

HESCAPE 1.5

Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan
for England 2026-2028

Produced by the

**Historic Environment
Skills Forum**

Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England 2026-28

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This document can be located online on the [Heritage Sector Resilience Plan Resources Hub](#).

This document has been prepared by the Historic Environment Skills Forum Steering Group on behalf of the wider Forum membership.

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We also acknowledge the Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment as a direct source of inspiration and approach for this Action Plan.

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The Action Plan will be formally reviewed in March 2028.

To join the Historic Environment Skills Forum, visit our online community:

<https://khub.net/group/skillsforum>

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Front cover image: A trainee from Historic England's Heritage Building Skills Programme undertakes stonemasonry work ©Historic England

Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
1. Introduction	6
Welcome to the Refreshed Edition.....	7
Understanding HESCAPE: Scope, Purpose, and Application	7
The Historic Environment Skills Forum	9
2. The Employment & Skills Landscape in England	10
3. A Model for Skills & Career Development.....	13
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	15
5. High Priority Historic Environment Skills	16
1. Skills for Retrofit (climate change adaptation in traditional buildings)	17
2. Traditional Skills in Plastering and Carpentry/Joinery	17
3. Post-excavation Specialist Skills (Archaeology)	17
4. Industrial Heritage Conservation Skills	17
5. Skills to Manage Change to the Historic Environment within Local Authorities	18
Acknowledging Other Skills Areas	18
6. Priority Areas for Action & Activities.....	19
Priority Area 1: Develop the evidence base	21
Priority Area 2: Provide a broader range of opportunities for career-entry (inc. career changers)	23
Priority Area 3: Upskill the existing workforce to work appropriately with heritage assets (particularly in response to climate change interventions)	25
Priority Area 4: Embed the historic environment into mainstream education and training.....	27
7. The Action Plan in Summary	29
8. Delivery, Monitoring & Reporting.....	31
Governance: Historic Environment Skills Forum Steering Group.....	32
Delivering on Activities: Working Groups	32

Delivering on Activities: Individual Organisations.....	32
Delivering on Activities: Regional Heritage Skills Networks.....	33
Reporting on Activity	34
How to Align your Project to HESCAPE.....	34
9. Evaluating HESCAPE	36
10. Appendices.....	38
Appendix 1: Activity Tables	38
Appendix 2: References	47

Executive Summary

The historic environment relies on **specialist skills** across archaeology, conservation, heritage construction, and historic environment advice and management. Employers report **recruitment difficulties**, thin pipelines, and **gaps in critical technical skills**. Evidence shows **rising demand** driven by repair/maintenance, **retrofit and climate adaptation**, and major infrastructure and land-use programmes. At the same time, parts of the workforce are **ageing**, and training routes are **inconsistent or hard to navigate**.

Employer surveys show shortages and skills gaps, with some organisations **turning down work** on pre-1919 buildings; archaeological employers report **shortages** in fieldwork and **post-excavation specialisms**; local authorities face **recruitment and capacity challenges** affecting decision-making for historic assets and retrofit.

The sector needs **coordinated but flexible** action: a way to act **locally and by sub-sector**, while contributing to a **national picture** of what's being done and what impact it has. That is the role of **HESCAPE**.

What HESCAPE is (and is not)

HESCAPE is a sector-wide framework for aligning activity on skills and careers. It offers common **Priority Areas for Action** and a set of **Activities** that any organisation can adopt, **in any occupational context**, without changing their mission. Success is measured by **uptake, alignment and collective impact**—not by “completing” every activity.

HESCAPE is not a single delivery programme, a central pot of funding, or a directive checklist. Organisations **choose and adapt** Activities that fit their context and resources.

The 4 Priority Areas for Action

- 1) **Develop the evidence base** — build a clearer, shared picture of workforce supply/demand, heritage works pipelines and live training provision, with regionally useful granularity.
- 2) **Provide a broader range of opportunities for career-entry (inc. career changers)** — structured placements, outreach, toolkits and shared apprenticeship models to widen and stabilise entry routes.
- 3) **Upskill the existing workforce** (esp. for climate interventions) — Bootcamps, CPD for local authority staff, mentoring partnerships and train-the-trainer support to build capacity and capability.
- 4) **Embed the historic environment in mainstream education and training** — enrichment resources, teacher/tutor CPD, coordinated work experience, and influence in retrofit/construction curricula.

High Priority Historic Environment Skills

HESCAPE identifies 5 nationally evidence skills pressure points:

- **Skills for retrofit** (adaptation/energy efficiency in traditional buildings, with repair/maintenance as a prerequisite; Local Authority retrofit decision-making confidence).
- **Traditional plastering and carpentry/joinery** (shortages, training access variation, regional differences).
- **Post-excavation specialist skills (archaeology)** (analysis and conservation specialisms).
- **Industrial heritage conservation** (metals, engineering/mechanical objects; very limited accredited capacity).
- **Skills to manage change within local authorities** (recruitment/retention pressures, late-career weighting, visa-listed roles).

Important: These pressure points are included to inform policy; not constrain delivery. Any Activity can be applied in any part of the sector where need is identified.

What organisations are being asked to do

Pick and apply the Activities that fit your remit, region and occupational focus. There is **no requirement** to address the national skills list, but it should be used to help prioritise when resource is limited.

Register aligned activity via the Skills Forum **Reporting Form** and submit brief **progress updates** (every 6 months). This is about **visibility and shared learning**, not compliance.

Where helpful, **use the Strategic Objectives** (SO1–SO5) to describe your intended impact; map your existing outputs to the relevant **Outputs/Impacts** in each logic model.

Collaborate regionally through emerging **Regional Heritage Skills Networks** to share intelligence and coordinate local opportunities.

1. Introduction



Heritage Building Skills trainee repointing the parapet of a church with lime mortar. © Historic England

HESCAPE is a sector wide skills development framework with the overarching goal of ensuring we have a resilient workforce, with the right skills to meet current and future demand for work

Welcome to the Refreshed Edition

The Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England (HESCAPE) is a sector wide framework designed to support a more consistent, coordinated and transparent approach to skills and workforce development across the historic environment. It supports an overarching goal of ensuring we have a resilient workforce, with the right skills to meet current and future demand for work. We do this to guarantee we retain an historic environment that is managed, protected and conserved; that people connect with and learn from; and that we are proud to pass on to future generations.

The Historic Environment Skills Forum published the first HESCAPE document in September 2024. This version 1.5 is a “refresh” of the original document, adding in additional detail around Actions and Activities, an improved monitoring and reporting process and some changes to formatting.

The Action Plan outlines a range of **Priority Areas for Action** that will help to meet longer term **Strategic Objectives**. A number of **High Priority Historic Environment Skills** have been identified which Actions can be focused on, but delivering against the Actions can, and will, impact other Skills Areas.

What do we mean by “Historic Environment Skills”?

Skills are abilities that require both teaching *and* practice to be developed. Historic Environment Skills are defined as those skills which are most concerned with the understanding, planning, design, maintenance and repair, conservation and sustainability of the historic environment. This can be through work that is either commercially led or in response to government initiatives.

HESCAPE focuses on these skills areas rather than on Essential Skills which are applicable within the historic environment, e.g., “Digital Literacy” or “Leadership”; and acknowledges the work of the Historic Environment Forum (HEF) in tackling these through the Heritage Sector Resilience Plan 2 (see below).

To that end HESCAPE will be directed towards occupational areas that most align to the activities above. These have been defined as:

- Archaeology (all specialisms)
- Conservation (preventative and remedial in-situ, including for maintenance)
- Heritage Construction (trades and professionals)
- Historic Environment Advice/Management (public and private sector)

Understanding HESCAPE: Scope, Purpose, and Application

What HESCAPE is

HESCAPE is not a list of all the activities that *could* be done to tackle skills challenges in the Historic Environment. Rather, it has identified a broad range of activities that can be taken across and between different occupational areas, and by individual organisations or by consortia and collaborations. It presents a prioritised list that could be delivered within the timeframe of the Action Plan, acknowledging sector limitations on resource.

It provides:

- A shared structure and common language (objectives, priority areas, actions and activities) that organisations can align their own projects and programmes to.
- A way for activity delivered across different sub-sectors, regions and occupational areas to be understood collectively, rather than in isolation.

- A mechanism for building a clearer national picture of what is happening, where, and with what impact — without requiring organisations to change their core missions or delivery models.

HESCAPE is intentionally flexible. Individual organisations, partnerships, regional networks or working groups can:

- Select the Actions or Activities that best align with their remit, expertise, funding and interests.
- Deliver projects or programmes in specific occupational or thematic contexts (for example archaeology, building conservation, dry stone walling, marine heritage, industrial heritage, Local Authority practice).
- Map their own objectives, outputs and outcomes to the relevant HESCAPE Actions and Activities, using the framework as a reference point.

In this way, HESCAPE acts as an alignment layer — enabling diverse activity to sit within a shared national framework while remaining locally and sector led.

What HESCAPE is not

HESCAPE is **not**:

- A delivery plan for a single organisation, or for a small group of organisations.
- A centrally funded programme intended to deliver every Action or Activity listed.
- A checklist of tasks that must all be completed in order for HESCAPE to be considered “successful”.
- A mechanism for directing or prescribing what individual organisations *should* do.

It is neither expected nor realistic that all Actions and Activities will be delivered, or delivered by the same organisations. Many Actions and Activities are deliberately framed so they can be applied across multiple occupational areas and contexts, and therefore may be taken forward many times, in different ways, by different parts of the sector.

