

Comprehensive Spending Review 2020

Icon submission

September 2020

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Introduction

1. The Institute of Conservation is a charity and the professional body representing and supporting the practice and profession of conservation. Icon champions excellence in conservation and promotes the value of caring for heritage.
2. Cultural heritage is economically vital, it generates a total GVA of £31 billion and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs in tourism, conservation, planning, archaeology, and construction. Millions of people from all over the world appreciate the UK's unique heritage, not just in London or Stonehenge but in Cardiff (Cardiff Castle), Cumbria (Tullie House) Hull (City of Culture), Belfast (Titanic Belfast) and Edinburgh (Old Town) - places where heritage provides a basis for social capital and civic identity. Conservation preserves this cultural heritage, facilitating public access and enjoyment and enabling heritage to maximise its economic and social value.
3. The Coronavirus hit our sector hard; wiping millions from budget sheets as visitor numbers dropped and plans for development were put on hold. The sector is hugely grateful for the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, which will provide essential life support for organisations across the country.
4. Loss of income on the scale that many museums and galleries have experienced cannot be replaced quickly. We have already seen the impact of financial restructuring in the announcements from various organisations, from regional museums through to major bodies such as the National Trust.
5. Cultural heritage will require ongoing support and investment from DCMS, arms-length bodies and local authorities to perform these varied roles. We want our heritage to help the country to thrive, so we can safeguard our nation's recovery and strengthen our position on the world stage. We present our recommendations for the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in section 1. We describe the desired outcomes, policy rationale and benefits of each recommendation in section 3.

1. Priority actions

6. As the leading voice for cultural heritage conservation, Icon is calling on Government to
 - 6.1. Invest in our cultural institutions with ring-fenced funding for essential collections care and conservation work
 - 6.2. Invest in a resilience fund for cultural heritage enterprises to support freelance conservators and small and micro businesses

- 6.3. Invest in creative education and training to encourage people from a diverse range of backgrounds into future-proofed cultural jobs in the creative industries
- 6.4. Fund cultural heritage wellbeing programs to help deliver the NHS Long Term Plan
- 6.5. Invest in distributed research and innovation infrastructure for heritage science
- 6.6. Use cultural heritage to deliver the Soft Power Strategy and strengthen the UK's international standing

2. Conservation Restores - what we offer

7. Conservation helps us understand ourselves and the world around us, which in turn helps us make better decisions about our future as we learn valuable lessons from our past. Conservators protect and care for the things that matter most - everything from national treasures to family heirlooms. The benefits of the work of conservators to society is far-reaching:
 - 7.1. Conservation helps the economy: contributing to business, industry, growth and employment.
 - 7.2. Conservation builds resilience and is cost effective: prioritising early interventions prevents problems that would be much more expensive to deal with later on.
 - 7.3. Conservation can help us live healthier and happier lives by creating opportunities to experience cultural heritage in meaningful ways.
 - 7.4. Conservation extends the lives of objects and encourages us to care for our possessions, favoring sustainability over throwaway culture.
 - 7.5. Conservation enables a broader range of objects to be put on display and made accessible to the public, offering the potential to increase visits to heritage sites and museums.
 - 7.6. Conservation supports diversity and inclusion: objects that are fully representative of the UK's heritage can be conserved, displayed and interpreted.
8. Conservation is distinct from other crafts and heritage professions, with its own Professional Standards, Ethical Guidance, and Code of Conduct. Conservators are highly trained and use their knowledge, skills and experience to understand objects before suggesting ways to protect and preserve them and - most importantly - share them with others.

9. Conservation is therefore a core element of the work of cultural and heritage institutions and is one of three pillars that support the care of collections, alongside our fellow professionals in the curatorial and collections management disciplines. Each pillar offers distinct skills and brings a wealth of professional knowledge, expertise and judgement to the challenges faced by institutions as they develop and implement new strategies for the future.

3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Grant funding for the UK's world-class museums and galleries with ring-fenced funds for essential conservation and collections care work

Desired outcome

10. Heritage organisations and institutions retain and invest in an appropriate number of conservation and collections care specialists with the necessary skills and experience to ensure that collections are safeguarded and that the objects' stories are accessible to future generations.

