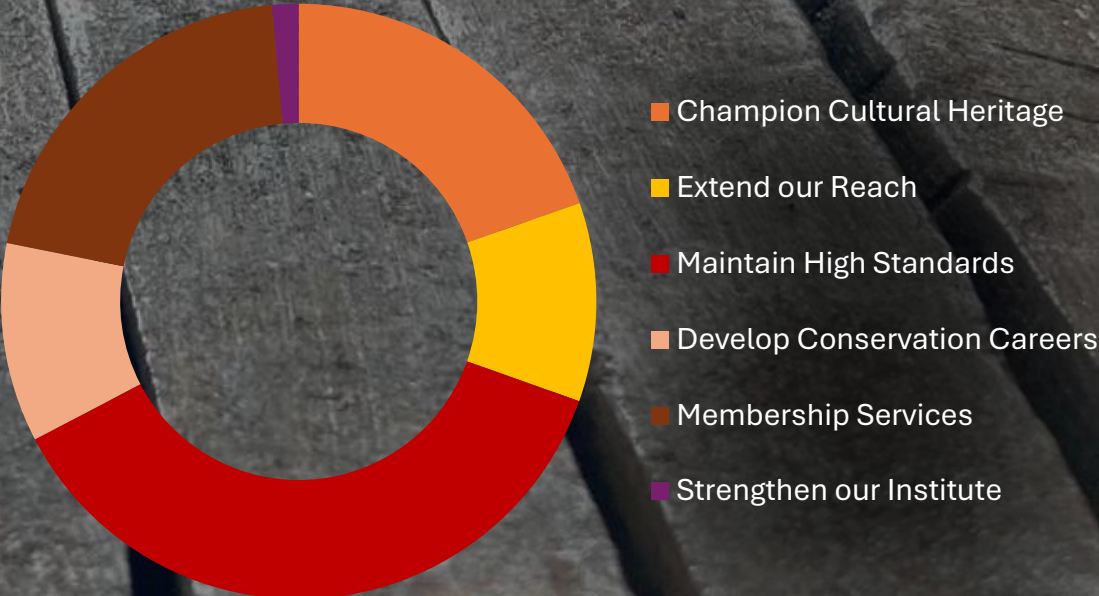
Attracting **3,627** delegates

Our Year in Numbers: Income and Expenditure

Income



Expenditure



Conservation Skills at Risk

With the support of the Pilgrim Trust, Icon has embarked upon an 18-month research project, identifying specialist conservation skills that are at risk of being lost across the UK heritage sector.

Working with professionals across the conservation community to map expertise, understand training pathways, and identify areas where skills shortages may threaten the long-term care of collections and historic objects, the research is contributing to an evidence-based action plan that helps strengthen training, support knowledge transfer, and ensure that these vital skills continue to be sustained for future generations.

With thanks to

**Pilgrim
Trust**

© Fernando Franceschelli

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The Winter Reception: Celebrating 20 Years of Icon

In November, Icon celebrated its 20th Anniversary at the inaugural Winter Reception at the Crafts Council Gallery in London. The evening offered an opportunity for connection, reflection and inspiration, looking back at two decades of progress whilst looking ahead to the future of Icon and the conservation profession.



The programme combined Icon's 21st Annual General Meeting (AGM), the Conservation Awards, Photography Prize, and an insightful seventh Annual Lecture delivered by Professor Jane Henderson ACR FIIC. In her captivating and interactive lecture, Jane explored 'why we do conservation', featuring video reflections from conservators across the profession that captured the passion, values, and purpose uniting those working to care for our shared heritage.

