Urban Built Heritage

Research Summary May 2019

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National Trust

Front cover image: City of Plymouth skyline
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Foreword

The National Trust was founded almost 125 years ago, with the core charitable purpose of protecting special places for the benefit of the nation;

For ever, for everyone.

Whilst the work of the National Trust has never been just about looking after our own places, we're most known for our predominantly rural, visitor attraction model. But we need to look beyond that if we are to fulfil our charitable purpose for the whole nation.

The places that matter most to people are often those closest to home, and in many cases, these are looked after by local authorities or small charities. In recent years, significant budget cuts have meant that many of these organisations are struggling to cope.

Our 10-year strategy outlines how we will 'play our part'[1] in helping to look after these special places that sit outside of our ownership. The Urban Places Programme has been established to deliver on this part of the strategy by helping local greenspaces and heritage avoid threats and deliver public benefit.

We've focussed specifically on 'urban' because 80% of the UK population live in towns or cities, and that's forecast to grow to over 90% by 2030.[2]

Over the last few years, we've been working with a wide range of partners, helping in a practical way on the ground, but also learning and understanding the different challenges and opportunities others face.

As this work grows, we're being asked more and more to offer our support where we can; from enquiries to our operations team to audience research showing there's an appetite for us to play more of a role in local areas. We commissioned this research to complement our 'on the ground' experience and to try to glimpse what the future might hold by looking at national data trends, case studies and by listening to recognised experts in the sector. We hope this work will help us play our part alongside many other partners.

Hilary McGrady
Director General of the National Trust

1. *Playing Our Part: https://www. nationaltrust.org.uk/features/playing-our-part-our-strategy-to-2025*
2. *Source: Office for National Statistics.*