Policy rationale

11. As detailed in the DCMS Select Committee Impact of COVID-19 report "the Covid-19 crisis presents the biggest threat to the UK's cultural infrastructure, institutions and workforce in a generation."¹ The Coronavirus crisis has brought about the loss of earned income for many heritage organisations (museums, galleries and libraries, historic sites) from tickets, shops, cafes, events and other common ways to earn income. Many museums and heritage sites are at risk of cash insolvency, which could lead to permanent closure or significant down-sizing.
12. Closure may result in the sale of collections and the loss of collections held in public trust, or the transfer of collections to already over-stretched national and local authority museum services. We are already seeing substantial redundancy consultations in major organisations such as Tate's commercial arm, the National Trust, and National Trust for Scotland. All of this risks the conservation of our world-leading collections.
13. The DCMS Select Committee outlined how the decline of cultural institutions, and the vital work they do in communities by spreading the health and education benefits of cultural engagement, would "undermine the aims of the Government's 'levelling up'

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmcomeds/291/29102.htm>

agenda and Arts Council England's next 10-year strategy, and reverse decades of progress in cultural provision and diversity and inclusion."

14. The sector urgently needs long term grant funding to cope with a longer-term reduction in visitor numbers, philanthropy, international collaborations and other sources of income. The Cultural Recovery Fund is a welcome investment for the sector. However, longer term financial support will be needed in all nations of the UK, so that heritage organisations can regain financial security.
15. We call on Government to invest in our cultural institutions with ring-fenced funds for collections care and conservation work. The funding is needed to support the core duties of cultural institutions - looking after the heritage entrusted in their care. There is a responsibility to the future to retain an appropriate number of skilled conservators within these institutions. These specialists are needed to train the next generation of conservators and to ensure the continuity of specialist knowledge and expertise.
16. Much of the nation's cultural heritage is held in trust by smaller organisations including regional museums and galleries. These much-loved and valuable institutions share the national responsibility to safeguard our cultural heritage even though many are unable to maintain an in-house conservation service. It is essential that those charged with the stewardship of collections have access to adequate resourcing for conservation and collections care.
17. Good custodianship underpins the accessibility of collections. Caring for collections enables people to engage with objects and the stories they tell from the past, helping society understand its present and future.
18. A dedicated grant scheme for the care of collections would not only protect our world-leading collections but also support jobs, skills and businesses. The skills and expertise of the self-employed and freelance conservators play a vital role providing institutions with conservation services but also public engagement and other specialist services. Without regular commissions, private practices may be forced to stop trading, with the risk of further loss of important conservation skills from the sector. Unless the ecosystem of small conservation businesses is supported, clients will find it increasingly difficult to source suitable professionals to undertake conservation projects. Targeted funding for conservation would help protect these businesses by revitalising commissions.

Benefits

Economic recovery

19. Funding the conservation and care of iconic heritage assets would support and promote heritage tourism, a leading contributor to economic growth. Heritage tourism and assets are also magnets for inward investment.
20. Properly resourced conservation teams will help cultural institutions reopen by assessing the likelihood of risks, proposing solutions, undertaking appropriate treatment to repair damage and ensuring that objects are safely displayed. This is fundamental to enabling heritage sites to recover income by delighting and engaging the public to their fullest potential with well looked after collections.

Jobs and skills

21. Investing in conservation will help protect the jobs of our globally renowned conservation workforce, the expertise of which is routinely sought internationally. The retention of these specialists will help train the next generation of conservators, ensuring the continuity of knowledge and expertise. Investing in conservation will revitalise commissions and help small and micro conservation enterprises regain income.
22. By saving sites from closure, and ensuring they open to the public, cultural institutions can help generate new jobs and inward investment through the revival of domestic and international tourism.

Levelling up economic opportunity across regions

23. Heritage assets are pull factors in business location decisions and provide an attractive backdrop for businesses and visitors. Investing in heritage can be a catalyst to regenerate and revitalise both communities and local economies.
24. Culture helps support local economies by creating jobs – over 300 cultural venues and buildings are located in unemployment hotspots.² Many conservation businesses are based in rural areas supporting their regional museums and local visitor attractions. By revitalising commissions through investment in conservation work, conservation businesses can generate employment and incomes in all parts of the UK, including in otherwise fragile rural economies where there may be few alternative sources of economic activity.

Recommendation 2: Resilience fund for cultural enterprises

Desired outcome

25. Cultural businesses can recover financial stability and recover cash flows, generating jobs, contributing to regional growth and protecting vital conservation skills.