How the Action Plan Should Be Read

The Action Plan is intended to function as a menu of opportunities, not a fixed programme of work.

- Actions and Activities describe types of intervention, not specific projects.
- The same Action or Activity may be delivered multiple times, by different organisations, in different regions, or across different heritage sub-sectors.
- Success is measured not by “completion” of the Action Plan, but by:
 - The extent to which organisations align their work to the framework
 - The breadth of uptake across sub-sectors and regions
 - The collective impact demonstrated through shared monitoring and reporting.

Funding and Capacity

HESCAPE recognises that delivery requires funding and organisational capacity.

- Projects and programmes aligned to HESCAPE will continue to rely on a range of external funding sources, employer investment, partnerships and local or regional mechanisms.
- HESCAPE does not assume that organisations can deliver additional activity without resources.
- Where possible, the framework is intended to support funding bids, partnership development and strategic alignment by clearly articulating how individual projects contribute to shared sector priorities.

Validity Period and Review

This Action Plan is set for a period of 2 years and will be formally reviewed at the end of that period by the Historic Environment Skills Forum Steering Group, to ensure it still reflects the priorities of the sector given any changes in to external factors, such as government policy updates or the ability to react to opportunities, e.g. availability of funding.

The Historic Environment Skills Forum

The **Historic Environment Skills Forum** was launched in November 2022, led by a Steering Group representing employers and professional bodies/associations across the different occupational areas that make up the heritage sector.

The Skills Forum is open to anyone in the sector with a desire to collaborate to improve historic environment skills and careers and is coordinated through a dedicated online community which as of 1st March 2026 consists of 315 individual members representing 195 different organisations.

The Skills Forum's [Terms of Reference](#) are available to view publicly online.

The Skills Forum wishes to coordinate activity across the sector to ensure that skills acquisition activities are evidenced, effective, responsive, and meet employer demands. It aims to provide the vehicle to help the sector prioritise the strategic and systemic skills issues that challenge us and lead the development of the interventions required to meet them.

In Summer 2023 the Skills Forum published its Strategic Statement of Intent, outlining a set of aims that members of the Forum agree to work collaboratively to achieve and included a Route-Map of activity to be undertaken in order to facilitate the creation of a Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England (HESCAPE); the first iteration of which was published in September 2024.

Relationship to the Historic Environment Forum (HEF)

The Historic Environment Forum (HEF) is a collective of national heritage organisations in England, working together on strategic issues affecting the historic environment. HEF convenes sector leaders, facilitates information sharing, and coordinates action on priority challenges through Task Groups. It serves as a key link to Government for policy dialogue. The HEF developed the **Heritage Sector Resilience Plan 2022-24** to support sector recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and build future resilience. One action from this plan was the creation of a cross-sector forum to address skills challenges, resulting in the establishment of the **Historic Environment Skills Forum**, which **operates independently** but maintains close liaison with HEF.

In 2025, HEF published a new ten-year Resilience Plan with four pillars: Financial, Physical, Workforce & Organisational, and Relevance. The plan highlights the importance of skills capacity, progression, and diversity, specifically supporting the Skills Forum and **HESCAPE** for heritage skills development. The HEF meanwhile is committed to strengthening organisational capabilities in management, delivery, finance, digital, environmental, and interpersonal skills to ensure long-term sector resilience and relevance.

2. The Employment & Skills Landscape in England

A quarter of heritage construction firms are experiencing skills shortages: with 15% having to turn down work on pre 1919 buildings due to lack of available knowledge and skills

Around a third of conservation organisations have reported challenges with recruitment, citing low overall numbers of applicants and low numbers meeting the requirements of jobs advertised

The largest Archaeological organisations are experiencing skills losses and have had to hire-in specialist skills in a range of areas as they do not have them in house

Technical skills are often not explicitly described in job descriptions and adverts, with employers relying on academic or professional qualifications as proxies



For over 10 years there have been increasing concerns from those working in the sector about both evidenced and perceived skills gaps and shortages; and how this poses a threat to the continued management, protection and conservation of the historic environment. It is also expected that the need for a wide range of specialist historic environment skills will only increase in the future; driven by things like increased public investment in building and infrastructure development; the impact of climate change on historic buildings and even things like increases in tourism.

In developing HESCAPE a range of research and labour market intelligence has been analysed; alongside primary data collection through workshops and surveys; in order to draw out the priorities presented in this document. A bibliography of these can be found in Appendix 2 but the following section highlights some key findings.

Those working in the historic environment sector come under a broad range of employment types; from directly employed in different sized organisations, to sole traders, to freelancers and beyond. They may be working full time or part time, have permanent contracts or move from project to project. There is no one dominant type of employment and there is variation across different employment type. This leads to a mixed picture with regards to career pathways and opportunities for skills development with challenges around recruitment and the need to buy-in specific skills.

ICON undertook labour market intelligence surveys in 2022¹ which showed that only a third of conservators work for a public sector or charity sector organisation with 41% being business owners or in private practice and 27% working as freelancers. Less than 50% of organisations employ just 1 conservation professional. Within this we see just over half working full time, but in a mix of contracted and permanent roles. Around a third of conservation organisations have reported challenges with recruitment, citing low overall numbers of applicants and low numbers meeting the requirements of jobs advertised.

The Local Authority Historic Environment Staffing Survey² provides the most detailed evidence regarding the workforce for heritage management within the planning system. There were, in 2023, around 800 full time staff working on heritage issues across the 300 plus local authorities in England; with an approximate 65:35 split between buildings conservation and archaeological roles. This is a loss of around 16 FTE posts since 2022, mostly within archaeology. Around a third of authorities have noted that most of their staff were in mid to late career which brings concerns about the trajectory of future retirement on capacity and skills levels.

The 2020 Profiling the Profession Survey³ for archaeology showed some more positive figures in that 88% of UK archaeologists are now on permanent contracts and 84% work full time. However, the organisations that employ the biggest percentage of all staff in the sector experienced skills losses and have had to hire-in specialist skills in a range of areas as they do not have them in-house. With regards to career stage, this information is not specifically highlighted however we can say that 15-20% of archaeologists have been working for the same organisation for their entire career and around a third working for the same organisation for over 10 years.

The 2024 Skills Needs Analysis⁴ reports the majority of organisations working on repair and maintenance of traditional buildings are micro businesses, employing between 1 and 9 people. The majority of these offer permanent (88%) and full time (97%) work contracts but the research suggests a workforce profile that is not particularly diverse. In particular, 43% of respondents

¹ <https://www.icon.org.uk/resource/conservation-labour-market-intelligence-june-2022.html>

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/la-staff-resources-2023/report-local-authority-staff-resources-2023/>

³ <https://profilingtheprofession.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/skills-needs-analysis-2024-repair-maintenance-retrofit-traditional-pre1919-buildings/>

noted over half their workforce was made up of people in the 45+ age group. A quarter of these respondents are experiencing skills shortages: with 15% having to turn down work on pre 1919 buildings due to lack of available knowledge and skills, yet over 60% do not employ either apprentices or trainees to work on pre 1919 buildings. Three quarters of respondents to this survey believed that skills shortages would get worse over the next three years.

In early 2024, Historic England commissioned the Heritage Alliance and Preservation Matters to investigate sector recruitment in the 2023 calendar year⁵. This research, whilst acknowledging it is based on a sample from a specific year, provides valuable insights into the current state of recruitment in the heritage sector, highlighting areas for improvement in both recruitment practices and skills development. Technical skills (i.e., the skills areas that HESCAPE is particularly interested in) are often not explicitly described in job descriptions and adverts, with employers relying on academic or professional qualifications as proxies. Similarly, job descriptions asking for specific knowledge from candidates in broad and ill-defined terms. For example, within heritage management and archaeological roles the most commonly requested areas of knowledge were "Heritage policy & legislation" and "British archaeology" respectively. This research identified over 50% of roles specifically requiring a degree (or equivalent) qualification, often with flexibility for equivalent experience but little or no guidance as to what would be seen as "equivalent".

The existing research gives us a broad overall picture of the sector workforce; and there are some areas with much more specific detail (referenced in other aspects of this document) but other areas where that detail is lacking. There is, for example, currently no clear overall picture of existing training provision for specialist historic environment skills. The sector is itself comprised of multiple occupational areas and there is a real mix of formal training and qualifications, CPD offers, and work-based learning opportunities available within the English Skills System; some of which have a focus on the historic environment, but many of which don't.

Further analysis of research has been used to identify the Priority Areas for Action within HESCAPE; but it is acknowledged that one such area is the ongoing need for more comprehensive and granular, and more consistent research and labour market intelligence around skills and careers.

⁵ https://khub.net/web/resiliencehub/resources/-/ddl_display/ddl/1080112516/939835164/maximized

3. A Model for Skills & Career Development

Historic England have developed a tiered model for work-based learning for the sector that allows us all to establish and invest in opportunities that support individuals at critical points in their careers. The model is designed to reach new sector entrants and to promote clear and sustainable early career progression in heritage. The model focuses on work-based training as research by the Centre for Economics and Business Research noted this approach would best alleviate sector skills gaps⁶.