With thanks to our Winter Reception Sponsors

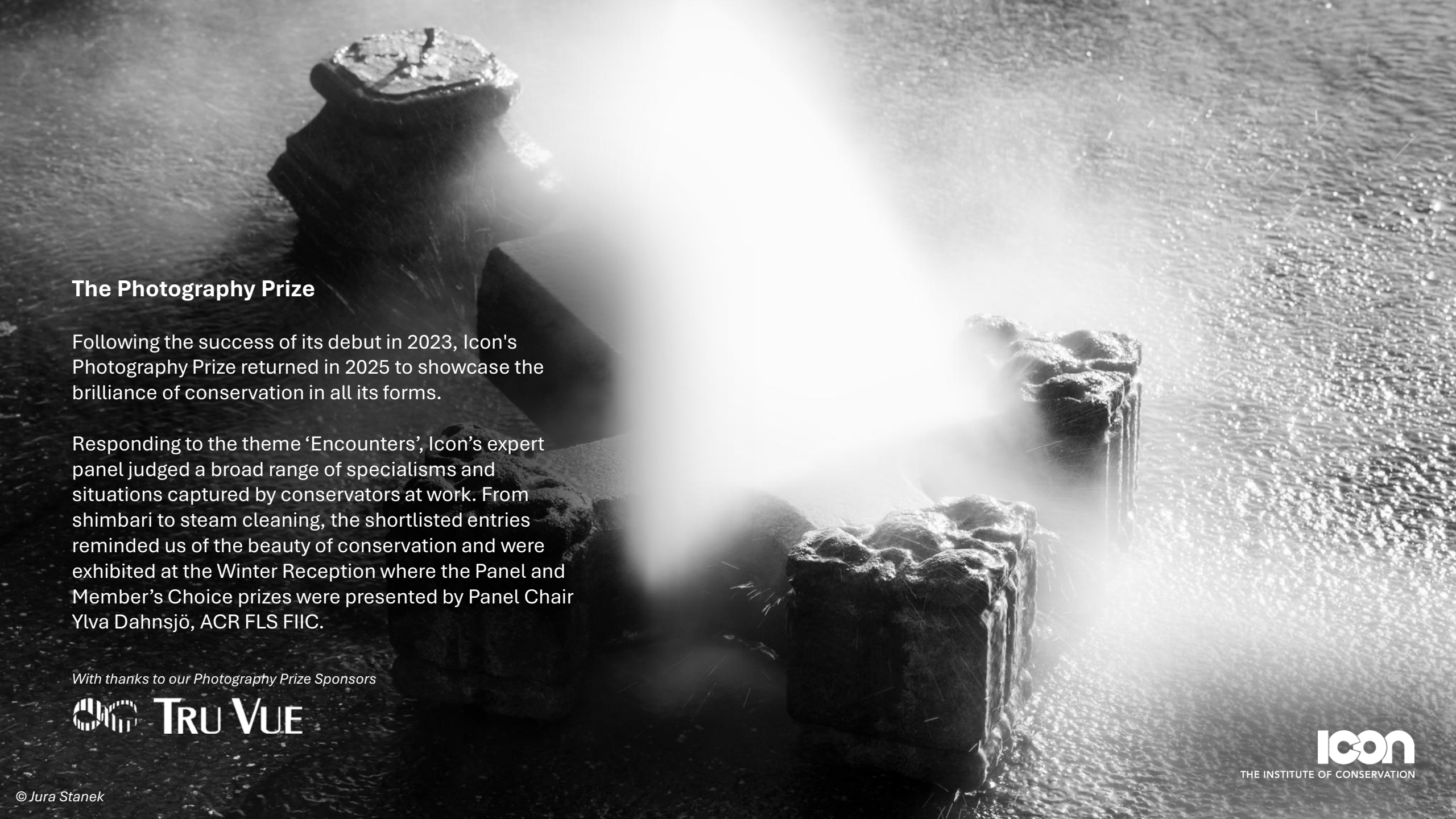
Spencer
& Fry



TRU VUE

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The Photography Prize

Following the success of its debut in 2023, Icon's Photography Prize returned in 2025 to showcase the brilliance of conservation in all its forms.

Responding to the theme 'Encounters', Icon's expert panel judged a broad range of specialisms and situations captured by conservators at work. From shimbari to steam cleaning, the shortlisted entries reminded us of the beauty of conservation and were exhibited at the Winter Reception where the Panel and Member's Choice prizes were presented by Panel Chair Ylva Dahnsjö, ACR FLS FIIC.

With thanks to our Photography Prize Sponsors





© Ian Clark ACR



© Alan D. West

Icon Photography Prize Winner
Ian Clark ACR
Re-installation of Iron:Man by Antony Gormley

With thanks to our Photography Prize Sponsors



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© Alan D. West

Members' Choice Winner

Rebecca Goddard

Consolidating lacquer with the Shimbari technique

With thanks to our Photography Prize Sponsors







The Conservation Awards

Returning to Icon for a third year, the 2025 Conservation Awards celebrated conservation and shone a spotlight on the highly skilled practitioners who are championing advances in best practice, research and training.