² <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/arts-council-funded-cultural-infrastructure>

Policy Rationale

26. We recommend the establishment of a resilience fund targeted at cultural sector businesses. We call on Government to recognise the interconnected nature of the cultural sector and extend financial support beyond well established, high profile, institutions. It is essential that cultural freelancers and small companies in the supply chain can access support.
27. A third of the conservation workforce is self-employed. During the pandemic, these conservators experienced loss of income due to cancelled contracts and reductions in commissions as clients stopped commissioning new conservation work during the crisis. Our Coronavirus survey showed that 90% of respondents reported a loss or postponement of work due to the pandemic.³
28. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme has been a lifeline for those in the cultural industries who have been eligible for it. However, the closure of the scheme in October means the future of the workforce remains at significant risk. Furthermore, certain demographics within the self employed workforce fell between the cracks of funding schemes, including:
 - 28.1. Sole directors of limited liability companies who don't self-assess for tax and are not able to claim under the scheme.
 - 28.2. Conservators who started in self-employment after April 2019 or are recent graduates. These new entrepreneurs are already particularly vulnerable and require support while they grow their businesses.
 - 28.3. The many conservators who operate in the gig economy or juggle a variety of part-time jobs and freelance work and earn small amounts of income from a range of sources.
29. We echo the DCMS Select Committee's recommendation that the Government "must learn from the shortcomings of previous support schemes to ensure future investment is tailored to the unique characteristics of the cultural sector and its workers." These workers require urgent financial support to ensure their businesses do not fold and skills are not lost.
30. Heritage sites and organisations rely heavily on the vital skills and expertise of the self-employed sector and contractors. These individuals provide public engagement (art, performance), building work (plasterers, stonemasons), conservation, heritage engineering, specialist archaeological services, and other small consulting contracts.

³ <https://icon.org.uk/news/icon-coronavirus-survey-loss-of-work-for-conservators>

31. In the long-term, there is a risk that many self-employed contractors will be unable to survive without Government investment. This would mean a loss of skills that would lead to heritage assets falling into disrepair and capital and conservation projects facing issues commissioning work.

Benefits

32. The proposal would support the fulfillment of the Government's priorities:

Economic recovery

33. Tailored investment would help conservation businesses to regain financial stability, enabling them to contribute to national and regional economic recovery. Conservation fosters a diverse business environment through its division of employment between medium, small and micro-sized businesses. 84% of conservation workplaces have five or fewer conservators. Small businesses are vital to the economic wellbeing and social fabric of places.⁴

Skills and jobs

34. Conservation contributes to varied and dispersed employment, distributing the value of skills, jobs, investment and innovation across sectors and the UK. The skills and expertise of the self-employed and freelance conservators play a vital role providing institutions with not only conservation services but also supporting public engagement and other specialist services. With support to make up for lost income, private practices can continue to operate and supply important skills for the sector.

Levelling up economic opportunity in rural areas

35. Many conservation businesses are based in rural areas supporting their regional museums and local visitor attractions. These businesses help create modern and distinctive places and spaces that are loved and owned by communities.

Recommendation 3: Invest in creative education and training to encourage people into future proof cultural jobs in the creative industries

Desired outcome

36. All young people - regardless of background - have access to a creative education and practical craft skills and are aware of the career opportunities within the cultural sector

⁴ https://icon.org.uk/system/files/public/economy_2020.pdf

and creative industries. Careers within these sectors are open to and inclusive of a more diverse range of people.

Policy rationale

37. Icon proposes targeted and strategic investment in practical crafts and arts education and training to create tomorrow's workforce.
38. Creative skills have been shown to be the most resilient to automation with creative careers being amongst the most future proof. Recent research by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre showed that creativity is consistently identified as the most significant predictor for the likelihood of growth for an occupation between now and 2030.⁵ Jobs in the UK's Creative Industries are growing at three times the UK average.⁶
39. We welcomed the Government's £2 million investment towards developing creative skills and education in the Creative Industries Sector Deal. However, this represents just over 1 percent of the Deal's total investment and no new measures were outlined for improving arts education or policy. This is in stark contrast to the Industrial Strategy's £406 million investment in maths, digital and technical education to help address shortages in STEM skills.⁷
40. STEM graduates are widely employed in the Creative Industries. However, the imbalance in the Industrial Strategy's education commitments ignored the fact that creative subjects are key drivers of the UK's creative and cultural sectors. The study of arts, crafts and design is central to inspiring and equipping the future professionals of these industries. Conservators, for example, combine knowledge of science with practical crafts skills and understanding of artistic methods.
41. We urge Government to address the effects of the EBacc, which emphasizes a core set of academic subjects studied for GCSE and excludes creative disciplines. Arts GCSE entries are not recovering after years of falling numbers, while A Level entries continue to decline.⁸ Icon urges the Government to invest in arts education and training to ensure the Creative Industries continues to have access to a strong pipeline of talent.