Image Moseley Road Baths
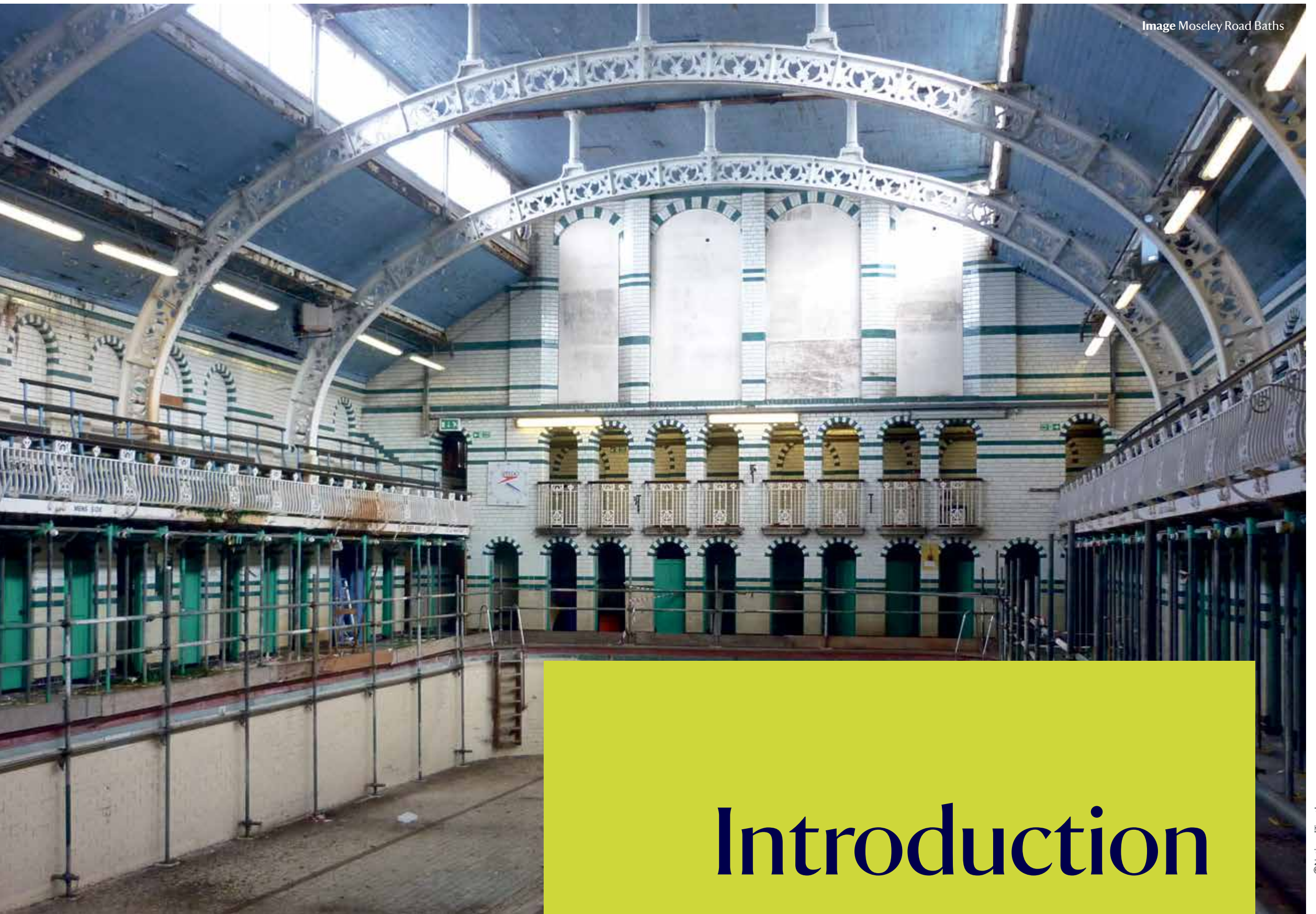
Introduction

Purpose

This research was commissioned from BOP Consulting and Gareth Maeer, and was conducted between June and November 2018. The objectives were to:

Provide an **evidence base** around urban heritage, and in particular the threats to Grade II listed buildings with potential for public value use;

Review relevant **current policies and programmes** to pinpoint **strengths**, **gaps** and **weaknesses**;

Assess the **trends and challenges** around work to sustain urban heritage projects as a guide to National Trust strategy, particularly the Urban Places Programme;

To **consolidate the existing evidence on public engagement** with urban heritage and augment it with new research by the National Trust.
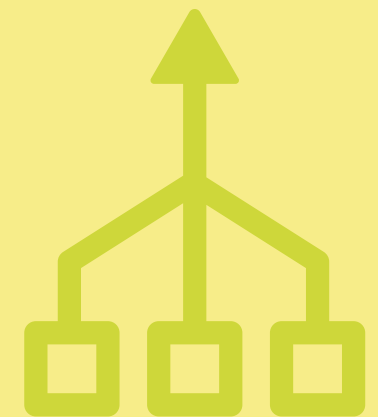
Definitions and focus

For the purposes of this work, 'Urban Built Heritage' refers to buildings or structures, usually but not exclusively built before 1919, in urban areas.

More specifically in the context of this research, we've focussed on:

Cities;

The assets important to local populations;

Prioritising buildings (with potential public use) over structures;

Grade II listed assets;

And excluding general residential use, registered parks, scheduled monuments, conservation areas, and ecclesiastical assets.

"The research has been designed to focus on assets capable of delivering the greatest amount of public benefit ..."

The research focusses on Grade II buildings because these are the listed assets offered the least formal protection,[3] and therefore, we hypothesise, most in need of additional support.

The research has been designed to focus on assets capable of delivering the greatest amount of public benefit (to the largest number of people), and on those which provide opportunities to tell varied and rich stories relevant to their local populations. It was felt that residential buildings are less able to offer this opportunity, and are therefore out of scope for the purposes of this work. Ecclesiastical buildings have also been excluded as a number of other organisations already focus on the conservation needs and challenges of this category of heritage.

The research focusses on England and excludes Wales and Northern Ireland due to the availability and comparability of data.[4] However, the conclusions and implications of this work would often be applicable in Wales and Northern Ireland.

3. *The definitions as set out by Historic England are: Grade I are 'buildings of exceptional interest'; Grade II* are 'particularly important buildings of more than special interest'; Grade II are 'buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve'.*

4. *The Heritage at Risk (HaR) register compiled by Historic England covers England, excluding Wales and Northern Ireland. Some other sources are available, for example, Ulster Architectural Heritage Society produces the Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland, a list of 'buildings and monuments of architectural and historic interest whose future seems uncertain', but this is not directly comparable with England data sources.*

Image Queen Street Mill, Burnley

Key Insights

What are the current trends in Urban Built Heritage?

We estimate that there are

3,000

Grade II places at risk in urban areas,[5] and with potential to offer greater benefit to the public.

