



# Introduction

Through our advocacy work, we seek to lead and steer audiences to make our words, ideas, evidence, and proposals their own and to act on them. Icon wants audiences to understand, engage with, be convinced by and to take ownership of the messages presented in this document. We believe this will support our vision for cultural heritage to be valued and accessible and for its future to be enhanced and safeguarded by excellence in conservation.

All those who share Icon's values and commitment to conservation – ranging from Icon staff and members to the general public – are encouraged to use the following arguments to advocate on behalf of cultural heritage conservation. You can read more about how Icon advocates and ways to get in involved in our Advocacy Framework.

1

Conservation preserves cultural heritage, facilitating public access and enjoyment and enabling cultural heritage to maximise its economic and social value.

2

Conservation is a source of economic prosperity and growth, contributing to business, industry and employment. It is a highly interconnected sector with multiple economic activities dependent and embedded within it.

3

Conservation is a highly skilled and cross-disciplinary practice that links the arts, humanities, social science, science and technology. It delivers fundamental skills and learning, contributing to education, the advancement of knowledge and innovation across sectors.

4

Conservation supports healthier and longer lives and contributes to the wellbeing of communities by facilitating meaningful engagement with our cultural heritage.

5

Conservation contributes to cultural diplomacy and soft power through the sector's international reputation and its support of world-leading industries.

6

Conservation can support communities dealing with climate change through direct rescue and refuge but also by helping to inform environmental action by building understanding of materials and change and promoting principles of sustainability.

7

Professional accreditation guarantees our shared cultural heritage is cared for, protected and preserved by fully qualified and capable professionals, providing assurances to the public and clients.

8

Accreditation demonstrates the professionalism of practitioners supporting business and employment and fostering the respect of peers.

# Cultural Heritage

Conservation preserves cultural heritage, facilitating public access and enjoyment and enabling cultural heritage to maximise its economic and social value.

## The Message

- Conservation physically saves cultural heritage, allowing for items to be displayed, researched and used.
- Conservation protects the values and significance of cultural heritage.
- Conservation helps us to understand our cultural heritage by increasing knowledge of its physical and intangible characteristics.
- Preserving the full breadth of heritage – including artworks, architecture, archaeology and ranging from the built environment to collections – requires a unique and diverse set of skills and specialisms.

## The Evidence

Cultural heritage is vulnerable to a range of threats and harmful agencies. 1

Conservators protect and treat the tangible characteristics of cultural heritage using their expert hands-on technical and decision-making skills, to mitigate and reduce these harms. 2

Decisions about treatments and interventions are based on an assessment of cultural heritage, including its significance and cultural, historic and spiritual contexts. 3

Conservation is based on comprehensive research into materials, deterioration causes, interventions, treatments, cultural significance, history and social values. 4

Conservators disseminate knowledge acquired through their work to lay and expert audiences. 5

Our conservation sector possesses skills across specialisms, including in book and paper, metals, ceramics, glass, and time-based media. 6

The many aspects of conservation include investigation, documentation, preventive care, remedial treatment, packaging, display, cleaning, repair and restoration. 7



## The Objective

### We will

- Advocate the importance of professional conservation skills to preserving our shared cultural heritage.
- Collaborate with the cultural heritage sector to ensure conservation is included within the wider heritage debate and represented within collective messaging.
- Promote the diversity of heritage and drive parity between moveable cultural heritage and the historic environment.

### We urge decision makers to

- Recognise the interconnections between cultural heritage and conservation by explicitly including conservation within heritage debates, strategies and policies.
- Celebrate the diversity of heritage by committing equal support for built and moveable heritage in strategies and policies.



# The Economy, Business and Industry

Conservation is a source of economic prosperity and growth, contributing to business, industry and employment. It is a highly interconnected sector with multiple economic activities dependent and embedded within it.