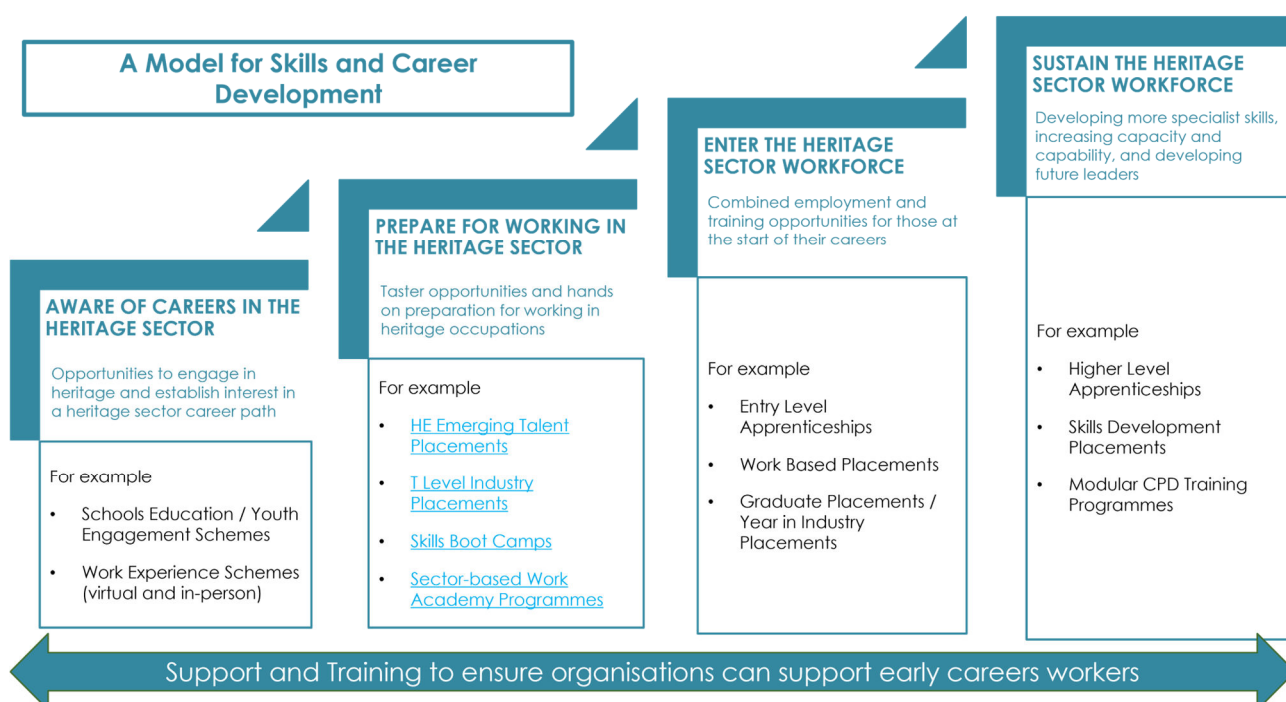


Fig. 2 Historic England Model for Skills and Career Development

The model can be applied to various parts of the sector, from building skills to archaeology, to architecture and historic environment advice. The model's adaptability means it can respond to emerging policy areas, new skills need, or regional training requirements, ensuring local skills provision meets local needs. Its tiered approach is easily aligned to the range of initiatives developed through government skills policy and can be used to promote effective use of these in historic environment occupations.

The Priority Areas for Action outlined in this plan should be delivered with consideration for this Model.

⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2019/skill-gaps-needs-in-the-heritage-sector-pdf/>

4. Strategic Objectives for Skills & Career Development



Historic Environment Specialist
Placement in Zooarchaeology
learning to identify animal bones
with their Mentor.
© Historic England

HESCAPE aims to address the strategic, system-level skills and career challenges facing the historic environment sector. It focuses collective effort on a set of priority issues identified through evidence and sector consensus in this iteration of the Action Plan, ensuring that limited resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact.

The Strategic Objectives below set out the long-term outcomes HESCAPE seeks to achieve across all occupational areas. They are drawn from shared strategic challenges agreed by the sector and provide a common direction of travel for coordinated action. These Objectives are not intended to be delivered through individual projects or activities in isolation, but through the combined and cumulative impacts of different types of intervention over time.

Subsequent sections of this Action Plan describe how **Priority Areas for Action** and associated **Activities** contribute to meeting these Strategic Objectives, recognising that progress will be incremental, overlapping and delivered through a range of approaches rather than a single linear route.

- SO1. Develop and enable a broader range of pathways into historic environment roles.
- SO2. Reduce the barriers to cohesive career progression that currently exist for historic environment roles.
- SO3. Improve the perception of and recognition of historic environment roles; including addressing issues such as limited levels of qualification and accreditation in some areas; and perceptions of elitism in others.
- SO4. Invest in building the capacity and capability of sector employer organisations to deliver work-based training.
- SO5. Support the development of capacity and capability building initiatives for formal training providers to enable them to better deliver the knowledge and skills employers need from their current and future workforce.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Skills Forum openly acknowledges that the historic environment sector workforce is not representative of the communities we work in across England.

We believe that improving career entry and ongoing development will in-itself assist in making the sector more diverse and provide greater equity for individuals from all backgrounds.

Rather than setting a single specific action to “address diversity”; we believe that all Activities should identify barriers to inclusion and seek to counter these.

Diversity and Inclusion should be a “golden thread” that runs throughout the Priority Areas for Action within HESCAPE.

5. High Priority Historic Environment Skills



Trainees learn to cut a mortice using chisel and mallet in a carpentry workshop at the Heritage Building Skills Summer School.
© Historic England

The Skills Forum has identified the following Skills as current highest priority areas nationally. These face the largest or most immediate challenges in terms of gaps or shortages that can be evidenced through data, such as labour market intelligence.

These High Priority Skills do not direct, constrain or rank delivery under this Action Plan. The Priority Areas for Action and Activities are deliberately skills-agnostic so that any organisation—whether working in archaeology, conservation, heritage construction, or Local Authority practice—can pick and apply the interventions that best fit their context. Delivery partners should therefore use the Actions first, and address whichever skills areas are most relevant to their work. However, when determining where to invest resource when this is limited, greater weight should be given to action which can particularly help build these **High Priority Historic Environment Skills**.

1. Skills for Retrofit (climate change adaptation in traditional buildings)

It has been estimated that an additional 86,500 workers will be needed each year up until 2050 to retrofit England's traditionally constructed buildings, in order to meet UK net zero targets⁷. These workers need the knowledge and skills to allow them to work appropriately on historic buildings.

Effective ongoing **repair and maintenance** of our historic building stock is a necessary precursor to retrofit, and so we consider the range of trade skills needed to undertake this to be part of this Priority; including, but not limited to, trades such as bricklaying, roofing, painting and decorating, stonemasonry and those skills referenced in Skills Area 2.

Additionally, **Local Authority historic environment teams** are seeing more casework involving decisions, advice or pre-applications enquiries about retrofit of historic buildings; with only 16% of authorities reporting in recent surveys that they were confident in making such decisions. There is a need to build these skills and increase confidence.

2. Traditional Skills in Plastering and Carpentry/Joinery

The 2024 Skills Needs Analysis⁸ indicates organisations are experiencing the largest national skills shortages in **carpentry and joinery and plastering**.

Just under **a third** of organisations **report skills gaps in carpentry and joinery** and around **a third** of organisations have **not been able to find appropriate skills training in plastering**. **One fifth** of organisations have **had to turn down plastering and carpentry/joinery work** due to **lack of available skills**.

There are however considerable regional differences in traditional construction craft skills needs and these should be clarified and responded to.

3. Post-excavation Specialist Skills (Archaeology)

The most recent "Profiling the Profession" and "State of the Archaeological Market" labour market intelligence reports for archaeology indicated employers see fieldwork (intrusive and non-intrusive) and **post-fieldwork analysis** as the 2 highest areas of skills shortage in that sector. Additionally, the top three skills areas that employers have needed to buy-in as it is not available to them in-house are in **conservation of materials**, fieldwork, and **post-fieldwork analysis**.

The research undertaken for the Scottish Skills Investment Plan has resulted in a number of skills profiles produced and the profile for archaeology **highlighted post-excavation specialist skills** as one of the areas with highest skills gaps and/or shortage. We can infer a similar profile for England, given the cross-nation operation of UK archaeological companies.

4. Industrial Heritage Conservation Skills

Industrial heritage represents a significant part of our shared cultural heritage; and many industrial collections remain an in-situ part of the historic environment.

⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/climate-change/delivering-net-zero-local-data-demand-for-retrofitting-skills/>

⁸ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/skills-needs-analysis-2024-repair-maintenance-retrofit-traditional-pre1919-buildings/>

However **less than 1% of ICON's Accredited members** report that they are **able to care for industrial heritage** collections.

Skills that relate to the **conservation of metals, engineering and mechanical objects** are in particular demand in this area.

There is also a need to obtain a more detailed understanding of the specific skills that are required within this area are, and the number of individuals who currently hold them.

5. Skills to Manage Change to the Historic Environment within Local Authorities

Local Authority historic environment staff bear a great deal of responsibility for heritage conservation across England. Local Authority Staffing Surveys provide evidence for increasing skills gaps and recruitment problems with **over 20% of authorities reporting skills gaps** and **over a third reporting problems in recruiting** for historic environment roles.

Data has also shown that the make-up of Local Authority historic environment teams is **heavily weighted** (between three quarters to 100%) **to individuals in their late career**, with a much smaller percentage of teams being early career. This highlights a need to mitigate against the **impact of future retirement** on capacity and skills.