There is little data on the number of Grade II buildings at risk in England; the Heritage at Risk (HaR) register only includes Grade II buildings in London. Some local authorities collate their own lists, but these are inconsistent and reduced funding and expertise mean that few places continue to do this. We have used the data on Grades I and II* as a reliable proxy to produce an estimate.

There is potential for people to

connect

to heritage where it is local, personal and focusses on use rather than asset. But some are more engaged than others.

There is a lack of diversity in engagement with urban heritage. Whilst barriers (such as awareness) exist, we also know that some people think about heritage more than others – linked to their personal values.

People speak more about the use of a heritage asset (provision of community space; to address 'social issues'), than its historic significance.

The sector is fragmented and projects need to focus on the

future

of the building, rather than just on its physical restoration.

The research identified 'Five elements' of any heritage regeneration project (identification, ownership, restoration, reuse and sustainability). Most funding and activity is focussed on the restoration phase. There is a high level of competition for funds and approaches are disjointed. Sustainability is the least well resourced element and is sometimes poorly considered in project planning.

5. *Excluding residential and ecclesiastical assets, plus other exclusions outlined on p12.*

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What is the future of Urban Built Heritage if nothing changes?

Although we have no direct evidence that numbers of at risk buildings will grow, the trend is for the level of risk to increase. The lack of data in the sector increases its

vulnerability.

The number of assets on the HaR register remains fairly static, but the list is dynamic with many places coming on and off it each year. If new sources of funding are not found to augment diminishing public and lottery finance, the likelihood is that places already vulnerable will become more so. There is also a need to identify and intervene before places become at risk, a challenge within current resources.

The sector continues to be disjointed with

no shift from restoration to sustainability.

Without a movement towards an 'end-to-end solution' for heritage assets, buildings are unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term, and more projects will fail.

By focussing too much on historic or cultural significance, rather than the potential for an asset to deliver more benefit to the public, engagement will continue to be from a

small proportion

of the urban population.

The public are clear that they see heritage as a possible solution to local community needs, rather than just as places of beauty or significance.

There is also a need to build trust and connect better with community organisations already active in the sector who lack support and infrastructure.

With no change, the future is one of inequality and decay, with diminishing resources focussed on a small number of projects.

"[If nothing changes] increasing numbers of important historic buildings will fall into decay, creating a spiral of decline for the places where they are located. This impact will be felt first and to a greater degree in the poorest areas, exacerbating inequality." – Funder

"The only places where projects will happen will be in those that are economically self-sufficient, meaning that huge swathes of the country will be left out." – Local trust

"I feel there is a real lesson for funders: lots of community assets have had public investment and we need to get better at ensuring their long-term sustainability." – Charity

Data Context

How many places are at risk?

All Grade I and II*

31.8k

At Risk

5.2k

Building based

1.5k

Not domestic or ecclesiastical

639

Urban

273

Infographic shows the number of Grade I and II places at risk, once exclusions are applied.*

Very little data is available on Grade II assets at risk.

Grade I and II* data can, however, serve as a reasonable proxy.

0.88%

of all Grade I and II* assets of primary interest to the National Trust are

at risk.

Estimate, therefore, that

3,000 Grade II buildings

of primary interest to the National Trust in urban areas are at risk[6].

Overall, the number of assets on the HaR register is

broadly stable

but the register is dynamic, with assets added and removed annually.

Resources

to protect assets at risk (local authority funding and expertise, lottery funding)

are reducing.

There is good evidence that places with strong concentrations of Grade I and II* heritage assets also have strong concentrations of Grade II, and vice versa.

6. *Of a total 344,898 Grade II assets in England. Source: Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)/The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)*

Where has the most at risk places?

Local authority	HaR (I,II*)	% of HaR assets vacant	% of all GI & II* at risk	IMD Decile
Leeds	13	54%	8.90%	2
Calderdale	12	83%	9.52%	3
Birmingham	10	40%	7.81%	1
Plymouth	9	89%	7.56%	3
Bristol, City of	9	78%	3.40%	4
Kirklees	8	88%	10.13%	5
Portsmouth	7	86%	15.91%	4
Leicester	6	50%	12.00%	2
Manchester	6	50%	6.25%	1
Newcastle upon Tyne	6	83%	2.90%	2

Top 10 English urban local authorities by total number of Grade I and Grade II* non-domestic, non-religious buildings at risk, 2018. Table includes Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). IMD Decile 1 = most deprived 10% of England; 10 = least deprived 10%.