## The Message

- Conservation is a source of economic prosperity, providing services and goods and contributing to national GDP.
- Conservation contributes to national employment by creating jobs.
- Conservation contributes to varied and dispersed employment, distributing the value of skills, jobs, investment and innovation across sectors and the UK.
- Conservation fosters a diverse business environment through its division of employment between medium, small and micro-sized businesses. Businesses led by Icon accredited conservators can be sourced using the Conservation Register.
- Conservation supports local business and investment by preserving heritage assets that act as important “pull” factors to places and catalysts for economic revival.
- By preserving and enabling access to heritage, conservation maximises the economic value of industries like tourism, the creative industries and the cultural sector.

## The Evidence

- The cultural heritage sector, of which conservation is a part, has a total GVA of £29 bn (= 2% of national GVA).<sup>8</sup>
- Heritage directly provides 196,000 jobs, employing 11,000 conservation professionals. Moveable heritage conservation employs 4,250 people.<sup>9</sup>
- Conservation is spread across the public, private and civil society sectors. Most employers are in London and South-West England but conservators work across UK nations and regions.<sup>10</sup>
- 84% of conservation workplaces have five or fewer conservators.<sup>11</sup>
- Small businesses are vital to economic wellbeing and to the social fabric of places.<sup>12</sup>
- The density of heritage assets is positively related to the concentration of firms in a local economy and the overall movement of businesses into an area.<sup>13</sup>
- Heritage generates £16.9 bn through visits and trips in England alone.<sup>14</sup>
- The better performance of the creative industries has been linked to a greater density of heritage assets.<sup>15</sup>



## The Objective

### We will

- Advocate the value of conservation to the economy, business and industry.
- Foster understanding of the interconnected nature of conservation and how it enables industries to maximise their value.
- Raise awareness of the Conservation Register as an effective resource for finding businesses providing conservation services.
- Research and investigate the conservation workforce to understand its composition and economic contribution.

### We urge decision makers to

- Champion the cultural heritage and conservation industry nationally and internationally.
- Protect vital National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and Arts Council funding for cultural heritage.
- Attract more investment in conservation and deliver changes that improve conditions for philanthropy and giving.
- Deliver a Sector Deal for heritage to increase sector productivity and stimulate growth.



# Skills, Learning and Innovation

Conservation is a highly skilled and cross-disciplinary practice that links the arts, humanities, social science, science and technology. It delivers fundamental skills and learning, contributing to education, the advancement of knowledge and innovation across sectors.

## The Message

- An education in conservation contributes to a future-proof workforce through a high level of professional training and the delivery of creative and crafts skills.
- Conservation delivers skills in maths and technical education, helping to address the national shortage of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills.
- Research questions relating to the interpretation, management and preservation of cultural heritage drive innovation in science and technology.
- Conservation preserves the source material of our future artists and cultural professionals, driving innovation across the arts and creative industries.
- The sector's predominantly female workforce stands as an example for women in the sciences, encouraging greater gender parity within the field.

## The Evidence

78% of professional conservators hold at least one degree, with 46% holding postgraduate qualifications. <sup>16</sup>

The least automatable occupations require professional training, with a high portion of creative jobs being resistant to automation. <sup>17</sup>

A portion of conservation higher education is delivered through BSc and MSc courses, while entry requirements for conservation apprenticeships emphasise science subjects. <sup>18</sup>

The government's Industrial Strategy outlines the need to tackle shortages of STEM skills for a range of industries from manufacturing to the arts. <sup>19</sup>

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The Heritage Alliance's set of case studies illustrates the ways in which heritage underpins the success of the creative industries. <sup>21</sup>

65% of professional conservators are women, compared to the 22% in core STEM occupations nationally. <sup>22</sup>

## The Objective

### We will

- Showcase the multidisciplinary nature of conservation and advocate its benefits to learning and skills delivery.
- Promote the broad range of exciting careers within the cultural heritage sector.
- Research and investigate the skills of the conservation workforce.

### We urge decision makers to

- Protect the infrastructure of conservation education through support for alternative entry routes and vocal backing for higher education conservation courses.
- Support a sustainable workforce by funding projects that build sector capacity, develop skills and deliver diversity.
- Establish parity between STEM and creative subjects in national curricula.