Conservation Professionals, including **Conservation Officers** and Heritage Managers are listed on the **UK Skills Worker Visa list of eligible occupations**; demonstrating a demand for **such roles that is not being easily met** by the existing labour market.

Acknowledging Other Skills Areas

The High Priority Historic Environment Skills identified in this Action Plan reflect areas where there is currently the strongest and most consistent evidence of skills gaps or shortages at a national level. However, HESCAPE recognises that these do not represent the full breadth of specialist skills required to manage, protect and conserve the historic environment.

HESCAPE acknowledges that there are a number of niche and **highly specialist skills areas** where stakeholders **perceive emerging or acute skills challenges**, but where robust, **consistent national data is not yet available**. These include, but are not limited to, skills relating to the marine historic environment, such as **maritime archaeology, marine surveying and conservation**, and rural and land-based heritage crafts, including **thatching, dry stone walling, hedgelaying** and other traditional landscape skills.

The absence of comprehensive data does not imply that these skills are of lesser importance. Rather, it highlights **a limitation in the current evidence base** and reinforces the need for further research, intelligence-gathering and engagement with specialist organisations and networks. It should also be noted that **regional variations** in the High Priority Historic Environment Skills listed will still **need to be clarified and responded to**. These issues should be addressed through Priority Areas for Action 1.

HESCAPE is intentionally designed to remain open and adaptable, allowing Actions and Activities to be applied to any historic environment skills area where need is identified. Organisations working in specialist or niche fields are therefore encouraged to align relevant activity to the framework, even where their skills area is not explicitly listed as a current national priority. This will help build a clearer picture of demand, capacity and risk across the full spectrum of historic environment skills and inform future iterations of the Action Plan.

6. Priority Areas for Action & Activities



The Priority Areas for Action apply across all occupational areas in the sector.

Activities could be addressed by individual organisations in a specific occupational area; or by collaborators across and between occupational areas.

We expect organisations or sector collaborators to reflect this Action Plan in their own strategies and delivery plans.

These 4 **Priority Areas for Action** set out the types of intervention needed to strengthen skills and career development across the historic environment. They focus collective effort on areas where action is likely to have the greatest systemic impact, addressing both immediate pressures and longer-term change.

The **Priority Areas for Action** and associated **Activities** are deliberately designed to be skills-agnostic and applicable across multiple occupational and skills areas. While HESCAPE identifies a set of **High Priority Historic Environment Skills** where gaps and shortages are currently most acute, these are intended to guide where **effort should be weighted**, rather than to constrain delivery. The Actions and Activities are therefore intentionally flexible and may support delivery across the full range of historic environment skills, including those not explicitly identified as high priority.

Under the narratives for each Priority Area, we have set out a Logic Model for addressing it, which follows a linear progression:

Inputs: e.g. expertise, funding, employer and provider engagement, existing data etc. Inputs have been identified for the Area for Action as a whole.

Activities: These are clearly numbered and time-phased, with a defined split between **Year 1** and **Year 2** delivery. (Year 1 is the first year of this Action Plan, 2026.)

Outputs: Tangible, measurable deliverables that demonstrate progress for that specific Activity.

Impacts: Longer-term changes in workforce resilience, skills supply, and sector sustainability that undertaking the Activity would achieve.

Each of the **Activities** are further defined in **Appendix 1** through Activity Tables. These provide Key Performance Indicator/s for the activity and what expected stages of delivery might be. Some activities will have an organisation already leading work, or who are most appropriate to lead work, and these have been noted, however this does not mean that *only* those organisations can - or should - lead work.

There is no single approach to delivering an Activity and each Activity could be delivered multiple times in multiple occupational areas.

Priority Area 1: Develop the evidence base

Which Strategic Objective does this Priority Area Support?	
Primary	SO4 (employer capacity), SO5 (provider capability)
Secondary	SO1 (entry routes), SO2 (progression), SO3 (recognition/perception)
Why?	Better data, pipelines and training maps enable employers and providers to plan and target provision, and indirectly support entry, progression and recognition

The full make-up of the historic environment workforce is still not fully understood. In the development of HESCAPE efforts have been made to coordinate research across the various occupational areas within the sector to help quantify need and demand drivers for workforce skills. However, we wholeheartedly agree with the Scottish Skills Investment Plan's assertion that it is crucial to continue developing a system to capture more detailed and granular (regional) market intelligence, which can aid in workforce planning and provide a true picture of supply, demand, and workforce demographics.

Work is already taking place on the development of a "Red List" for Conservation skills at risk of being lost; similar in approach to the existing Red List of endangered craft skills collated by Heritage Crafts. This method should be endorsed and expanded out to other Priority Historic Environment Skills, such as archaeological specialisms. However, we also need more localised data.

As a sector we currently don't possess the ability to accurately profile heritage works pipeline at national, regional or even more local levels. Employers and training providers have noted that without such intelligence it is difficult for them to develop responsive skills and training delivery plans or to integrate in wider initiatives such government endorsed Local Skills Improvement Plans.

We need to look at developing a methodology/tool to intelligently profile heritage projects works pipelines at national, regional and local levels, and which allows organisations to undertake project level "skills audits". This would be beneficial to not only individual organisations but also, if adopted by multiple organisations and data sets aggregated, it has the potential to intelligently influence the local labour market and stimulate resilient skills training initiatives.

There is a need to fully map out the provision for skills development, both through formal qualifications and through more ad-hoc CPD provision, across all occupational areas in a consistent manner. This will allow us to better examine where gaps might be in terms of both content and geographic spread.

More consistent, structured regional skills networks would provide a useful mechanism for gathering and reporting on this intelligence.

Delivery and evidence will proceed in parallel: organisations should **not delay action** pending improved datasets; PA1 will **strengthen targeting over time**, but Activities across PA2–PA4 should **go ahead wherever need and partners exist**.

Inputs	Activities		Outputs: 6–24 months	Impacts: 2–5 years (related Strategic Objectives)
	Year 1	Year 2		
Sector expertise	1.1 Fully map existing sector workforce research, including frequency of collection		Database published	Better understanding of the existing sector workforce, improved targeting of funding for research, more regular and reliable data collection (SO4, SO5)
Funding for research and data collection	1.2 Develop digital platform for gathering sector intelligence that can be used across all parts of the sector, building on the Heritage LMI Toolkit.		Platform live and tested and made open source	Sector-wide adoption of evidence-based workforce planning (SO4, SO5)
Existing labour market intelligence and datasets	1.3 Commission/ undertake sector intelligence surveys which are structured to allow for regional breakdowns and utilise consistent approach (e.g. through Heritage LMI Toolkit/Digital Platform)		Priority occupational areas across the sector identified and at least 1 new survey commissioned	More responsive training and recruitment strategies (SO4, SO5)
Digital infrastructure for dashboards and surveys	1.4 Establish mechanisms for the ongoing collection and publication of heritage works pipelines at national and regional levels?		Feasibility study (externally funded) is published. Recommendations for methodology and ongoing management put into action	Organisations are able to plan work and skills training based on a known and reliable pipeline of upcoming works in their areas Heritage works are more visible as part of wider procurement. (SO4)
Engagement from employers, freelancers, and local authorities (inc. Strategic/Combined)	1.5 Develop a repeatable and adaptable methodology for auditing heritage skills required on projects, e.g. construction, archaeology etc		Multiple methodologies piloted	Improved targeting of funding and policy interventions (SO4, SO5)
	1.6 Collate and map live training provision for heritage skills across England; utilising key partners to provide local data and share insights	1.7 Create digital dashboard to map training provision and skills gaps (latter provided by LMI)	Clear picture of heritage skills training landscape available across more than 1 occupational area	Interactive dashboard live and used by sector partners for skills advocacy and to direct where interventions are best placed (SO5 primary, SO4 secondary)

Priority Area 2: Provide a broader range of opportunities for career-entry (inc. career changers)

Which Strategic Objective does this Priority Area Support?	
Primary	SO1 (entry routes), SO2 (progression)
Secondary	SO3 (recognition/perception), SO4 (employer capacity)
Why?	Structured placements, toolkits and shared apprenticeships expand and stabilise early routes; employer guidance increases confidence to host trainees.

Section 3 of this document outlines a simple tiered model for skills and career development and a focus on the Enter tier will have significant impact on skills and career challenges across the sector. Sector LMI raises concerns that at current rates new entrants to the sector will not replace the numbers leaving. We should therefore be prioritising looking at the opportunities for work-based training roles for career entrants. Attention should also be given to those individuals who may wish to change careers and join the historic environment workforce, rather than solely looking at those starting their first career. Heritage careers offer great opportunity for lifelong learning.

Shared Apprenticeship schemes already operate in sectors such as construction, where many employers struggle to take on apprentices for the full required time. These are known as “Flexi-Job Apprenticeships” and make use of approved Agencies who employ the apprentices and then place them with different host organisations. This issue of employers being unable to offer full term apprenticeships has been identified as a specific barrier to historic environment employers. Utilising this flexi-job apprenticeship model for historic environment organisations would result in the costs of employing an apprentice being shared between multiple companies and would also result in a well-rounded experience for the apprentice. Level 7 apprenticeships (commensurate with a Master’s degree) were a positive development for the sector, but since January 2026, government funding for formal training is unavailable for those over 21, except for care leavers or individuals with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Therefore, whilst Shared Apprenticeships contribute to this Action, they should not be the single activity undertaken here. Research has demonstrated that a healthy, sustainable skills ecosystem, needs a mix of initiatives. In recent years, the government’s Kickstart programme, which provided funding for 6 month work placements for 16-24 year olds on universal credit, was well received by the historic environment sector. Historic England managed a Gateway scheme which saw 30 sector organisations offer around 100 placements: with a number of those individuals securing further work on completion of placement. A key factor in the success of Kickstart for the sector was that it was operated as a structured programme, with a consistent delivery framework applied across placements. Providing funding for the placement salaries was also a fundamental success factor.