Benefits

Jobs and skills

⁵<https://www.pec.ac.uk/news/new-research-shows-creativity-will-become-even-more-important-to-the-growth-of-jobs-between-now-and-2030>

⁶ <https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/statistics>

⁷ https://icon.org.uk/system/files/public/beis_creativeindustriessectordealstatement_24may2018_fv.pdf

⁸<https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/arts-gcse-entries-stable-but-not-recovering-after-years-of-falling-numbers-while-a-level-entries-continue-to-decline/>

42. Creative skills are relevant beyond the sector and they can help create a national workforce with future-proof skills. According to the World Economic Forum, “with the avalanche of new products, new technologies, and new ways of working, workers are going to have to become more creative in order to benefit from these changes.”⁹ Creativity is an active process that is necessarily involved in innovation and will support the Government’s ambitions to develop innovative solutions to society’s biggest challenges.

Economic recovery

43. The Creative Industries export £46 billion in goods and services worldwide, accounting for almost 12% of UK services exports. The Creative Industries contribute £111.7 billion GVA to the UK, which is greater than the automotive, aerospace, life sciences and oil and gas industries combined.¹⁰

Strengthening the UK’s position in the world

44. The UK’s creative industries are world-renowned. Investing in the sector’s pipeline of talent will ensure this leading position can be maintained and strengthened.

Recommendation 4: Funding for cultural heritage projects to help deliver the NHS Long Term Plan

Desired outcome

45. Government and public bodies support third sector cultural organisations to deliver non-clinical health and social services and projects.

Policy Rationale

46. The Spending Review will prioritise “improving outcomes in public services, including supporting the NHS.” We urge the Government to integrate conservation and cultural heritage within social prescription schemes as a part of the NHS Long Term Plan. The UK conservation sector comprises several public and civil society organisations that could be mobilised to deliver the benefits of arts and cultural heritage to wellbeing to free up NHS resources.
47. Sector funders should continue to support and drive progress in this area. The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s Strategic Framework 2019-2024 sets out plans to encourage collaboration between heritage and health organisations and to fund high quality

⁹<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>

¹⁰ <https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/statistics>

projects. Historic England has developed strategic objectives for wellbeing and the historic environment and remains committed to further research within the context of its Research Agenda. We hope recognition of the value of the arts and cultural sector as a partner for social prescribing will continue to grow and be supported through frameworks such as the NHS Long Term Plan.

48. We propose encouraging the NHS and Clinical Commissioning Groups to include cultural heritage participation within social prescription programmes and designate an individual to take responsibility for integrating arts and cultural heritage within organisational policies.

Benefits

Supporting public services, including the NHS

49. Research from Age UK reveals that creative and cultural participation is the greatest contributor to wellbeing in older age.¹¹ Visiting heritage sites is estimated to save the NHS over £193.2 million by reducing demand for GP visits and psychotherapy.¹² Heritage and conservation save the NHS money by delivering varied benefits to the wellbeing of people by:¹³
 - 49.1. **Nurturing a sense of belonging and identity.** Engagement with arts and cultural heritage can cultivate a strong sense of place and identity by promoting a positive connection to our shared past. Conservation ensures that this heritage is protected, cared for and made accessible, enabling sites and collections to serve as focal points for the interaction of communities and help people to navigate their place in the world.
 - 49.2. **Supporting social connections.** The wide range of volunteering opportunities available within the arts and cultural heritage sector facilitate the development of meaningful relationships. Volunteering allows individuals to build their social networks by encouraging people to work together towards shared aims in a positive atmosphere where they can enjoy themselves and get to know each other.
 - 49.3. **Building confidence and self-esteem.** Conservation is a highly skilled practice. Participation in conservation projects often requires professionally-led training and learning to ensure that heritage assets are conserved and cared for

¹¹ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/wellbeing-research/creative-wellbeing/>

¹² <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2019/heritage-and-society-2019/>

¹³ https://icon.org.uk/system/files/public/important-documents/nhslongtermplan_statement_20190306_fv.pdf

appropriately. Engagement with such projects can significantly empower people by encouraging individuals to cultivate new competencies.