Intervention should also aim to prevent an asset from becoming at risk in the first place.

Alongside assigned level of risk, another underlying threat may come from a lack of community engagement in heritage.

Over 1/2 of the top 10 places with the highest number of at risk Grade I and II* assets are **in the north.**

Plymouth, Bristol and Portsmouth are also in the top 10, suggesting that **maritime heritage** plays a part.

This isn't just about population size. Even when that's controlled for, Leeds and Birmingham still have a high number of **assets at risk.**

There's a link with deprivation: the top four are also in the top **30%** of most deprived local authorities in England.

When starting with highest socio-economic need (rather than total number of assets), **the north** also dominates, in particular Manchester and Birmingham.

Image Carvings above the door to Halifax Town Hall

Community Engagement in Heritage

How do people engage with heritage?

Many express an emotional attachment to heritage in their area and talk about 'what places mean to them'.

People often connect more to places in the area they grew up, rather than where they are living now.

But there's often a lack of awareness of local heritage, particularly smaller sites.

And although most people recognise the importance and value of historic buildings in their area, it's not always top-of-mind.

When talking about heritage, people focus on 'how it can benefit the community'.

Heritage is seen as having a role to play in improving local areas.

People want to see heritage used to address local social issues.

Visiting remains the primary engagement activity with heritage, but **urban** heritage has limited appeal as a visitor attraction.

Some people are more engaged in heritage than others.

There is a lack of visitor diversity within heritage. Engagement is higher amongst higher socio-economic groups.

Barriers to engagement include awareness and perception, and values also play a part.

Amongst those who are engaged, there is a growing appetite to be fully involved in projects as active partners, and a desire for heritage bodies to be more transparent.

Source: BOP full report; NLHF Public Consultations, 2018; Heritage Resight, National Trust; 'Your local area's history', Discussion Room, October 2018, National Trust.

What heritage matters to people?

We asked: What historical buildings, places or areas in your local neighbourhood are important to you and why? What would be the impact if they disappeared?

The National Trust has undertaken work to develop a segmentation of the population, to understand their values. The work has identified three main groups across the nation: 'Deeper connections', 'Enhance my life', and 'Once in a while'.

'Deeper connections' and 'Enhance my life' are those who strongly value nature, art, culture and heritage, think it's important they should be protected, and enjoy experiencing those things in their day-to-day lives. These two groups make up around 52% of the population of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

'Once in a while' place much less value on nature, art, culture and heritage, are less concerned about their protection and spend less time enjoying them as part of their leisure and recreation.

'Deeper connections' and 'Enhance my life' show the most interest in this topic.

Source: National Trust, 'Your local area's history', Discussion Room, October 2018. Seventy-nine members of the online community contributed, posting 119 comments in total. The community has representation from across the general population and all segments.

"I've lived in the same town all my life. There's lots of historic buildings here and as I'm getting older I can really appreciate the beauty of it all. We have such beautiful buildings with exposed wood beam." – Deeper connections

"I enjoy the opportunities to discover and look round historic buildings that are not normally open to the public as tourist attractions. There is a local history archive in our local library so I hope to make use of that at some point." – Enhance my life

"I would say not many of the buildings are important to me but there are some lovely historic buildings around the town such as the pub, town hall which have some meaning to people that have lived here for a while. It wouldn't matter much to me (if they disappeared) …. I don't really visit them." – Once in a while

Threats, Opportunities and the Future

Views from the Urban Heritage Sector

The urban heritage landscape:
Views from the experts

Priorities
- Urban areas a natural priority for most funders
- Importance of being 'meaningful to local people'
- London not considered a priority
- Connection to wider social priorities

Threats & challenges
- Decrease in public finances (local, European) and lottery funding
- Increase in conservation deficit
- Lack of sectoral coordination and mutual trust
- Special attention required on: listing, early planning, Community Asset Transfer (CAT), sustainability

Opportunities & innovations
- Strong variation in opinions among experts, but two universal points: need to look beyond visitor attraction model; need to innovate new ways of sectoral working
- Housing as important part of reuse picture
- Three new funding sources identified: dormant assets, social investment, tax incentives
- Community share schemes an important new approach to fundraising
- Attitudinal shifts in funding, e.g. from 'most needy' to 'most likely to succeed'; de-risking early years; merging ailing ventures with stronger ones