Building on previous successes and establishing a shared framework for delivering work-based learning placements applicable across all occupational areas will enable the sector to better embed work-based learning opportunities consistently.

Within this we also need to consider the capacity and capability of the existing workforce to deliver work-based teaching and training. We should therefore be looking to establish a training and support network for mid-late career workforce to develop teaching and training skills and identify opportunities to minimise the resource costs of providing this to employers.

Inputs	Activities		Outputs: 6–18 months	Impacts: 2–5 years (related Strategic Objectives)
	Year 1	Year 2		
Sector employers (especially SMEs and micro-businesses) Funding bodies and sponsors Existing workforce (mid-late career professionals) Training providers (inc. FE and HE) and mentors Outreach partners (job centres, community groups) Approved apprenticeship agencies Local Skills Improvement Plan leads Sector expertise and training providers	2.1 Launch a national heritage skills placement network, targeting underrepresented groups and career changers, with a shared framework and set of principles. This would use both individually held and pooled funding and have coordinated promotion.		Scheme established with financial contributors or other funding sources identified and delivery model designed.	Increased diversity and inclusivity in sector recruitment (SO1, SO3)
	2.2 Partner with national initiatives like Discover! Creative Careers and Go Construct! And/or the STEM Ambassador scheme, to promote roles in the historic environment	2.3 Run outreach campaigns with job centres, adult education providers; and/or education careers services	Wider and broader promotion of careers in heritage reaches thousands of potential entrants	Stronger pipeline of skilled entrants, reducing future shortages (SO1)
	2.4 Co-create a “Heritage Apprenticeship Toolkit” with input from employers, agencies, and training providers, disseminated sector-wide; focused on standards developed by Historic Environment Trailblazer		Toolkit published and widely used	Increased employer participation in apprenticeships, especially SMEs and microbusiness (SO4)
	2.5 Research and develop appropriate models for formal shared apprenticeships in the historic environment	2.6 Launch a Shared Apprenticeship Programme	Shared apprenticeship models defined (could vary depending on occupational areas) First heritage focused shared apprenticeship programme launched	Apprentices gain broader experience and skills, increasing completion rates (SO1, SO2) Sector employers recognise apprenticeships as a key entry route Growth in apprenticeship numbers (SO1, SO3)

Priority Area 3: Upskill the existing workforce to work appropriately with heritage assets (particularly in response to climate change interventions)

Which Strategic Objective does this Priority Area Support?	
Primary	SO2 (progression), SO3 (recognition/perception), SO4 (employer capacity)
Secondary	SO5 (provider capability)
Why?	Bootcamps/CPD/mentoring build competence and confidence for working with historic assets and retrofit; trainer networks increase capacity to deliver work-based learning

It has been estimated that an additional 86,500 workers will be needed each year up until 2050 to retrofit England's traditionally constructed buildings, in order to meet UK net zero targets⁹. We need to be building skills to support net zero mitigation, adaptation and sustainability within the historic environment; however, research has demonstrated that the current heritage focused construction workforce has little interest in entering the "Retrofit" market¹⁰. Attention therefore needs to be given to the mainstream construction sector to ensure that they have the opportunity to diversify their skillsets and the appropriate level of skills to undertake such work.

The sector should also seek opportunities to support skills development within Local Authority Planning and related teams, as well as those specialising in the historic environment, around decision making related to retrofit of historic buildings.

Outside of Retrofit specifically, there is a continued need to raise awareness, understanding and practical skills in conservation for the built environment, including for example, within industrial heritage, as well as building the skills needed to repair, maintain, and adapt historic buildings more broadly.

There is a growing workforce and skills need arising from the expansion of infrastructure and land-use projects focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Major programmes associated with energy efficiency and renewable technologies, flood and coastal resilience, landscape and land-use change, and nature-based solutions such as nature recovery will increasingly intersect with archaeological remains, historic landscapes and heritage assets below and beyond the built environment. This is also likely to have a particular workload impact on the post-excavation specialists within archaeology and an increased need to upskill archaeologists to develop specialisms.

We also need to consider the capacity and capability of the existing workforce to deliver teaching and training; including those private organisations who also offer training courses and experiences.

⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/climate-change/delivering-net-zero-local-data-demand-for-retrofitting-skills/>

¹⁰ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/skills-needs-analysis-2024-repair-maintenance-retrofit-traditional-pre1919-buildings/>

Whilst there is a specific need to focus on upskilling around climate change interventions, building development opportunities for the existing workforce as outlined in the Activities below will have a wider impact across the sector, helping to achieve the Strategic Objectives.

Inputs	Activities		Outputs: 6–24 months	Impacts: 2–5 years (related Strategic Objectives)
	Year 1	Year 2		
Heritage sector organisations and construction industry partners Funding for training initiatives (government, sector, philanthropic) Training providers (FE colleges, private trainers) Retrofit experts and mentors Digital platforms for blended learning	3.1 Develop and deliver Historic Environment Skills Bootcamps (online and hands-on) aimed at the construction sector		At least 2 Skills Bootcamp delivered and evaluated	Increased workforce confidence and competence for working with historic buildings, particularly around retrofit (SO2, SO3)
	3.2 Develop CPD training resources specifically for Local Authority planning staff on retrofit of historic buildings		CPD resources produced and in use by multiple Local Authorities	Improved quality and consistency of decision-making affecting historic buildings in retrofit and adaptation projects (SO3)
	3.3 Develop Mentoring Partnerships as a structured approach to delivering 1:1 Skills development		Structured mentoring model established with trained mentors and active mentees in a number of disciplines	Enhanced sector reputation as accessible, supportive and rewarding (SO3) Improved retention of skilled practitioner (SO2)
	3.4 Create and Coordinate a Support Network for existing heritage professionals delivering work-based training	3.5 Develop and deliver “train the trainer” programmes for the existing workforce to help build capacity and capability in providing work-based training	Active practitioner support network established; train-the-trainer programme delivered	Increased capacity and capability within the sector to deliver high-quality training and supervision (SO4)
		3.6 Develop a “Heritage Skills Challenge Fund” managed by a partnership of sector bodies, awarding grants for innovative training pilots led by more than one organisation	Fund established and governance arrangements agreed - first pilot projects funded	Improved energy efficiency, sustainability and climate resilience of historic buildings and heritage assets (SO3 primary, SO2 secondary)

Priority Area 4: Embed the historic environment into mainstream education and training

Which Strategic Objective does this Priority Area Support?	
Primary	SO1 (entry routes), SO5 (provider capability)
Secondary	SO3 (recognition/perception)
Why?	Enrichment toolkits, teacher CPD and curriculum influence normalise heritage within FE/skills pathways and improve provider capability to include heritage content.

Mainstream Further Education (FE) colleges delivering (Level 1&2) construction or planning sector training have no curriculum obligation to introduce specific instruction / content linked to Heritage Skills.

There is no specific provision for Archaeology or Conservation in mainstream Further Education (no qualifications/programmes exist in these areas outside of apprenticeships).

Some mainstream training providers show localised interest though and provide some high level, general signposting or facilitate engagement with regional Heritage Skills events/activities for students.

This is often cultivated by individual educators sympathetic to Heritage Skills and as such can be a 'postcode lottery'. Such engagement would be classified as a FE 'enrichment' activity and there are some excellent examples of where the enrichment stream has been effectively used.

Development of a national FE Heritage Skills Training Module Toolkit in partnership with local employers; which could be utilised across the country and used within the enrichment stream; could provide a more consistent approach to embed heritage into mainstream training than trying to effect major change to curriculums themselves.

Within this we also need to consider the capacity and capability of the existing workforce to develop and/or deliver teaching and training.

Feedback from existing early careers workers in the historic environment indicates that the lack of heritage within curriculum and within careers advice has created barriers for even those who managed to find their way to heritage careers.

Careers advice within schools is incredibly limited and it would have limited impact to invest considerable sector resource into trying to raise the profile of heritage careers here at this stage. Pre-16 education still contains a component of work experience and focusing first on this area may prove more profitable.

Historic England's Virtual Work Experience programme has attracted over 800 participants in the past 2 years, and this model should be considered as a template which could be utilised across all the sectors occupational areas. Such an initiative could also reach those individuals who may be looking to change career and move into heritage; as well as those younger people who are thinking about starting a career.

The Government's 2025 National Youth Strategy places strong emphasis on access to skills, work experience and clear pathways into employment for young people, particularly through enrichment activity and employer engagement. This creates opportunities to position the historic environment as a source of place-based learning, practical work experience and skills development within mainstream education and FE provision.

