

Report of the Heritage Task and Finish Group

Reporting to Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Chair's Foreword

Like much of the UK, Brighton & Hove has a lot of history, and its journey from fishing village to royal playground and high society getaway, and then by stages to the popular and diverse cultural city-by-the-sea we all know and love has made it the unique place it is today.

However, again in common with many other towns and cities across the country, we have found ourselves over recent decades struggling to look after even our most famous heritage assets, with iconic structures like Madeira Terraces and the Royal Pavilion requiring more love – and money – lavished on them as the years go by to keep up with the ravages of age and climate change.

And if it is difficult to find creative ways to maintain our most famous treasures, how much more so to find solutions for the many lesser-known but still much valued buildings dotted around the city that need upkeep if we are not to lose them?

So, this task-and-finish group set out to talk to community groups old and new, charitable trustees from various local and national organisations, our expert officers in-house and those from other councils about their many and varied experiences with their own historical assets, to see if we could come up with a slate of recommendations that might help a bit in finding a way forward in these straightened times.

It's such a big subject, and we had some absolutely fascinating conversations along the way – we really wanted to make (self-funded!) site-visits to hear more about many of the places we discussed, but alas time wasn't on our side. At the end of it all I think we still wish we could have covered so much more, but we hope that we have added something to the conversation that can help inform the next Heritage Strategy for the city, as well as assist in building proper partnerships between the council, resident and community groups, funders, trusts and businesses to take our vibrant, growing and fantastic city forward to the next stage of its living history.

All that remains is for me to issue heartfelt thanks to the members of the TFG and all the people who came to talk to us for their huge part in those fascinating conversations I mentioned, as well as the brilliant work of scrutiny officer Natalie Sacks-Hammond, without whose input we'd never have made it to here!



Cllr Amanda Evans – Chair of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Executive Summary

The Heritage Task & Finish Group was established to look at the challenges facing the preservation of Brighton & Hove's heritage assets and to identify practical measures to support their long-term sustainability. Through a series of evidence-gathering sessions with residents, community groups, local authorities, custodians of heritage assets and heritage organisations, the group explored barriers to maintenance, funding, and effective partnership working. The findings are intended to inform the development of Brighton & Hove City Council's new Heritage Strategy.

The group found that many heritage assets across the city are deteriorating due to a combination of rising repair costs, limited funding, and regulatory requirements. Strict planning and conservation policies, while essential for protecting historic integrity, can increase costs and delay essential maintenance. This often results in a cycle of decline, where preventative work is unaffordable and reactive repairs become significantly more expensive over time.

It is vital to secure sustainable funding to keep buildings open and in use. There is heavy reliance on competitive external funding avenues, which often do not meet demand, particularly for smaller or lesser-known heritage assets. While larger, high-profile sites may attract investment, this can limit opportunities for other assets. The group identified the need to explore alternative funding mechanisms, including income generation, partnerships, and innovative financing approaches to support heritage conservation.

Community groups play a vital and growing role in protecting and promoting heritage assets. They bring local expertise, commitment, and fundraising capability, and in some cases have successfully delivered major restoration projects. However, they face challenges including limited capacity, funding constraints, and difficulties navigating council processes. The group concluded that stronger, more structured partnerships between the council and community organisations are essential, supported by clearer communication, shared expectations, and opportunities for collaboration.

The report also highlights the importance of adopting a more flexible and forward-looking approach to heritage management. This includes enabling sensitive adaptation of historic buildings to meet modern needs, including climate resilience, sustainability, and the long-term health of the building, while ensuring that heritage policies do not prevent innovation or viable reuse. The group emphasised that heritage should not be preserved in a way that freezes the city in time, but instead should support a vibrant, evolving urban environment.

Additionally, the group recognised the importance of inclusive storytelling and the need to better reflect the entirety of the city's history, including more difficult or underrepresented narratives. This approach can strengthen public engagement and ensure heritage remains relevant to all communities.

Overall, the group recommends a shift towards a more preventative, collaborative, and enabling approach. The council's role should increasingly focus on facilitating action, supporting asset owners and community groups, improving access to funding, encouraging partnership working, and promoting innovative uses of heritage buildings. These changes will help ensure that Brighton & Hove's heritage is protected, enhanced, and sustained for future generations while continuing to contribute to the city's identity, pride, and economy.