"Bigger organisations shouldn't step in and take ownership – I wouldn't want to give our assets away; they're our assets – but would be very happy to work alongside and explore different models, co-ownership etc."
– Local trust

"I just see this burgeoning crisis: sustainability not looked after at all; reuse is by accident rather than plan; the finance is not there; ownership, partnership structures and trust to get things done are missing." – Local trust

"The company has come out of an urban task force ethos, i.e. the idea that our cities need to be rebuilt from the inside out." – Developer
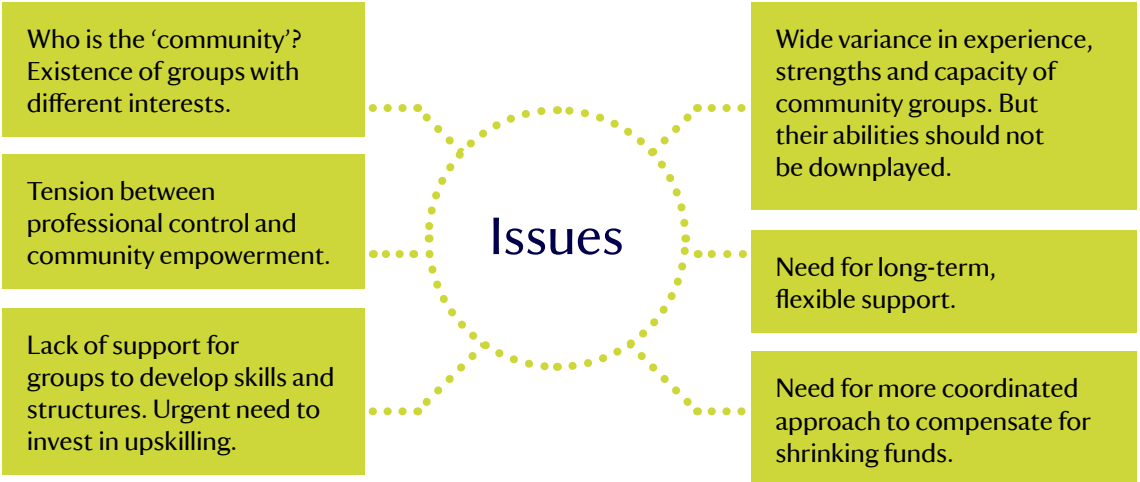
Working with communities:

Views from the experts

At the heart of all discussions about urban heritage is a debate about how communities should be involved, and the strengths and weaknesses of a community-led approach.

Issues

Who is the 'community'? Existence of groups with different interests.

Tension between professional control and community empowerment.

Lack of support for groups to develop skills and structures. Urgent need to invest in upskilling.

Wide variance in experience, strengths and capacity of community groups. But their abilities should not be downplayed.

Need for long-term, flexible support.

Need for more coordinated approach to compensate for shrinking funds.

Opportunities

In spite of the challenges, all interviewees recognised that local people should have active involvement at the heart of projects and that organisational approaches will need to adapt to reflect this.

"Small community organisations don't know how to do this and they need help" – Developer

Policy and Programme Review:

What Support Currently Exists?