Inputs	Activities		Outputs: 6–18 months	Impacts: 2–5 years (related Strategic Objectives)
	Year 1	Year 2		
FE colleges, universities, schools, and training providers Sector organisations and heritage professionals Funding for curriculum development and outreach Teachers and education leaders, careers advisers Digital and physical resources for curriculum enrichment	4.1 Develop Heritage Curriculum Enrichment Toolkit and Resources Packs for schools/colleges		Multiple Toolkit and Resource Packs created and made open access via Skills Forum	Heritage careers and skills widely recognised in mainstream education (SO3)
		4.2 Building on Historic England Heritage Schools programme, design teacher and tutor CPD workshops on heritage careers co-hosted by sector partners, sharing expertise and resources.	Programme developed and first tranche of Teachers/tutors trained via CPD workshops	Increased uptake of heritage-related courses, apprenticeships and pathways (SO1)
		4.3 Expand on existing work experience schemes, with placements offered by a network of heritage organisations and local authorities	Individual schemes connected to ensure national coverage	More diverse and informed entrants to the sector (SO1, SO3)
	4.4 Integrate heritage modules into mainstream retrofit and (relevant) construction apprenticeships/qualifications		Heritage retrofit content embedded in retrofit apprenticeship standards	Stronger collaboration between heritage and mainstream construction sectors (SO3, SO5) Improved capability of educators /training providers to include heritage careers content (SO5)

7. The Action Plan in Summary

	Year 1	Year 2
Priority Area 1: Develop the evidence base	1.1 Fully map existing sector workforce research, including frequency of collection	
	1.2 Develop digital platform for gathering sector intelligence that can be used across all parts of the sector, building on the Heritage LMI Toolkit.	
	1.3 Commission/ undertake sector intelligence surveys which are structured to allow for regional breakdowns and utilize consistent approach (e.g. through Heritage LMI Toolkit/Digital Platform)	
	1.4 Establish mechanisms for the ongoing collection and publication of heritage works pipelines at national and regional levels	
	1.5 Develop a repeatable and adaptable methodology for auditing heritage skills required on projects, e.g. construction, archaeology etc.	
	1.6 Collate and map live training provision for heritage skills across England; utilising key partners to provide local data and share insights	1.7 Create digital dashboard to map training provision and skills gaps (latter provided by LMI)
Priority Area 2: Provide a broader range of opportunities for career-entry (inc. career changers)	2.1 Launch a national heritage skills placement network, targeting underrepresented groups and career changers, with a shared framework and set of principles. This would use both individually held and pooled funding and have coordinated promotion.	
	2.2 Partner with national initiatives like Discover! Creative Careers and Go Construct! And/or the STEM Ambassador scheme, to promote roles in the historic environment	2.3 Run outreach campaigns with job centres, adult education providers; and/or education careers services

	2.4 Co-create a “Heritage Apprenticeship Toolkit” with input from employers, agencies, and training providers, disseminated sector-wide; focused on standards developed by Historic Environment Trailblazer	
	2.5 Research and develop appropriate models for formal shared apprenticeships in the historic environment	2.6 Launch a Shared Apprenticeship Programme
Priority Area 3: Upskill the existing workforce to work appropriately with heritage assets (particularly in response to climate change interventions)	3.1 Develop and deliver Historic Environment Skills Bootcamps (online and hands-on) aimed at the construction sector	
	3.2 Develop CPD training resources specifically for Local Authority planning staff on retrofit of historic buildings	
	3.3 Develop Mentoring Partnerships as a structured approach to delivering 1:1 Skills development	
	3.4 Create and Coordinate a Support Network for existing heritage professionals delivering work-based training	3.5 Develop and deliver “train the trainer” programmes for the existing workforce to help build capacity and capability in providing work-based training
		3.6 Develop a “Heritage Skills Challenge Fund” managed by a partnership of sector bodies, awarding grants for innovative training pilots led by more than one organisation
Priority Area 4: Embed the historic environment into mainstream education and training	4.1 Develop Heritage Curriculum Enrichment Toolkit and Resources Packs for schools/colleges	
		4.2 Building on Historic England Heritage Schools programme, design teacher and tutor CPD workshops on heritage careers co-hosted by sector partners, sharing expertise and resources.
		4.3 Expand on existing work experience schemes, with placements offered by a network of heritage organisations and local authorities
	4.4 Integrate heritage modules into mainstream retrofit and (relevant) construction apprenticeships/qualifications	

8. Delivery, Monitoring & Reporting



Historic Environment Advice
Assistant apprentices learn how to
recognise different architectural
features in historic buildings
© Historic England

Delivery of HESCAPE relies on coordinated action across the historic environment sector, drawing on the strengths of national bodies, regional partnerships and individual organisations. The mechanisms set out below are designed to support collaboration, transparency and shared learning, while remaining flexible and proportionate to different organisational capacities and contexts.

HESCAPE is not intended to create a new layer of governance or reporting burden. Instead, it provides a shared framework through which existing and planned activity can be aligned, supported and monitored in a consistent and lightweight way.

Governance: Historic Environment Skills Forum Steering Group

The Historic Environment Skills Forum Steering Group has overall ownership of the HESCAPE document and responsibility for maintaining strategic oversight of its delivery. The Steering Group is chaired by Historic England and includes representation from across the core occupational areas of the historic environment sector, in line with the Forum's Terms of Reference.

The Steering Group will:

- maintain oversight of progress against the HESCAPE Priority Areas for Action and Activities
- review delivery updates on a regular basis
- use a RAG (red, amber, green) approach to highlight progress, emerging risks or areas requiring additional support
- agree any changes in emphasis or prioritisation in response to external factors, emerging evidence or delivery constraints

A dashboard approach will be used to provide a clear, accessible overview of activity across the Action Plan. Summary updates will be shared with the wider Skills Forum membership, and a formal progress update on HESCAPE will be published annually.

Delivering on Activities: Working Groups

Working Groups are a primary mechanism for collaborative delivery of HESCAPE activities. Members of the Historic Environment Skills Forum are encouraged to form Task and Finish Groups or time-limited Working Groups to take forward specific Activities or clusters of related work.

Working Groups may:

- focus on a specific occupational area (e.g. archaeology, heritage construction, conservation)
- work across multiple occupational areas where shared challenges or opportunities exist
- form in response to time-limited opportunities such as funding calls or policy developments

Groups are intended to be flexible and opportunity-led rather than fixed or permanent structures.

To support coordination and visibility, Working Groups are asked to register using the Skills Forum **Reporting Form**. This captures:

- which HESCAPE Activity or Activities the group is addressing
- a brief overview of the project and its current status
- group membership and a named Reporting Lead
- an indicative delivery timeline

The Reporting Lead will provide a short update every 6 months, allowing progress to be tracked and shared, barriers to be identified early, and learning to be disseminated across the sector.

Delivering on Activities: Individual Organisations

Individual organisations across the historic environment sector play a critical role in delivering HESCAPE through their own strategic planning, programme delivery and day-to-day activity.

Organisations are encouraged to identify where their existing or planned work aligns with the Priority Areas for Action and Activities set out in this Action Plan, and to deliver these in ways that best reflect their operational context, capacity and occupational focus. This may include piloting

new approaches, scaling up proven initiatives, or working in partnership with others to pool resources and expertise.

To support coordination and shared learning, organisations are asked to register relevant activity with the Historic Environment Skills Forum using the **Reporting Form**. This light-touch process enables individual organisations to outline how their activity contributes to HESCAPE, identify intended outputs and timescales, and share progress updates. This information supports sector-wide monitoring, helps reduce duplication, and allows successful approaches to be promoted, adapted or replicated elsewhere.

Delivery by individual organisations is therefore a core mechanism for turning HESCAPE's priorities into practical, place-based action that collectively strengthens skills and career pathways across the sector.

Delivering on Activities: Regional Heritage Skills Networks

It is proposed that Regional Heritage Skills Networks are established across the country to provide a mechanism for understanding and responding to the geographically specific nature of historic environment skills needs. These Networks are intended to:

- gather and share regional labour market intelligence
- identify local priorities and opportunities for skills development
- support coordination between employers, training providers, funders and local authorities

In this sense, these regional networks can act as local mobilising arms for the national Historic Environment Skills Forum, and feed into the national Steering Group.

A template Terms of Reference for Regional Heritage Skills Networks has been created and is available in the Skills Forum Online Community document library.

Each Regional Heritage Skills Network is expected to develop its own Action or Activity Plan. These plans should clearly reference how the Network is contributing to one or more of the HESCAPE Priority Areas for Action and should focus on areas of greatest local need or opportunity, including the availability of regional or devolved funding.

Networks will share their delivery plans with the Steering Group and provide progress updates on a six-monthly basis.

Proposed geographic breakdown of these networks is as follows; however, it is accepted that development of Networks may not align exactly to these areas.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • London (Network established as of February 2026) | • North East & Yorkshire |
| • North West (Network in development as of February 2026) | • East Midlands |
| • East of England (Network in Norfolk established as of February 2026) | • West Midlands |
| | • South East |
| | • South West |

Reporting on Activity

Monitoring and reporting under HESCAPE is designed to be proportionate and enabling, focusing on learning and impact rather than compliance.

Reporting focuses on **mapping existing or planned activity** to Actions and Activities, rather than creating additional administrative burden.

Shared tools are intended to make it easier to demonstrate collective progress, reduce duplication of effort, and strengthen the evidence base for skills needs and interventions.

- **Working Groups and Individual Organisations** will submit an initial delivery outline via the **Reporting Form** and provide brief updates through the same mechanism; twice a year on a 6 monthly basis.
Organisations are not asked to report on everything they do, only on activity they choose to align with HESCAPE.
- **Regional Heritage Skills Networks** will provide progress updates every six months against their agreed plans.