From pioneering techniques in fluid specimen conservation, to safeguarding the future of musical instrument conservation, and conserving Shakespeare's First Folio, the winners of the 2025 Conservation Awards highlighted the remarkable breadth of the conservation profession, and the individuals, teams, and volunteers whose work ensures our shared cultural heritage remains accessible to engage and inspire future generations.

The Conservation Awards were presented at the Winter Reception by Panel Chair Carole Milner MBE MSc FIIC ACR (Emeritus).

With thanks to our Conservation Award Sponsors

MARSH
Charitable Trust



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Icon Petition for Royal Charter

With an overwhelming 92% of voting members supporting an Icon petition for Royal Charter, work has started to advance this important strategic initiative.

5pm - 21st Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Conservation

6pm - Jane Henderson ACR, FHC, SFHEA, FRHistS
'20 Reasons Why We Do Conservation'

7pm - The Conservation Awards

8pm - The Photography Prize

Drinks, canapes and networking until 9pm

The Royal Charter Working Group formed following last year's AGM, with its members developing the evidence base required to demonstrate Icon's distinctive role in delivering public benefit, representing and regulating the conservation profession, and supporting the long-term stewardship of cultural heritage. The first stage of our petition was submitted to the Privy Council Office at the end of September 2026, and we look forward to updating members on our progress.

The Tru Vue Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme

2025-2026 marked another year of successfully supporting small heritage institutions to care for our shared cultural heritage. With thanks to our partners Tru Vue®, we were able to deliver the Tru Vue® Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme for the 7th year running.

A particular highlight was the opening of Durham University's 'Shakespeare Recovered' exhibition, which saw the return of the University's stolen copy of Shakespeare's First Folio, conserved and re-displayed with the support of the scheme. The University went on to win 'Heritage Conservation in Action' at Icon's Conservation Awards for their work engaging young people in conservation through the exhibition.

With thanks to



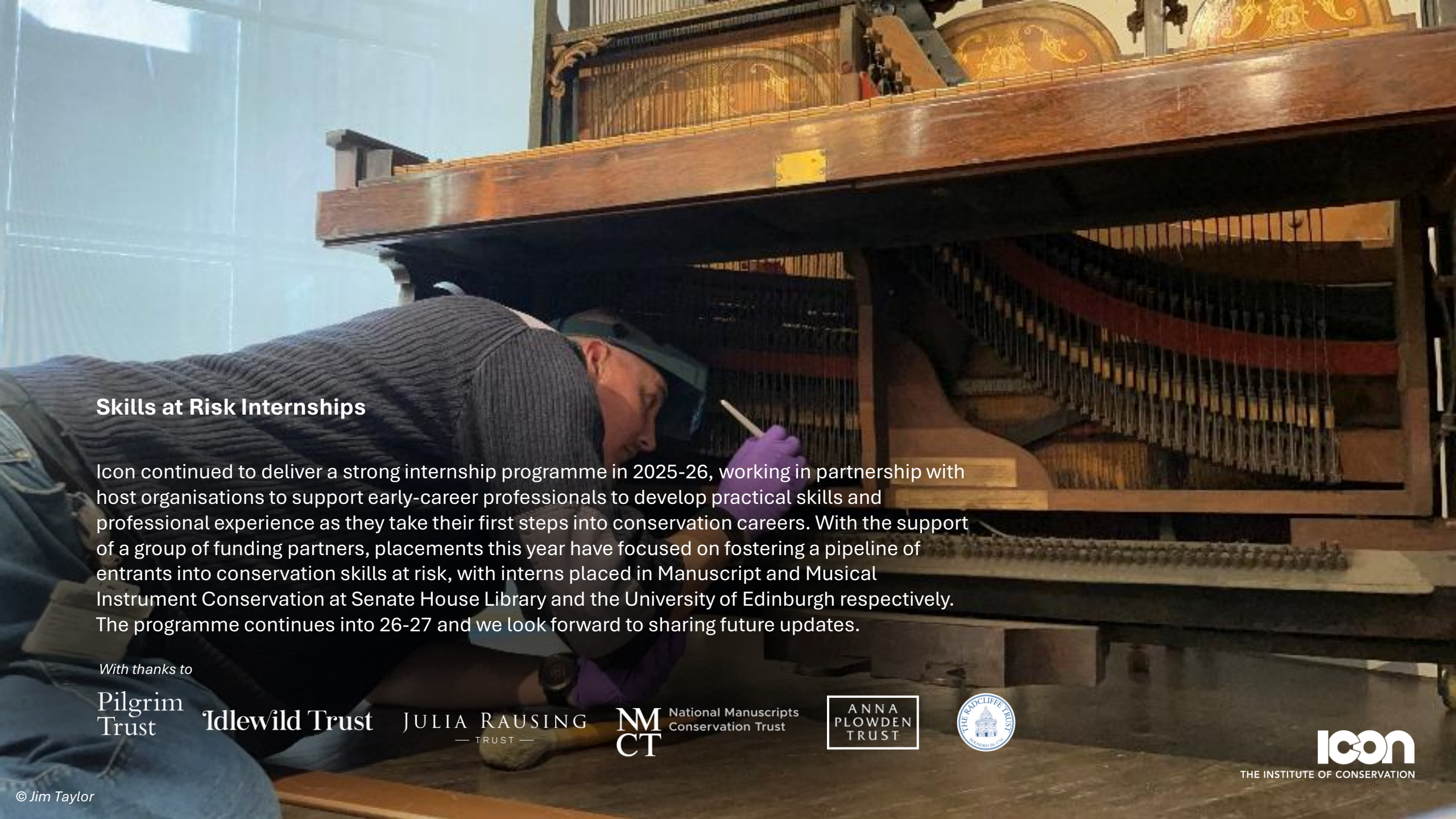
Heritage Conservation: A Resilient and Engaging Future