Recommendations

Council support

1. The council to undertake a review of signage and wayfinding in the city in partnership with community groups.

Throughout the Task & Finish Group meetings, signage and wayfinding in the city was brought up, referring to old street signs that were misleading, and the out-of-date wayfinding information on ‘monoliths’ around the city. The monoliths need to be kept clean from graffiti and stickers with the information being regularly checked and updated. Nick Tyson of the Regency Town House said that having a simple brown sign on Western Road pointing to the Town House would help with promotion and increase footfall as passer-bys were his target audience¹. Charlotte Barrow from Visit Brighton agreed that wayfinding was outdated and needed a review². When meeting with Helmut Lusser from the Hove Civic Society, the group learned that the society were seeking to take over responsibility for updating the Hove Heritage Boards and if they were to get funding, they would work in partnership with local societies, historians and the museum. The Council could encourage and support a community group to take on the audit of signage and wayfinding. Potential funding sources could be explored such as Active Travel England, parking revenue, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Seafront Development Board.

2. To review council owned heritage assets and consider the different Trust models that exist that could allow community groups to take on the responsibility for some assets, whether through direct ownership or management; and to support groups to do so.

Brighton & Hove City Council owns a large number of heritage assets, and it would be beneficial to take a proactive and strategic approach to reviewing them. This should include consideration of their condition, costs, community value, and whether the council is best placed to continue managing them. The council could explore alternative models that involve communities more directly. The group heard about a range of trust models, including full transfer of ownership to a trust, as demonstrated by the Historic Coventry Trust, where it was noted that: “There is a lack of money, focus, time and too much else going on for councils that it makes sense to transfer the ownership over to organisations like the Historic Coventry Trust.”³ Other approaches include community led management, with the council retaining ownership, such as the model used for the Royal Pavilion. In the best interests of some heritage buildings, it may be beneficial to transfer ownership or responsibility for certain council-owned assets to community groups, provided they have the necessary resources and capacity, with support available to help them become a Trust. National Lottery funding can be obtained to cover set up costs and there is advice and free support for this available from Community Works.

3. To support community groups to develop plans or strategies for heritage assets, ensuring that well-prepared, fundable proposals are in place so projects can move forward quickly when funding opportunities arise.

Alfie Stroud from Historic England said that the ‘Kingsway to the sea’ project didn’t need much help from his organisation because “it was well conceived and ready to go when the funding became available”⁴ which demonstrates that being proactive and prepared can lead to gaining funding quicker. Helmut Lusser from the Hove Civic Society said that “... if there is already a plan in place, it can be implemented as soon

¹ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

² Charlotte Barrow, TFG Meeting 2

³ Ian Harrabin, TFG Meeting 1

⁴ Alfie Stroud, TFG Meeting 1

as the investment has been found. If there is no plan, then nothing happens.”⁵ and Guy Smyth from “Friends of the Pepper Pot” felt that a “micro-area strategy” was needed⁶. Supporting community groups to have plans in place through providing advice and expertise could help them with funding opportunities and ensure heritage assets are restored more quickly.

New initiatives

4. **To support community groups in creating art and heritage trails to encourage visitors to disperse more around the city and visit areas they wouldn't normally go. To consider using incentives to increase participation.**

Throughout the Task & Finish Group meetings, the idea of heritage or art trails was raised. Charlotte Barrow of Visit Brighton said that it would be good to disperse visitors across the city more and that trails are a good way to do this, which could incorporate the more obscure heritage assets and raise their profile. It was noted that there are many trails in other cities including London and Stevenage, which are popular. Derek Wright wanted to create a trail that went through every ward in the city and end up on the Downs with information boards or QR codes providing information along the way⁷. The Hove Civic Society has already started an open-air sculpture trail on the seafront and are looking for half a million pounds for the next 2 sculptures⁸. Mark Strong said that adding incentives to these trails can be very effective as people enjoy ticking things off and remain engaged. It would be beneficial to have both printed and digital versions of these trails. Although Cllr Evans pointed out that “having everything listed as a heritage trail would bring people visiting the major attractions to also see the more obscure ones if they happened to be on the route. Although this would help with tourism, it wouldn't necessarily result in money being raised and spent on the upkeep of those assets.”⁹ There is an appetite for this, and it could be something the council supports and encourages community groups to create, possibly via Visit Brighton, Community Works or another similar organisation.