# People and Communities

Conservation supports healthier and longer lives and contributes to the wellbeing of communities by facilitating meaningful engagement with our cultural heritage.

## The Message

- Conservation enables cultural heritage to enrich the lives of individuals by nurturing a sense of identity and promoting a positive connection to a shared past.
- Participation in conservation can help individuals build confidence, self-esteem and future employability through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge.
- Conservation supports healthy communities by preserving cultural heritage, which gives places their character, brings communities together and fosters pride of place.
- The conservation sector helps people build social connections through a range of volunteering opportunities that encourage people to work together in a positive atmosphere.
- The conservation sector can help save money in health services by offering activities for social prescription schemes.

## The Evidence

Cultural heritage objects enable us to make bodily, cognitive and emotional connections through their material properties and 'authenticity.' <sup>23</sup>

The value attached to being allowed to touch valuable and historical objects is linked with feelings of self-worth. <sup>24</sup>

Historic places that are well-maintained and well-managed add to cultural life, community resilience and our collective wellbeing. <sup>25</sup>

There are 616,000 heritage volunteers in England alone. <sup>26</sup>

Heritage volunteers report higher levels of mental health and wellbeing. <sup>27</sup>

Social prescribing schemes can lead to a range of positive health and well-being outcomes and may lead to a reduction in the use of NHS services. <sup>28</sup>

## The Objective

### We will

- Advocate the value of conservation to the health and wellbeing of people and communities.
- Collaborate with partners within and beyond the heritage sector to advance good practice linking heritage and health.
- Celebrate the significant contribution made by volunteers and build capacity and confidence in the sector for managing conservation volunteers.

### We urge decision makers to

- Champion the benefits of heritage engagement to the public and health service providers.
- Support and commission conservation and health and wellbeing projects.
- Support third sector cultural heritage organisations to deliver non-clinical health and social services by including cultural heritage participation within social prescription programmes.
- Encourage national and local engagement in heritage activities.



### **Case Study: Wellbeing Through Volunteering**

Icon's Conservation in the Community Award marked the valuable efforts and excellence achieved by volunteers on conservation projects. It is presented to a project involving a professional conservator who has increased the learning of new skills by volunteers and benefited communities in accessing cultural heritage.

In 2015 the award was given to 'Resurrecting the Coffin Works', the Birmingham Conservation Trust's rescue of a Victorian factory building along with its contents in a very deprived area of Birmingham. The project combined high conservation standards with excellent community engagement and public access where none previously existed.

The project provided volunteers with an opportunity to gain new skills, greater confidence and to learn about conservation. It increased social cohesion and inclusion by allowing the community to contribute to the conservation of an aspect of their heritage that had been previously inaccessible through its semi-derelict state. The factory now offers a range of community events, ensuring the site's continued contribution to wellbeing and education in the community. The restored building adds to the character of its setting, improving quality of life in the area.

The project demonstrates the positive impact of conservation projects on community engagement and education. Further, it showcases how conservation can enable heritage to maximise its social impact now and in the future.

### **Case Study: Soft Power in China**

In 2018, Icon was invited by the British Council China to participate in a tour of the Shaanxi Province cultural heritage landscape in May 2018. The visit took place under the auspices of the Silk Road International Trade and Investment Expo 2018 in Xi'an and was funded by the GREAT Britain Campaign. During the tour, Icon signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Shaanxi Provincial Museum Association to promote knowledge exchange in the field of cultural heritage conservation.

Ahead of Icon's visit, the Shaanxi cultural heritage conservation community agreed to set up a new Conservation and Restoration sub-group of the Shaanxi Provincial Museum Association. The sub-group was formally established during Icon's tour and became the first professional body for conservators in Shaanxi Province. Mr Luo Wen Li, Director General of the Shaanxi Cultural Heritage Bureau, anecdotally reported how the Bureau had planned to set up a professional body, but it was Icon's return to Shaanxi that prompted them to establish the association during Icon's visit.