- 49.4. Studies have shown that being permitted to touch historical objects, for example through museum handling sessions, fosters a sense of privilege and responsibility. This has been linked to engendering positive feelings of value and self-worth. For example, the UCL-led Heritage in Hospitals research project delivered over 200 museum object handling sessions with hospital patients. Comparison of pre- and post-session quantitative measures showed significant increases in wellbeing and happiness.

Case study

50. The arts and cultural sectors have been proactively delivering health and wellbeing projects in recognition of these benefits. Icon is currently partnering on the mental health Conservation for Wellbeing (C4W) project that combines conservation, archives and mental health. As well as practising conservation, participants will gain behind-the-scenes knowledge of how heritage collections are protected and cared for at London Metropolitan Archives. This is a completely new way of engaging people, who live with mental health, in heritage and creativity.¹⁴
51. Further examples of arts and wellbeing projects can be found in Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing, an inquiry report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.¹⁵

Recommendation 5: Research infrastructure for heritage science

Desired outcome

52. Government support for physical and digital infrastructure that ensures world-leading heritage science research can take place across the UK. UKRI investment in a distributed research and innovation infrastructure for heritage science and conservation research that increases access to facilities across the UK and opportunities for cross-sector research collaboration and innovation.

Policy rationale

53. The Government's ambition is to make the UK a "scientific superpower." The UK has an impressive record of organisations collaborating on research that uses science and technology to enhance the understanding of cultural heritage, engagement with it, and

¹⁴ <https://icon.org.uk/news/icon-partners-on-the-mental-health-project-with-conservation-for-wellbeing>

¹⁵ <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

its long-term management. Fragmentation, duplication of efforts, isolation of small research groups put at risks the competitive advantage of heritage science research.¹⁶

54. A research infrastructure for heritage science is needed as a long-term resource and Icon mirrors the National Heritage Science Forum's Strategic Framework recommendations.¹⁷ We call on the Government to support UKRI investment in a distributed research and innovation infrastructure for heritage science and conservation research that addresses strategic gaps in UK heritage science infrastructure. Infrastructure should unite and increase access to new facilities, expertise and the development of techniques and instrumentation to address research challenges for heritage science. This would help leverage the value of heritage assets to address research questions elsewhere, e.g in relation to climate change and pandemics.
55. We also urge BEIS to sign up to the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium). E-RIHS is a distributed heritage science infrastructure offering integrated access to cutting-edge facilities and expertise, as well as shared data resources. Supporting a UK node (UK-RIHS) would allow a transformation of the UK interdisciplinary heritage science landscape through access to these. UK government involvement would ensure that the UK maintains its internationally recognised strength in the field and to continue to build on close ties with heritage science research in Europe for mutual benefit.

Benefits

56. The proposal would deliver several benefits to the Government's spending priorities:

Jobs and skills

57. An effective digital infrastructure is necessary to support training and knowledge exchange and to enable the discovery, sharing and re-purposing of research so that it has maximum impact and benefit to society and industry. Engagement with heritage science can help deliver STEM skills:¹⁸
 - 57.1. Heritage science, (through the application of science to the non-science domain of heritage), offers people who may not originally be interested in science a way to engage with science and develop scientific skills.
 - 57.2. A high proportion of the people working and volunteering in the heritage industry are female, demonstrating the success of heritage science at engaging women in STEM subjects.

¹⁶ <http://www.e-rihs.eu/about/about/>

¹⁷ http://www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/documents/NHSF_StrategicFramework-FINAL_Web.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/documents/NHSF_StrategicFramework-FINAL_Web.pdf

- 57.3. Heritage science unites the sciences, humanities and arts, creating highly employable individuals with transferable knowledge and skills.

Levelling up economic opportunity across regions

58. Access to a balanced geographical distribution of research infrastructures will support all parts of the heritage sector to address current and future challenges including the conservation of heritage assets and climate change.

Making the UK a scientific superpower

59. Investment in heritage science infrastructure would ensure that the UK maintains its internationally recognised strength in the field and continues to build on close ties with heritage science research in Europe for mutual benefit. It would help address research challenges for heritage science and help leverage the value of heritage assets to address research questions elsewhere, e.g in relation to climate change and pandemics.

Recommendation 6: Use cultural heritage to deliver a successful Soft Power Strategy that invests in international opportunities for culture enterprises and our world-leading collections

Desired outcome

60. The UK's cultural institutions and businesses are supported to make the most of their potential as a soft power resource in order to support the Government's international ambitions.