5. **The council to support joint-ticketing and promotional partnerships between larger heritage assets (such as the Royal Pavilion) and smaller assets (such as the Regency Town House) to raise their profile, increase visitor numbers, and improve their long-term financial sustainability.**

Brighton & Hove has a large amount of heritage assets, with the Royal Pavilion being the biggest and most renowned. This means that smaller or lesser promoted heritage assets can feel a bit forgotten about. Nick Tyson, the curator of the Regency Town House, said that they would benefit from more support from the council to help raise its profile, that it suffers when it comes to grants because the Royal Pavilion always gets the funding. “The council could develop a business model with joint tickets with the Royal Pavilion as they get hundreds of visitors. The Town House can only deal with a small number of visitors but could sell up to a practical limit with a joint ticket, which would instantly mean they are more financially viable and could use this money to finish the restoration.”¹⁰ This idea was echoed by Ian Harrabin of the Historic Coventry Trust, who described the “National Trust effect”; his organisation

⁵ Helmut Lusser, TFG Meeting 6

⁶ Guy Smyth, TFG Meeting 4

⁷ Derek Wright, TFG Meeting 5

⁸ Helmut Lusser, TFG Meeting 6

⁹ Cllr Evans, TFG Meeting 4

¹⁰ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

was losing £100k pa on running the Charterhouse before partnering with the National Trust. Ian Harrabin said “the National Trust has 5 million members so all they do is put the building in the brochure on their website and people turn up! It instantly brings in people and it’s vital to sustain this.”¹¹ The council could explore opportunities for discounted tickets with local transport providers including the bike-hire scheme and consider whether the development of a “city card” would be viable. Visit Brighton could coordinate these partnerships.

6. To explore alternative funding mechanisms where people can choose to invest in parts of the city/heritage assets

There are a lot of residents who are passionate and care about their local heritage, and many of them have put their own time and money into this, such as Nick Tyson of the Regency Town House and the members of the Saltdean Lido Trust. Derek Wright talked about other Councils, such as Rother, who run a lottery where residents choose what the money goes towards; this could be introduced in Brighton & Hove with proceeds going towards Heritage assets in need of repair. There was also a suggestion of setting up a fund for those who have a bit more money in their pockets who may choose to invest in the city. Lewis Church, BHCC Acting Strategic Manager for Culture & Creative Industries, talked about tapping into philanthropic networks in the city as part of a project for cultural organisations¹². The Better Brighton & Hove Fund could also present an opportunity to support heritage assets, particularly smaller and lesser-known sites, with their heritage value informing the prioritisation of resident-led proposals in decision-making. Any of these avenues would be worth exploring to generate funding for the city’s heritage.

7. The council to enable and support community-led maintenance of heritage assets.

Allan Grainger of the Brighton Society raised the issue of the seafront shelters that are in disrepair, and he questioned why quotes for these projects end up so large and then doesn’t happen when “all it needed was a lick of paint that could be done straight away”¹³ The ‘cucumber benches’ were re-painted as a community effort and it is clear that residents want to do more. A pragmatic community response could include providing clear guidance, reducing administrative barriers, and offering access to technical advice or resources that empower local residents and community groups to undertake timely and practical repair work on heritage assets within their areas. The council could support this by giving groups agency to act within defined parameters, following a model similar to initiatives such as the “Tidy Up” team¹⁴. Under this model, volunteers are upskilled through training, made aware of associated risks, provided with appropriate equipment and guidance, and supported to carry out the work effectively.

Managing expectations

8. To introduce a “code of conduct” or “service agreement” between the council and community groups when working in partnership.