Icon's role in inspiring the professional body shows the enormous prestige for Chinese institutions to be associated with Icon, but also the significant interest to develop partnerships with the UK. Our history of conservation means that we have a great amount of knowledge and experience that could be shared and adapted to international contexts. The UK stands to benefit from engagement with China, as collaboration can enable us to develop our own profession and image abroad, as well as to fulfil our moral duty to the global environment.

### **Case study: Innovation in Heritage Science**

The Icon Heritage Science Group is a forum for professionals interested in the scientific endeavour benefiting the conservation, management and interpretation of cultural heritage. In 2017, the Group initiated an innovative project to develop guidance for ethical sampling within heritage science in response to ambiguities around the decisions and justifications for sampling.

The group consulted a range of stakeholders through an online survey, workshop and consultation to draw on the extensive knowledge and expertise available within the Icon community and wider field. Working with scientists, academics and practitioners from the UK and abroad ensured a considered and versatile tool that can be used in a wide array of sampling scenarios.

The guidance document was published in 2019. It includes an easy to follow decision making flowchart outlining considerations for both the researcher and owner/custodian. It provides a comprehensive checklist of the typical sampling scenarios in which users will find themselves where the perspective of both the researcher and owner/custodian are considered. The guidance can be used as a standalone tool for individuals but can also help institutions to inform the further development of their best practice sampling protocols.



# Soft Power

Conservation contributes to cultural diplomacy and soft power through the sector's international reputation and its support of world-leading industries.

## The Message

- The UK's expertise in conservation and heritage science is routinely sought internationally.
- The conservation sector underpins industries vital to the UK's global reputation, including heritage, tourism and the creative industries.
- The UK's conservation education sector has an international reputation that is second to none, contributing to the education of the domestic and global workforce and development of the subject.
- Conservation organisations within the civil society sector add value to soft power rankings through their independent networks.

## The Evidence

The UK's "world leadership" in heritage has been linked to its museums "pioneering" "models of conservation in art, artefacts and heritage sites." 29

The UK's heritage NGOs engage internationally in at least 38 countries and across seven continents. 30

The GREAT campaign identifies heritage as one the UK's 12 "unique selling points." 31

Portland's global Soft Power 30 Index, which ranked the UK first in 2018, lists culture as one of the UK's strengths. 32

International students and researchers are attracted to the UK's leading centres of conservation training. In 2008, more than half of all European conservation training took place in the UK's HEIs. 33

In 2012/13 a third of the conservation workforce was reported working within civil society. 34

The UK civil society's independence fosters trust and credibility with global partners. 35

## The Objective

### We will

- Raise the profile of organisations and individuals engaged internationally in conservation.
- Foster interest and awareness within the conservation community of cross-border collaboration and its benefits.
- Encourage and support the workforce to engage in international activities and to communicate its impact.

### We urge decision makers to

- Champion our world-leading heritage and conservation sector on the world stage.
- Foster existing global networks and relationships established by heritage and conservation organisations.
- Support international posts in organisations to ensure that a sector composed of SMEs has the capacity for international work.
- Ensure continued access to skilled labour and restoration materials from EEA countries post-Brexit.



# Sustainability

Conservation can support communities dealing with climate change through direct rescue and refuge but also by helping to inform environmental action by building understanding of materials and change and promoting principles of sustainability.

## The Message

- Conservator-restorers can provide knowledge and expertise to protect and conserve at risk heritage and to inform refuge and rescue responses to climate emergency.
- Conservation and heritage science can be used to understand and demonstrate the impacts of climate change and make informed predictions.
- Conservation and cultural heritage can support clean growth by helping communities to become more sustainable and resilient to climate change.
- Cultural heritage can be an accessible resource for communicating climate change, empowering people to confront the challenge and inspiring more sustainable lifestyles.