The research identified 'Five Elements' of Urban Heritage Regeneration Projects: *Restoration is the best supported and* sustainability the least.
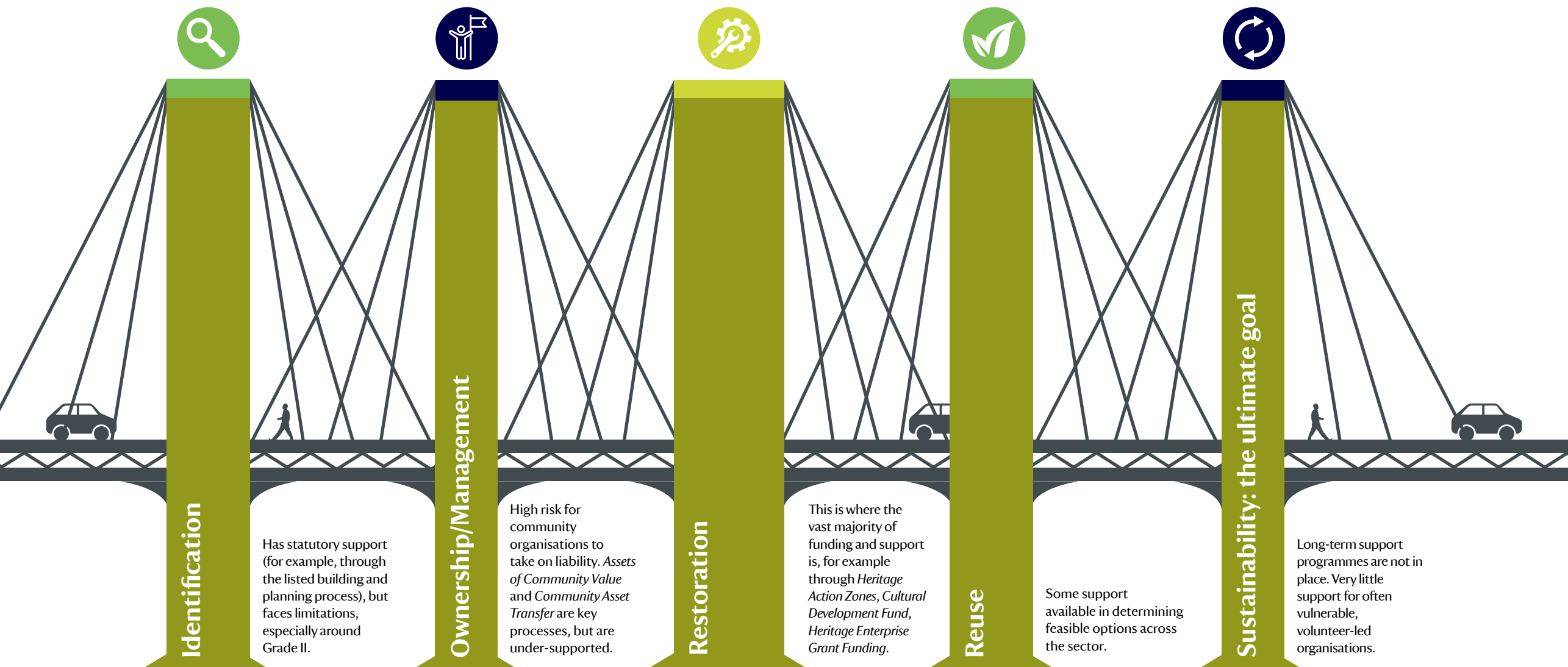
Element		Funding status & key issues
Identification	Asset at risk identified for action by local authority/ community group OR Need identified by local community which heritage can potentially fulfil	'Heart, head and business planning' need to be there from the start: Importance of beginning process with identification of social value as well as asset – better bridging between both needed Importance of beginning project with a plan for its ultimate sustainability
Ownership/ Management	Establishment of appropriate ownership/ management model	Limited support and funding Further issue lies in often high risk for community organisations or councils taking on liability, coupled with often 'delinquent owners'
Restoration	Asset made physically fit for purpose	Currently considered as best supported of the 'Five Elements', the only area adequately served by expertise and resourcing, but lacks joined-up approach among funders Supported by emerging model of local training schemes for volunteers or apprentices
Reuse	New use evolved for building	Limited support and funding Further issue lies in gap in experience and expectation of heritage sector and community sector in defining reuse
Sustainability	Asset's future secured	Currently considered as least supported, as immediate needs of restoration are prioritised over sustainability Further threatened by lack of commercial acumen, risky business and ownership models, shrinking public sector

How does existing policy and funding support the 'Five Elements'?

High challenge
Medium challenge
Low challenge

Identification

Has statutory support (for example, through the listed building and planning process), but faces limitations, especially around Grade II.

Ownership/Management

High risk for community organisations to take on liability. *Assets of Community Value* and *Community Asset Transfer* are key processes, but are under-supported.

Restoration

This is where the vast majority of funding and support is, for example through *Heritage Action Zones, Cultural Development Fund, Heritage Enterprise Grant Funding*.

Reuse

Some support available in determining feasible options across the sector.

Sustainability: the ultimate goal

Long-term support programmes are not in place. Very little support for often vulnerable, volunteer-led organisations.

Key opportunities and barriers to engagement

Opportunity

Need for increased focus on public benefit

The cultural importance of the built environment has tended to focus on its tangible historic heritage rather than the public benefit it can deliver.

Opportunity

Direct economic benefits

Businesses locate in heritage areas or buildings for their ambience and features.

Businesses based in listed buildings are highly productive, generating Gross Value Added (GVA) per year 4.4% higher than the average.