In the same way as the council has a service agreement with the University of Sussex as a custodian of heritage assets, a similar agreement could be made with community groups looking after heritage assets. The group learned that community

¹¹ Ian Harrabin, TFG Meeting 1

¹² Lewis Church, TFG Meeting 4

¹³ Allan Grainger, TFG Meeting 5

¹⁴ [Volunteer with the Tidy Up Team](#)

organisations have a lot to give, such as time, expertise, and resources but often felt that they did not have the support of the council. Helmut Lusser of Hove Civic Society said that they want to work with the council but there seems to be an “us and them” situation where they feel like they are “stepping on Council Officer’s toes”. This is something that needs to be resolved if the council wants more involvement from the local community but it needs to be a real partnership. “They need to see the potential in what the community can offer”¹⁵. Other guests echoed this feeling including the Saltdean Lido Trust who “had a solid case that it would benefit the city and attract visitors but it took a long time to be heard”¹⁶. Mark Strong reported that Oxford Council has a code of conduct between them and community groups that sets expectations for both parties to sign up to, helping to build trust and a positive ongoing relationship. This is something that could be replicated at Brighton & Hove City Council and could be managed by an organisation such as Community Works.

Pooling resources and knowledge

9. Create a network of community groups who can provide advice and mentorship to other community groups wanting to look after a heritage asset.

The group heard about the passion and care that residents have towards heritage in the city and that many people in community groups have a lot to give in terms of knowledge, experience, skills and expertise that could benefit others if they were to pool resources. Rebecca Crook, of the Saltdean Lido Trust, said they would be happy to talk to other community groups if they want advice and that it would have been really helpful to have a facilitator role to connect people. “There are lots of things they would have done differently and they could share lessons learned.”¹⁷. Mark Strong mentioned that there is a Confederation of Community Groups in Oxford where they collaborate on big projects going on in the city. A network could meet in person at set times during the year to discuss heritage issues and work collaboratively to resolve them. The group are not suggesting that this network would be offering formal advice on the planning process or commenting on particular planning applications but a collaborative space to share best practise, ideas and potential plans for individual heritage assets, to discuss challenges community groups may be facing, and to provide support to each other.

Creating a network could be the solution to other issues raised at the Task & Finish Group as follows:

- a. Providing advice or guidance around how to navigate council systems as a resident/community group (e.g. what an FOI is, the purpose of a deputation etc).

Rebecca Crook from the Saltdean Lido Trust said it probably wouldn’t have taken so long to restore the Lido if they had understood how to properly navigate and use council systems to progress the cause.¹⁸. A mentorship programme could be beneficial to those groups struggling to be heard.

- b. Coordinating all funding avenues both available to the council and community groups so there is oversight of all funding bids, ensuring they don’t end up in competition with each other.

¹⁵ Helmut Lusser, TFG Meeting 6

¹⁶ Rebecca Crook, TFG Meeting 3

¹⁷ Rebecca Crook, TFG Meeting 3

¹⁸ Rebecca Crook, TFG Meeting 3

This issue was raised by several guests at the Task & Finish Group meetings where it became very clear that having a Grade 1 listed building like the Royal Pavilion has meant that smaller heritage assets have missed out on funding. Competition for funding is high and there were several examples where the smaller assets couldn't compete against more 'valuable' sites, including the Regency Town House, the Pepper Pot and the Saltdean Lido. Having a collaborative body sharing funding plans could help with funding strategies and reduce competition.

c. Legacy/ succession planning

In some cases, there are often one or two key people running these groups with no succession plan, such as Nick Tyson of the Regency Town House, who expressed concern about what happens to it when he is no longer able to put his own time and money into it. Working within a wider network might help identify others who want to take this on.

d. Sharing knowledge on smaller funders and foundations

Alfie Stroud of Historic England said "The best way is to work in partnerships to reach small grants and foundations"¹⁹. There are funding streams available, but groups do not always know about them so through having a network, this kind of information could be shared easily.

Lobbying government

10. Depending on the outcome of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, the council should lobby central government to review and streamline planning requirements for routine building maintenance of listed buildings to reduce barriers for custodians

The group heard about the huge costs involved in the upkeep of heritage assets that had to be done in a particular way to protect the heritage nature. One example was at the University of Sussex where they wanted to clean up the facade of some of the buildings, estimating a cost of £20 - 30k, but it ended up costing over £500k due to the building being listed and having to be cleaned in a certain way to preserve the brickwork²⁰ and the seafront shelters and Madeira Terraces that had to be treated in a specific way to avoid rust re-surfacing and to use the same material as the original even if it's not fit for purpose. Relaxing the rules associated with these low-impact works could make essential upkeep more affordable for custodians and would support better long-term maintenance of the city's heritage assets, reduce unnecessary delays, and help avoid escalating repair costs caused by delayed works. However, this is not within the control of the council as these requirements are decided by central government.