## The Evidence

Conservators' appreciation of the various values of heritage means they can ensure mitigation and adaptation measures are sympathetic to the significance of heritage. 36

Conservation professionals understand the chemical and physical properties of materials and recognise evidence and causes of change. 37

Collections data provides a benchmark for monitoring change. 38

Conservation is based on the aim of conserving rather than replacing heritage assets, naturally promoting the sustainable use of resources. 39

Traditional building materials and techniques may be more resilient and recover more quickly from climate change impacts than modern buildings. 40

Cultural heritage enables information to be demonstrated through tangible material culture, expressing complex and abstract ideas in lateral ways through human stories. 41



## The Objective

### We will

- Promote the positive role cultural heritage and conservation can play in informing responses to and communicating climate change.
- Encourage organisations and individuals to embed environmental sustainability into their operations and practice.
- Mobilize the cultural heritage sector for climate action in collaboration with partners like the Climate Heritage Network and Fit for the Future network.

### We urge decision makers to

- Take a holistic approach to climate change adaptation that draws on the conservation sector's expertise and experience.
- Support or commission heritage bodies to run environmental projects to encourage wider participation across society and enable messages to resonate with a broader audience.
- Recognise the substantial carbon benefits of retaining and adapting older buildings and place cultural heritage at the heart of sustainable development.



# Accreditation: Quality and Trust

Professional accreditation guarantees our shared cultural heritage is cared for, protected and preserved by fully qualified and capable professionals, providing assurances to the public and clients.

## The Message

- Accreditation shows that an individual has an in-depth knowledge of conservation, a high degree of competence, sound judgement and a deep understanding of the principles which underpin their practice.
- Accreditation provides a clear method of identifying technically capable and experienced professional conservator-restorers.
- The use of ACRs can help meet legal or contractual requirements, grant and funding conditions and give confidence to lenders and donors.
- Accreditation can assist recruitment by serving as a benchmark.
- Using ACRs can mitigate risks such as irreparable damage to heritage assets, damage to organizational reputation, expensive rectification or higher insurance costs or refusal of cover.

## The Evidence

Becoming an Accredited Conservator-Restorer (ACR) requires proficiency across Icon's professional standards in conservation.  
42

The Conservation Register [will] lists all Icon Accredited conservators, providing a means of verifying status and contacting businesses.  
43

The PACR Novice to Expert scale can be applied to different levels of practice.

## The Objective

### We will

- Raise awareness of the value of accreditation with commissioners, clients and members of the public.

### We urge decision makers to

- Recognise accreditation as a guarantee of high-quality conservation services.





# Accreditation: Professionalism

Accreditation demonstrates the professionalism of practitioners supporting business and employment and fostering the respect of peers.

## The Message

- Accreditation raises the professional profile of an individual.
- Accreditation can provide a competitive advantage in the job market and in employment.
- Accreditation can raise the profile of a business, helping to build demand for its services and to establish valued business relationships.
- Accreditation fosters the respect of peers and demonstrates parity with allied professionals.
- Accreditation supports career development by providing direction, motivation and opportunities to broaden horizons.
- Accreditation allows practitioners to be at the centre of the profession and to lead the debate on conservation.
- Accreditation builds recognition of conservation as a distinct profession.

## The Evidence

Accredited members can use the ACR post-nominals.

ACRs are listed on the Conservation Register.

Accreditation can be a desirable or essential criteria for employment with bodies like the National Trust.

Accreditation can be a requirement in tenders for work or reward of funding.

ACRs can be listed on the Conservation Register's Enhanced Listing pages, which enable conservators to market their services.

A peer review process provides recognition across conservation regardless of specialism.

Icon's framework is comparable to the assessments of other allied and chartered professions.

ACRs can access Icon's CPD expertise, support and offer.

ACRs can apply to mentor fellow conservators on their path to accreditation.

Icon's annual ACR conference features high-profile speakers providing inspiration for professional development and networking.

## The Objective

### We will

- Encourage and support ACRs to advocate to commissioners, clients and the public the value of accreditation.

### We urge decision makers to

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# The Evidence

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