Updates should:

- reference the relevant HESCAPE Priority Areas for Action
- outline progress achieved since the previous update
- highlight any barriers, risks or support needs
- identify emerging outputs, outcomes or learning

Upon completion of an Activity or project, Reporting Leads should notify the Steering Group.

Where appropriate, outputs such as reports, toolkits or case studies should be uploaded to the Resilience Hub and shared via the Skills Forum online community to support wider sector learning and reuse.

How to Align your Project to HESCAPE

This guide explains how individual projects or programmes can align with HESCAPE. Alignment is voluntary and proportionate and is intended to help demonstrate how diverse activity across the sector contributes to shared skills priorities. You do not need to change how you deliver your work to align with HESCAPE.

Projects aligned to HESCAPE are not required to focus *only* on the High Priority Skills Areas. Activities are intended to be flexible and can be used wherever they best address historic environment skills needs.

Step 1: Identify the most relevant Priority Area

Start by identifying which HESCAPE Priority Area best reflects the main aim of your project or programme. You only need to select one primary Priority Area, even if your work contributes to others. For example:

A Local Authority retrofit CPD programme → Priority Area 3: Upskill the existing workforce

A heritage building crafts apprenticeship scheme → Priority Area 2: Career-entry training roles

Step 2: Select the Activity that best fits

Within your chosen Priority Area, select the Activity that most closely matches what you are delivering.

- You are not expected to deliver an Activity exactly as written.

- Activities describe types of intervention, not fixed project designs.
- If more than one Activity could apply, choose the closest fit.

Examples:

A mentoring scheme for early-career archaeologists could align to Activity 3.3: Develop Mentoring Partnerships.

A training programme for planners on historic building retrofit could align to Activity 3.2: CPD training for Local Authority staff.

Step 3: Define your delivery context

To help build a national picture, you will be asked to identify the context in which your project sits.

This typically includes:

- Geography (region, Combined Authority area, or national)
- Occupational or thematic focus (e.g. archaeology, building conservation, crafts, marine heritage, industrial heritage)
- Primary audience (e.g. career entrants, career changers, existing workforce, educators, Local Authority staff)

This information is used to understand coverage and gaps, not to assess or rank projects.

Step 4: Map your outputs to HESCAPE outcomes

You do not need to adopt new performance measures. Instead:

- Identify the outputs you already plan to deliver (e.g. number of trainees, workshops delivered, qualifications achieved)
- Map these to the Outputs or Impacts described in the relevant HESCAPE logic model

If the wording does not align perfectly, use best fit. For example:

- “12 practitioners completed retrofit CPD” contributes to Improved capability of the existing workforce
- “3 organisations collaborated on shared placements” contributes to Increased collaboration and access to training opportunities

Step 5: Record and update your aligned activity

Aligned projects can be recorded using the shared HESCAPE reporting mechanism (e.g. a digital dashboard or short template). Reporting is intended to be, light-touch, proportionate and focused on alignment, not detailed project management. You are only asked to report on activity you choose to align with HESCAPE.

Step 6: Continue delivering as normal

Once aligned:

- You continue to deliver your project as planned
- You remain responsible for your own governance, funding and evaluation
- HESCAPE does not direct, approve or quality-assure delivery

Alignment simply ensures your work sits within a shared national framework, contributes to a collective evidence base and can be recognised as part of a co-ordinated sector response.

9. Evaluating HESCAPE



Historic Environment Specialist Placement in Archaeological Conservation and their Mentor examining material recovered from a shipwreck. © Historic England

HESCAPE is a sector-wide alignment framework, not a single delivery programme. Success is therefore defined by collective uptake, coordinated action and demonstrable impact, rather than by completing every activity in the Action Plan. Evaluation of HESCAPE's success will be based on:

1. Sector Adoption and Alignment

HESCAPE is successful when it is **actively used** by organisations across the historic environment sector to shape, align and evidence their work. Success looks like:

- A growing number of **national bodies, regional networks and individual organisations** explicitly aligning projects and programmes to HESCAPE Priority Areas and Activities.
- Clear evidence of **uptake across multiple occupational areas** (archaeology, heritage construction, conservation, Local Authority practice) and **across regions**.
- HESCAPE being referenced in **strategies, funding bids, partnership proposals and business plans** as the shared national framework for heritage skills.

2. Delivery of Priority Outputs (Short-term: 6–24 months)

HESCAPE is successful when priority actions translate into **tangible, visible outputs** that strengthen the skills system. Success looks like:

- A **clearer national and regional evidence base**, including live data on workforce profiles, skills gaps, training provision and heritage works pipelines.
- **New and expanded entry routes** into the sector, particularly for under-represented groups and career changers (e.g. placements, apprenticeships, shared models).
- **Practical upskilling offers** in place for the existing workforce, especially in response to climate change impacts and mitigations for the historic environment.
- Heritage skills increasingly **embedded in mainstream education and training**, through enrichment resources, CPD for educators, work experience and curriculum influence.

3. Collective Impact on the Workforce (Medium-term: 2–5 years)

HESCAPE is successful when aligned activity contributes to **measurable improvements in workforce resilience and capability**. Success looks like:

- Stronger and more sustainable **pipelines of skilled entrants**, reducing recruitment pressures in priority skills areas.
- Improved **confidence, competence and consistency** among professionals working with historic assets, including planners, construction workers and specialists.
- Greater **capacity within employers** (including SMEs and micro-businesses) to deliver work-based training and progression.
- Early signs of improved **diversity, equity and inclusion**, with barriers to entry and progression actively identified and reduced across activities.

4. Effective Coordination, Monitoring and Learning

HESCAPE is successful when it enables the sector to **see itself more clearly** and to learn collectively. Success looks like:

- A functioning, **light-touch reporting system**, with regular updates from working groups, regional networks and aligned organisations.
- A shared **dashboard view** showing where activity is happening, where gaps remain, and where collaboration could add value.
- Annual progress updates that demonstrate **breadth of engagement, emerging outcomes and learning**, rather than compliance or performance management.
- The ability for the Skills Forum Steering Group to **adapt priorities** in response to new evidence, funding opportunities or policy change.

5. A Stronger Skills System, Not a Finished Plan

Ultimately, HESCAPE is successful if, by 2028:

- The historic environment sector is **better coordinated, better evidenced and better positioned** to respond to future skills challenges.
- Organisations are **working more strategically together**, rather than duplicating effort in isolation.
- HESCAPE is seen as a **useful, trusted and practical framework** that supports action — and is ready to be refreshed for the next phase.

10. Appendices



Cohort and staff members at Historic England Emerging Talent Placement Welcome Event 2025 at Canon Bridge House, London © Historic England Ar-

Appendix 1: Activity Tables

There is no single approach to delivering an Activity and each Activity could be delivered multiple times in multiple occupational areas. They could be addressed by individual organisations in a specific occupational area, or by collaborators across and between occupational areas.

The following Activity Tables provide an indicative overview of what is needed and how an Activity may run. The activity tables offer a structured summary of the essential elements, resources, and steps required to deliver each activity, helping guide organisations or collaborators through the process across various occupational areas.

Activity Table Template

Activity	<i>No. and name of Activity – taken from Logic Models</i>
Lead Organisation	<i>Some activities we know will have an organisation already leading work or are most appropriate to lead work. If an activity has a named organisation lead, please contact them first if you would like to get involved in the activity; for example, you may want to take a lead on delivering it within a specific occupational area of the sector or within a different region. Otherwise, the activity is classified as Open.</i>
Resources Required	<i>What we already anticipate this will need - working out how to access these resources will impact the Key Stages</i>
Key Performance Indicator/s	<i>How we are going to measure if this activity is on track or not</i>
Key Stages	<i>Outlining a basic set of actions needed for how this activity can move forward</i>

Priority Area 1: Develop the evidence base

Activity	1.1 Fully map existing sector workforce research including frequency of collection
Lead Organisation	Historic England
Resources Required	Project lead and researcher time (possible research grant funding), access to past/ongoing workforce research and datasets, data management and cataloguing tools
Key Performance Indicator/s	Published catalogue of sector workforce research (with metadata and update cycles)
Key Stages	• Define scope • Identify key stakeholders/owners of data • Define metadata standards and develop data capturing template • Identify and obtain data sets • Review for relevance, quality, methodology, and data completeness and note frequency of collection • Build a searchable, standardised catalogue

Activity	1.2 Develop digital platform for gathering sector intelligence that can be used across all parts of the sector, building on the Heritage LMI Toolkit
Lead Organisation	Historic England
Resources Required	Funding for platform development, sector data access, IT support, stakeholder engagement
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of organisations contributing data to the Platform
Key Stages	• Scope platform requirements • Engage sector partners • Develop and test platform • Launch and promote platform

Activity	1.3 Commission/ undertake sector intelligence surveys which are structured to allow for regional breakdowns and utilise consistent approach (e.g. through Heritage LMI Toolkit/Digital Platform)
Lead Organisation	Historic England CifA ICON IHBC
Resources Required	Research funding; researcher time
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of surveys completed; regional coverage; response rate; actionable insights generated
Key Stages	• Design survey instruments • Identify target respondents • Distribute surveys and collect responses • Analyse data and report findings • Develop dashboard framework • Populate dashboard with initial data • Train partners to update and maintain dashboard