With the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Icon began delivery of an exciting public programme in 2025. 'Heritage Conservation: A Resilient and Engaging Future' will see Icon's Groups supported to engage with and inspire new and wider audiences.





Early events in the programme included a conservation panel at the Heritage Careers Experience Day held at the Holy Sepulchre Church in partnership with the Square Mile Churches and the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust. Over the course of the day, students were able to talk to conservators working across the profession and attended a panel discussion. The project continues into 2026-27 and we look forward to sharing future events.



Skills at Risk Internships

Icon continued to deliver a strong internship programme in 2025-26, working in partnership with host organisations to support early-career professionals to develop practical skills and professional experience as they take their first steps into conservation careers. With the support of a group of funding partners, placements this year have focused on fostering a pipeline of entrants into conservation skills at risk, with interns placed in Manuscript and Musical Instrument Conservation at Senate House Library and the University of Edinburgh respectively. The programme continues into 26-27 and we look forward to sharing future updates.

With thanks to

Pilgrim
Trust

Idlewild Trust

JULIA RAUSING
— TRUST —

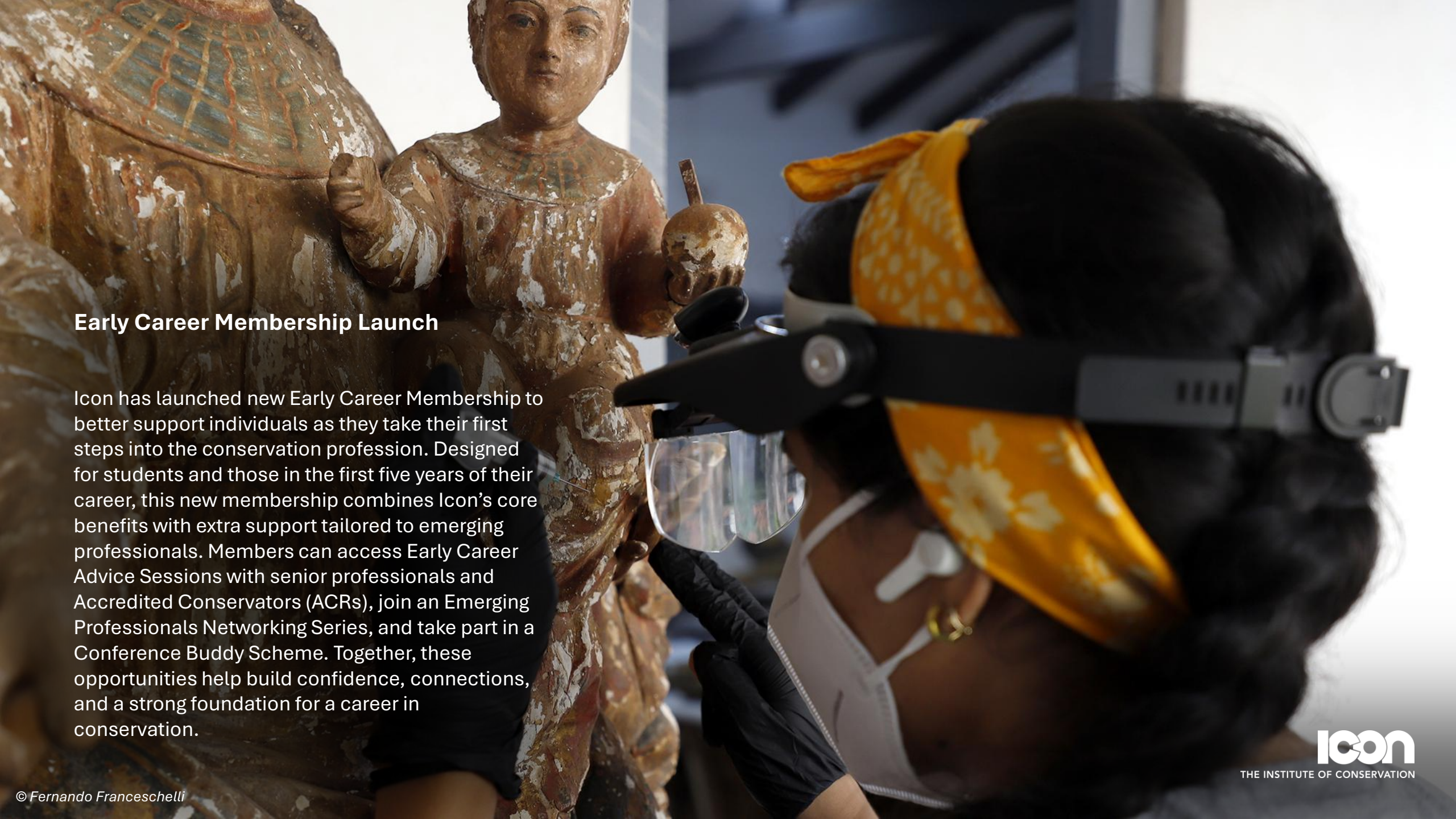
NM
CT

National Manuscripts
Conservation Trust

ANNA
PLOWDEN
TRUST



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Early Career Membership Launch

Icon has launched new Early Career Membership to better support individuals as they take their first steps into the conservation profession. Designed for students and those in the first five years of their career, this new membership combines Icon's core benefits with extra support tailored to emerging professionals. Members can access Early Career Advice Sessions with senior professionals and Accredited Conservators (ACRs), join an Emerging Professionals Networking Series, and take part in a Conference Buddy Scheme. Together, these opportunities help build confidence, connections, and a strong foundation for a career in conservation.

ACR Conference 2025: The Conservators Legacy

Icon's 2025 ACR Conference: The Conservator's Legacy took place in October at Coin Street Conference Centre in London. With 75 delegates in-person and 17 speakers, the event facilitated networking and discussion about the vital impact and legacy of conservation alongside an opportunity to discuss the potential for Icon's petition for Royal Charter.