11. Alongside Historic England, lobby central government to introduce more preventative funding for historic structures

As reported by the Saltdean Lido Trust, if it takes a long time to gain permission to restore a heritage building, it can deteriorate even further and will inevitably cost more. Cllr Miller felt that national funding should focus on the regular inspection of assets and need to provide more preventative funding. "We shouldn't be letting buildings get to such poor states of decay and then spend vast amounts of money to

¹⁹ Alfie Stroud, TFG Meeting 2

²⁰ Matt Kitson, TFG Meeting 2

rescue them. It is cheaper to be preventative.”²¹ Historic England provides a certain amount of clout so partnering with them to lobby central government might be more successful.

Changing attitudes

- 12. To add a paragraph to the Heritage Strategy committing to open and honest conversations about commemorating difficult periods in the city’s past and sensitively explaining and contextualising their impact for local communities.**

Brighton & Hove and Bristol have a rich history, which includes the transatlantic slave trade that both cities profited from. Discussions with Peter Insole from Bristol City Council highlighted the decision to place the Colston statue in a museum and that the council “...have been raising awareness of this legacy across the whole city, telling the story and talking about how this causes equality, diversity and inclusion issues”²² Part of their new Heritage Strategy is a commemoration memorialisation section that talks about who should be remembered and how.

Davinder Dhillon spoke about Indian soldiers treated at the Royal Pavilion during the First World War, a largely unacknowledged part of its history. Some members felt that they were doing the memory a disservice by not representing the true history. The city’s history continues to shape its identity, and the group believes that those interpreting and presenting it must do so honestly and transparently. There is a need for clearer expectations around how difficult histories are commemorated, while recognising that this does not detract from the valuable work already being undertaken by heritage groups across the city.

- 13. To ensure the Heritage Strategy protects and restores heritage assets, reflects the full range of the city’s history, and supports good quality new development, so that heritage is not frozen in time but can continue to change and be used in ways that benefit the city and its communities.**

The group noted tensions around preserving heritage sites “in aspic”, with some projects focusing on a single historical period, resistance to change from some community groups, and strict policies requiring buildings to remain as originally built. They felt these approaches should be challenged to avoid the city becoming a pastiche and to better reflect its full history. Examples of other buildings internationally show how views change over generations, such as the Eiffel Tower, which was loathed by the locals when it was first built but today it is a much loved and respected tourist attraction that revitalised the area and brings in considerable income. The Heritage Strategy should protect and maintain heritage assets while recognising the city as a living environment. It should support sensitive, high-quality development that meets modern needs, including climate resilience, sustainability, and the long-term health of the building, while celebrating the different periods in a building’s history. The City Plan is currently being developed, which is a policy document unlike the Heritage Strategy; therefore, it may be better placed to support the objectives included in this recommendation. Consideration to be given to include this in the City Plan.

²¹ Cllr Miller, TFG Meeting 6

²² Peter Insole, TFG Meeting 4

Specific actions

14. Consider adding Brunswick Square pavements on the local list

The entirety of Brunswick Square is listed except for some buildings to the rear and the pavements. Nick Tyson of the Regency Town House said “The pavement is of very high quality, shipped in from the South Devonian Ranges off Dublin’s coastline and laid with great care, which was also unprotected. Utility companies have since brutalised the pavement during digs and smashed the paving stones.”²³ The council needs to protect its heritage pavements and Steve Tremlett, BHCC Planning Policy and Heritage Manager, explained that some protection would be achieved through the planning process by adding it to the local list. In addition, the Council should consider using its engagement channels with utility companies to emphasise the importance of heritage paving to the city’s Regency assets. This would help ensure that utilities take appropriate care when lifting and reinstating paving, reducing the risk of inadvertent damage to these historic features. The group acknowledges that it was unable to speak to all groups in the city during this time-limited process and that there might be other areas that would also benefit from being put on the local list. They would encourage others to approach the council if they are in a similar situation.