Activity	1.4 Establish mechanisms for the ongoing collection and publication of heritage works pipelines at national and regional levels
Lead Organisation	Historic England
Resources Required	External funding; sector partner and wider stakeholder engagement; access to project data (public and privately held)
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of stakeholders engaged; feasibility study completed; ongoing delivery implemented
Key Stages	• Procurement of consultant to carry out the feasibility study • Key stakeholders have been engaged • Modelling of approaches and testing with stakeholders • Recommendations on scope and methodology • Recommendations for ongoing management models and funding • Implementation by relevant partners based on recommendations

Activity	1.5 Develop a repeatable and adaptable methodology for auditing heritage skills required on projects, e.g. construction, archaeology etc
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Research funding; researcher time; access to project data (public and privately held)
Key Performance Indicator/s	Publication of a recommended, adaptable audit method
Key Stages	• Define scope • Review existing audit methodologies from occupational area • Develop draft audit framework and testing tools • Pilot methodology with a sample of live and completed projects • Refine approach following sector consultation • Publish recommended methodology and guidance for use across the sector

Activity	1.6 Collate and map live training provision for heritage skills across England; utilising key partners to provide local data and share insights
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Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Data collection templates and guidance for partners; digital system; researcher resource
Key Performance Indicator/s	% of regions with mapped provision by occupational area
Key Stages	• Define scope • Identify named regional partners to supply local data • Build and populate the registry; validate entries • Produce spatial analysis • Establish ongoing maintenance and review

Activity	1.7 Create digital dashboard to map training provision and skills gaps (latter provided by LMI)
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Digital infrastructure, data sources, partner organisations, technical support
Key Performance Indicator/s	Percentage of regions represented in the dashboard and reports; number of partners updating data; dashboard usage statistics
Key Stages	• Identify data partners • Develop dashboard framework • Populate dashboard with initial data • Train partners to update and maintain dashboard

Priority Area 2: Provide a broader range of opportunities for career-entry (inc. career changers)

Activity	2.1 Launch a national heritage skills placement network targeting underrepresented groups and career changers, with a shared framework and set of principles. This would use both individually held and pooled funding and have coordinated promotion
Lead Organisation	Historic England
Resources Required	Placement funding, sector partner coordination, promotional materials
Key Performance Indicator/s	No of organisational members within Network Number of placements provided Demographic breakdown of recipients Retention rate of trainees and career changers after 12 months
Key Stages	• Design common principles each member of Network should agree to follow • Design mechanisms for shared promotion • Develop approach/processes for sharing funding across Network where appropriate • Secure Network Partners • Secure funding where appropriate • Promote opportunities • Monitor placements and outcomes

Activity	2.2 Partner with national initiatives like Discover! Creative Careers and Go Construct! And/or the STEM Ambassador scheme, to promote roles in the historic environment
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Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Promotional materials summarising roles and pathways; and links between
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of national initiatives formally partnered with Increase in traffic to heritage-related careers pages via partner platforms Number of heritage roles featured or updated in partner career directories
Key Stages	• Develop shared key messages • Update careers content for heritage occupations on Creative Careers Service/Go - Construct website

Activity	2.3 Run outreach campaigns with job centres, adult education providers; and/or education careers services
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Promotional materials, partnerships with job centres and education providers
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of individuals engaged
Key Stages	• Coordinate sector activity for Creative Carers Month • Establish Heritage Careers Week England, to run parallel to Scottish Heritage Careers Week

Activity	2.4 Co-create a “Heritage Apprenticeship Toolkit” with input from employers, agencies, and training providers, disseminated sector-wide; focused on standards developed by Historic Environment Trailblazer
Lead Organisation	CifA (for Archaeology and Heritage Management) London Regional Heritage Skills Network (for heritage in construction)
Resources Required	Toolkit development team, funding for any hard copy publications
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of organisations using the Apprenticeship Toolkit (or downloads of it?)
Key Stages	• Gather sector input • Develop toolkit content • Disseminate toolkit • Track usage

Activity	2.5 Research and develop appropriate models for formal shared apprenticeships in the historic environment
Lead Organisation	Open (could be different models depending on occupational area)
Resources Required	Research funding, sector consultation
Key Performance Indicator/s	Model designed
Key Stages	• Commission research into Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agencies model to determine needs, opportunities and barriers and recommendations for how to apply to heritage sector • Consult with sector stakeholders • Develop models and test with sector stakeholders

Activity	2.6 Launch a Shared Apprenticeship Programme
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Programme delivery team; funding to support apprentice salaries
Key Performance Indicator/s	No. of organisations engaged with scheme
Key Stages	• Launch scheme based on most appropriate model • Promote and monitor adoption

Priority Area 3: Upskill the existing workforce to work appropriately with heritage assets (particularly in response to climate change interventions)

Activity	3.1 Develop and deliver Historic Environment Skills Bootcamps (online and hands-on) aimed at the construction sector
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Recognised delivery partners (e.g. FE college), access to bootcamp funding from local authorities, employers who would be able to provide roles or interviews afterwards
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of Bootcamps delivered and geographic spread Number of professionals trained (by sector and region)
Key Stages	• Gain Local Authority Skills Lead Agreement • Identify Delivery Partners • Establish employer pool to provide interviews/roles • Develop bootcamp programme • Recruit participants • Deliver bootcamp • Evaluate and refine programme

Activity	3.2 Develop CPD training resources specifically for Local Authority planning staff on retrofit of historic buildings
Lead Organisation	Historic England
Resources Required	Subject matter experts, training materials, funding for delivery
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of professionals trained Post-training evaluation: percentage of participants reporting increased confidence/skills
Key Stages	• Identify priority needs on this topic • Develop CPD resources • Deliver training • Collect and analyse feedback

Activity	3.3 Develop Mentoring Partnerships as a structured approach to delivering 1:1 Skills development
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Guidance materials on mentoring partnerships; funding for remuneration of time

Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of partnerships established
Key Stages	• Define mentoring objectives, codes of conduct, and eligibility • Recruit mentors/mentees via institutes and employer networks • Match pairs and provide onboarding materials • Run programme in cohorts (6–12 months); provide check-ins • Evaluate outcomes

Activity	3.4 Create and Coordinate a Support Network for existing heritage professionals delivering work-based training
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	network coordination, digital platform, funding for in-person networking
Key Performance Indicator/s	Network activity levels
Key Stages	• Define network purpose and membership (trainers, supervisors, assessors) • Launch digital community space (forums, resource library, events) • Programme quarterly practice exchanges and clinics • Curate and publish shared teaching resources and case studies • Track engagement; adjust offer based on feedback

Activity	3.5 Develop and deliver “train the trainer” programmes for the existing workforce to help build capacity and capability in providing work-based training
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Training materials, funding for venue or online course creation and distribution (inc. any assessment)
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of individuals completing programmes
Key Stages	• Define trainer competencies • Design delivery mechanisms and materials • Pilot with employers/providers; refine assessment • Roll out nationally via sector partners and FE/private providers • Track completions and on-the-job training quality gains

Activity	3.6 Develop a “Heritage Skills Challenge Fund” managed by a partnership of sector bodies, awarding grants for innovative training pilots led by more than one organisation
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Fund management team, grant application process, sector outreach
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of pilot projects funded through Challenge Fund Average cost per trainee
Key Stages	• Set up fund governance • Identify and attract funding • Promote fund to sector bodies • Review and award pilot project grants

Priority Area 4: Embed the historic environment into mainstream education and training

Activity	4.1 Develop Heritage Curriculum Enrichment Toolkit and Resources Packs for schools/colleges
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Curriculum developers, sector experts, funding for resource creation
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number and spread of Toolkits and Resources Packs created Number of FE colleges adopting the Packs (cumulative)
Key Stages	• Develop toolkit content • Engage schools and colleges • Distribute resources • Monitor adoption

Activity	4.2 Building on Historic England Heritage Schools programme, design teacher and tutor CPD workshops on heritage careers co-hosted by sector partners, sharing expertise and resources.
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Workshop facilitators, training materials, sector partner support
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of teachers/tutors trained
Key Stages	• Identify priority skills and knowledge areas where teachers require support • Design workshop content in collaboration with sector partners • Pilot CPD sessions with selected schools/colleges • Roll out national programme

Activity	4.3 Expand on existing work experience schemes, with placements offered by a network of heritage organisations, museums, and local authorities
Lead Organisation	Open
Resources Required	Funding; programme coordination, digital platform
Key Performance Indicator/s	Number of work experience placements offered Increase in student interest in heritage careers (pre/post intervention survey)
Key Stages	• Coordinate with sector partners • Engage with national initiatives such as those run by the Careers Enterprise Company • Identify platforms through which to jointly promote work experience opportunities • Monitor student interest • Evaluate outcomes

Activity	4.4 Integrate heritage modules into mainstream retrofit and (relevant) construction apprenticeships/qualifications
Lead Organisation	Historic England
Resources Required	Curriculum/Standard development expertise, collaboration with apprenticeship Trailblazer groups, Access to relevant Skills England representatives

Key Performance Indicator/s	Percentage of mainstream retrofit and construction apprenticeships/qualifications that include specific reference to heritage within standard/curriculum
Key Stages	• Identify suite of Standards/Qualifications and their existing references to heritage • Identify review cycles and other opportunities to influence design of quals/standards • Join relevant Trailblazer or equivalent groups and feed into design and review processes

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Heritage Building Skills trainee undertaking conservation and restoration of a mosaic floor. © Historic England

HESCAPE 1.5

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