Barrier

Barriers to private sector's reuse efforts

High up-front costs and long return cycles in bringing historic buildings back into use are key barriers for developers and private investors as well as local authorities. Important role of Historic England to ensure they have the confidence to go ahead.

Barrier

Barriers to community sector's reuse efforts

Lack of access to funding/ finance.

Lack of capacity, skills and access to professional expertise.

Issues re community ownership: lack of expertise, funding, time, clear local level policy.

Lack of understanding of how to engage community groups among heritage organisations.

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Image River Avon in Bristol

Learning From Case Studies

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Key learning from case studies

Nine UK and five international case studies provide examples of 'rescued' built urban heritage that demonstrate innovative approaches

High level findings

Main success factors mentioned:

Available funding, available expertise, volunteer enthusiasm and careful financial/long-term planning.

Main problem factors mentioned:

Lack of council support, lack of funding, lack of expertise/careful management and conflicts among stakeholders as to the best way to proceed.

Many of these key success and problem factors appear across different elements of the journey – e.g. the importance of volunteer support, funding, relevant expertise, and council support.

In various guises, finding and working towards an ultimately sustainable solution cuts across all elements of the journey, e.g. conflicts over best approach (identification); balancing heritage requirements with financial viability (restoration); vision not commercially viable (reuse); various issues (sustainability).

The project journey is non-linear and individual elements take on larger or smaller relevance in different projects.

There is no 'one size fits all' template.

Case studies:
Two examples from the UK

Hastings Pier, Hastings

- Closed 2006 and burnt down 2010

- Local Trust campaigns to gain ownership and restore. Compulsory purchase order and transfer to Trust 2013

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant funding for restoration and education programme 2011–16. Reopened 2015

- 2017 Charity goes into administration. Pier sold to private investor

- Success factor: local people power; twin-track approach towards ownership

- Key problem: lack of funding prior to ownership; merging owner and management company; commercial administration process

©Adobestock

Portland Works, Sheffield

©Portland Works

- Former cutlery works; fell into disrepair from 1968

- Grade II* listing in 1995

- Bought by Community Benefit Society in 2013. Total raised for purchase and immediate costs: £565,000

- Wide range of funding sources: shares, bonds, donations, loans, external grants

- Ongoing, phased restoration of workspaces for craftspeople and small scale manufacturing

- Success factor: campaign group with 'head and heart', plus continuing active volunteer support

- Key problem: protracted negotiations with previous owner

Case studies:
Two international examples

Gängeviertel, Hamburg

- City centre listed quarter of buildings, flats and shops
- Sold by city following budget cuts to investors with authorisation to demolish (2008)
- Artists/activists' occupy it and form collective
- City re-buys quarter; cooperation agreement with collective (2010–11)

- Restoration and re-occupation based on collective's democratic principles. Halted since 2015 – disagreement between collective and city
- Success factor: different skills/ backgrounds of collective; popular support
- Key problem: disagreement over restoration and ownership between collective and city

7th 'birthday party' of the Gängeviertel

©René Gabriel, 2016

Evergreen Brick Works, Toronto

- Former brick works. City buys site in 1980s as housing development plans determined unviable, then site abandoned
- Environmental not-for-profit organisation Evergreen approach city to repurpose site
- Got $20m from Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund and £55.6m capital loan from city

- Reopened as environmental community centre and national hub for urban sustainability, based on social enterprise model
- Success factor: big vision and ambition; community engagement, like-minded partners
- Key problem: huge amount of money to fundraise