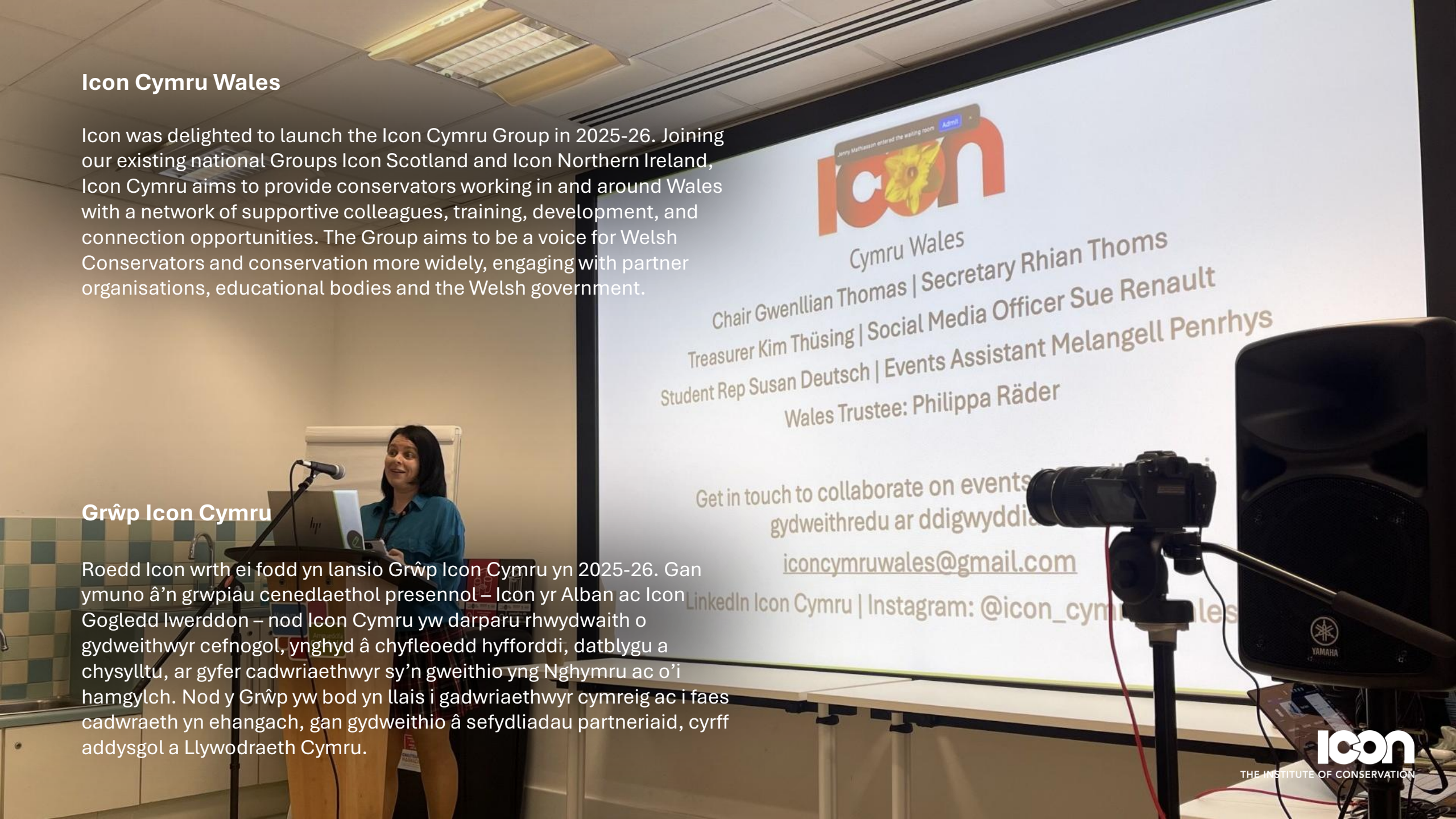


Icon Cymru Wales

Icon was delighted to launch the Icon Cymru Group in 2025-26. Joining our existing national Groups Icon Scotland and Icon Northern Ireland, Icon Cymru aims to provide conservators working in and around Wales with a network of supportive colleagues, training, development, and connection opportunities. The Group aims to be a voice for Welsh Conservators and conservation more widely, engaging with partner organisations, educational bodies and the Welsh government.

Grŵp Icon Cymru

Roedd Icon wrth ei fodd yn lansio Grŵp Icon Cymru yn 2025-26. Gan ymuno â'n grwpiau cenedlaethol presennol – Icon yr Alban ac Icon Gogledd Iwerddon – nod Icon Cymru yw darparu rhwydwaith o gydweithwyr cefnogol, ynghyd â chyfleoedd hyfforddi, datblygu a chysylltu, ar gyfer cadwriaethwyr sy'n gweithio yng Nghymru ac o'i hamgylch. Nod y Grŵp yw bod yn llais i gadwriaethwyr cymreig ac i faes cadwraeth yn ehangach, gan gydweithio â sefydliadau partneriaid, cyrff addysgol a Llywodraeth Cymru.



Icon Cymru Wales
Chair Gwenllïan Thomas | Secretary Rhian Thoms
Treasurer Kim Thüsing | Social Media Officer Sue Renault
Student Rep Susan Deutsch | Events Assistant Melangell Penrhys
Wales Trustee: Philippa Räder

Get in touch to collaborate on events
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