Policy rationale

61. By prioritising cultural heritage in the upcoming Soft Power Strategy, the Government can efficiently strengthen its place in the world in correspondence with Spending Review priorities.
62. Heritage is an integral part of the UK brand, driving millions of international visits each year. History and heritage are strong product drivers for most overseas markets. Visit Britain's GREAT campaign has identified heritage as one the UK's 12 'unique selling Points'.¹⁹
63. The conservation sector maximises the impact of the cultural sector. Conservation enables access to heritage by ensuring the survival of cultural heritage assets for the enjoyment and education of current and future generations. Without conservation, the soft power impact of heritage could not be maintained in the long term. The UK's "world

¹⁹ https://icon.org.uk/system/files/public/softpower_2020.pdf

leadership” in heritage has indeed been linked to its museums “pioneering” “models of conservation in art, artefacts and heritage sites.” The UK’s expertise in conservation and heritage science is routinely sought internationally.²⁰

64. As a result, the Government should support the conservation sector’s engagement in international projects and trade missions. This support should extend beyond the work of big national institutions to also include the sector’s sizable independent workforce. We recommend a strategic approach to investing in:

High quality exchanges for cultural professionals

65. UK-based conservators frequently take part in overseas conferences and welcome international speakers to events in the UK. These activities all contribute to strengthening the conservation skills-base and professional expertise internationally. Travel bursaries to help promote people exchanges, e.g. of conservation professionals and students, would help to build on this potential.
66. However, the Government should ensure that the cultural exports it promotes are of the highest quality. For example, accreditation should be encouraged to guarantee people exchanges include professionals who abide by high standards of practice and ethics. Icon Accreditation is used as a benchmark for quality within the conservation sector. Icon accredits conservators (Accredited Conservator-Restorers) who have reached a proficient level of practice, judgement and ethics across Icon’s professional standards, which they maintain through on-going professional development.

SME-tailored support

67. The conservation sector is made up of SMEs and microbusinesses, which do not have the capacity to devote resources to international work when it diverts from essential duties. Tailored support to help these businesses engage internationally is needed. Support for new international posts or the backfilling of existing posts so that staff can be routed to international projects would maximise potential. Culture-focused trade missions would allow small and micro heritage businesses to grow their international relationships.

Access to international markets

68. We ask Government to support our ambitions to access international markets for Icon accreditation to capitalise on the demand for our expertise. Icon benefits from an international presence and outlook. Although most of our members are UK-based, a substantial contingent (17.5% of the membership in 2019) are based outside the UK. Icon regularly receives enquiries about accreditation from professional conservators who are not based in the UK, including the United States, Australia and Israel. In the past, Icon has undertaken accreditation assessments in Singapore, Italy and Belgium. Key to

²⁰ https://icon.org.uk/system/files/public/important-documents/iconbriefing_soft_power_20190429_fv.pdf

this process has been ensuring that the standard and method of assessment has been consistent no matter where assessments take place.²¹

69. The UK conservation sector is a leader in terms of conservation standards. There are around 25 conservation standards published by the British Standards Institution (BSI). As the UK professional body for conservators, we champion best practice through professional standards and accreditation. China's interest in developing standards is a key impetus for its interest in UK collaboration. In 2018, Shaanxi Province timed the establishment of the region's first professional body for conservators to coincide with Icon's visit to Xi'an.²² This was a tangible demonstration of the UK conservation sector's influence on global standards.
70. By supporting us to sell Icon accreditation to other countries, we can strengthen the UK's leading position in terms of conservation standards and also protect our shared global heritage.

Benefits

Economic recovery

71. By enabling cultural professionals to increasingly engage internationally, they can continue to demonstrate the UK's expertise in conservation abroad. This can support and promote heritage tourism, a leading contributor to economic growth, and create a magnet for inward investment. It would also attract international students and researchers to the UK's leading centres for conservation education, leading to economic growth.

Strengthening the UK's place in the world

72. International engagement has the potential to lead to new sources of income, supporting the heritage sector's resilience. A more financially resilient sector can ensure the conservation and enhancement of iconic heritage assets which support and promote heritage tourism, a key contributor to the UK's global reputation.
73. The UK's expertise in conservation and heritage science is routinely sought internationally. However, a strong, consistent and varied global presence - of cultural professionals from across the spectrum of big national institutions to independent microbusinesses - is needed to enhance the UK's standing on the world stage.

²¹ https://icon.org.uk/system/files/public/important-documents/icon_international_addendum_2019_fv_.pdf

²² <https://icon.org.uk/news/icon-publishes-china-report-and-mou-with-shaanxi-province>