©DennisJarvis

Case studies:
Summary table – Success Factors

Key success factors	Identification	Ownership/Management		Restoration	Reuse	Sustainability
	Dedicated campaigners	Support from council		Step-by-step restoration to manage costs/create iterative income sources	Commercially viable plan for end use	Ongoing interest from prospective tenants/hirers
	Local enthusiasm and support	Skilled support from established core volunteer group		Funding support	Ongoing interest from prospective tenants/hirers	Successful public space that draws in visitors
	'Head and heart' – campaigners with skills and knowledge	Negotiating 'tentative steps' towards ownership/management		Determination, network, vision of leading individuals	Creation of successful public space that draws in visitors	Careful financial management and risk assessment
	External factors (that could not be influenced)	Building up of political and/or people power		Available expertise	Ongoing volunteer support	External factors – regeneration of surrounding area
	Sector/expert support	Sector/expert pressure		Inherent characteristics of the building	Sufficient funding/income to pay for professional staff team	Regular/long-term funding support
	Inclusion of asset on Heritage at Risk register	External factors (that could not be influenced)		Volunteers/tenants active in restoration work	Ability to undertake outreach work/raise awareness of project	Ongoing investment in asset
	Alignment with/inclusion in city development plans	Long-term planning from the start		Being strategic about sources of funding	External factors – regeneration of surrounding area	Mixed-income model
	Commercial interest in asset	Gaining funders' trust		Creative approach to restoration reducing costs	Careful management of governance transition	An ambitious vision
	Location of asset	Receiving funding pre-ownership		Collaboration between council and campaigners	Accessible location	Public – private partnership to secure investment
		Joint investment arranged for purchase		Independent, objective oversight over restoration process	Local council allowing flexibility to enable new life for building	
		Government support adapting regulations to enable project to go ahead			Stakeholders working in partnership	
		Listing status to protect building			Ability to demonstrate demand and viability	
					Media attention raises awareness of site	

Case studies:
Summary table – Problem Factors

Key problem factors	**Identification**	**Ownership/Management**		**Restoration**	**Reuse**	**Sustainability**
	Financial risk aversion among/ liability for stakeholders	Private owner unwilling to sell		Unexpected costs during restoration	Economic challenges of local area (low land value)	Lack of engagement from council (council budget cuts)
	Lack of commercial viability	Protracted ownership negotiations requiring huge amount of volunteer time and financial outlay		Need to balance heritage requirements with financial viability	Vision not commercially viable/lack of vision	Ensuring active engagement of shareholders, board members, volunteers
	Lack of council support	Lack of available funding support before ownership resolved		Modern building legislation impacting on heritage restoration	Disagreement among stakeholders/public on appropriate regeneration	Limited interest from local population
	Criticism at previous approaches to regeneration	Bringing together sufficient funds for purchase and getting mortgage for 'risky' venture		Time constraints of NLHF funding application	Difficulty in making regeneration stack up financially	Competition for/high demands in getting heritage funding
	Unprepossessing building	Assets further deteriorate		Raising sufficient funds for costly restoration	Initial regeneration plans not fully implemented	Ongoing financial demands
	Structural problems to building	Identifying current owners/ tenants		Need for capacity-building among campaign group/new owners		Ongoing uncertainty of physical works required
	Conflicts over best approach to regeneration among stakeholders	Project doesn't deliver to government strategic aims		Lack of available expertise		Finding suitable management staff
	Difficulty in reaching out to private owner			Disagreement among stakeholders on restoration process		Reliance on government non-financial priorities to override commercial interests
				Delay due to protest from (other) interest groups		Reliance on financial liquidity of commercial operator
						Requires acknowledgement of value as community asset
						Management decisions putting asset at risk

Image View of central Newcastle including clock tower and rail bridge

Next Steps

What does all of this mean for us?

There is significant appetite for the National Trust to play a greater role.

Interviewees concurred on the four core strengths that the Trust brings to this work: brand/reputation, convening power, size, and heritage expertise. Weaknesses were also noted for our consideration – less known outside of our rural model, lack of diversity, low levels of expertise in community engagement.

This research can act as a catalyst for collaborative change across the sector.

The hope is for this work to prompt discussions and action across the sector. The 'Five Elements' framework can be used as a starting point to discuss where we, and others, can add most value. There is also an imperative to improve the data available on Grade II places, to identify those estimated 3,000 places at risk, and those places most 'in need'.

Possible solutions to be explored with partners.

There was a clear consensus among the expert panel that a collaborative approach to co-create new ways of working presents an immediate opportunity.

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Key challenges for the sector to consider

1. Explore how organisations that deliver on the ground can be supported to be financially self-sustaining and thus able to deliver more public benefit.

2. Proactively engage with those outside of the sector to pull in resources, skills and investment.

3. Develop a more 'partner orientated' approach which is less about administering a process and more about working with proven deliverers.

4. See urban heritage as a key resource to engage a wider, more diverse population with our collective heritage and stories.

5. Reviewing the existing financial structure so it better reflects sectoral need and is more joined up whilst co-developing new funding models.

6. Working together to address the identified weaknesses in government policy approaches.

Acknowledgements

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Image View of town hall in Leicester

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