15. To support the installation of a sculpture in the Pavilion Gardens commemorating the Indian Soldiers in the First World War

The group heard about the suggestion from Davinder Dhillon OBE DL (Chair of The Chattri Memorial Group) to commemorate the injured Indian soldiers in the First World War who were treated at the Royal Pavilion when it was used as a hospital, by installing a sculpture in the Pavilion Gardens. However, the funding for the Pavilion Gardens project aimed at taking it off the “at risk” register was to restore the natural boundary from the Regency period, and so far, the decision has been to only focus the designs on this period of time. The proposal for the sculpture wasn’t taken forward. There was a lot of support from members for this sculpture, who firmly believe that both the early and the more recent history could happily co-exist and admired the work Davinder Dhillon has done so far. The group believes strongly that the statue should go ahead, and that recommendations 12 and 13 in this report would support this outcome. There is no expectation that the council provide funding for this but to demonstrate support for Davinder’s ambition to raise funds and champion local backing for this project. The group are keen for the city not to be preserved “in aspic” and for its entire history to be represented at its relevant historical sites and museums.

Introduction

Purpose

The Heritage Task & Finish Group was established to examine the issues faced in preserving the city’s heritage assets and to investigate what other initiatives or measures could be put in place to help the council support owners, residents and community groups to look after their buildings at a time where there are limited resources available.

The group’s aim was to develop a report with recommendations that will support the development of the council’s new Heritage Strategy. The report will be presented to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee for agreement, and, subject to the committee’s endorsement, the report recommendations will be referred to Cabinet and/or partners for consideration.

²³ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

Members of the group: Cllr Evans (Chair), Cllr Cattell, Cllr Grimshaw, Cllr Theobald, Cllr Sykes, Cllr Earthey, and Mark Strong (Community Voluntary Sector). Steve Tremlett, BHCC Planning Policy and Heritage Manager, was invited as the relevant officer to provide any additional information and stay updated on the group's progress.

The Task & Finish Group held 7 meetings with a total of 20 guests who spoke to the group about their experiences and work with heritage assets. All evidence gained during these meetings has been used to form the recommendations.

Definition

*"Our heritage is what we have inherited from the past to value and enjoy in the present, and to preserve and pass on to future generations."*²⁴

The Task & Finish Group recognised that the definition of heritage can encompass a wide range of elements, including cultural, historical, and social aspects. However, for the purposes of this work, the focus was on historic buildings, structures and artefacts in the city, and including lesser known, but still 'at risk' assets. The group explored how to preserve heritage assets during times of limited funding by developing new ways of supporting community groups, generating income, and applying best practice drawn from other local authorities and organisations. The group has produced recommendations to support the preservation of heritage assets in the city.

Heritage Strategy

The council is currently working on its new Heritage Strategy. The recommendations from the Task & Finish Group will feed into the development of this strategy. The timeline for the strategy has been altered to facilitate this. The Heritage Strategy will be agreed by Cabinet following a period of public consultation.

The council wants to reimagine its role as facilitator in helping people to look after their buildings, of which some may be in disrepair, at a time when funding and resources are scarce. "There remains a need to raise awareness of what makes the city's heritage so important, to develop a positive city-wide appreciation of these special qualities and to create a pride in the historic environment and confidence in its future conservation." - BHCC Conservation Strategy, 2015

The Issue

The look and feel of the city are a key priority for Brighton & Hove City Council where conserving and developing the unique culture and heritage of the city contributes to Outcome 1 of achieving the Council Plan: "A city to be proud of".

The deteriorating state of heritage assets across the city has been raised by residents and councillors. This includes iconic sites such as the railings and shelters on the seafront and Madeira Terraces as well as lesser-known assets such as the Pepper Pot in Queen's Park and the Dovecote in Patcham. A Notice of Motion was agreed by Full Council in July 2025 calling for better protection of local heritage and noting the significant reputational damage the council suffers when heritage is left to deteriorate²⁵. The council faces ongoing challenges in maintaining the heritage assets in its ownership, and many private and community owners of assets are experiencing similar difficulties. This reflects the wider, fragile financial position of local authorities in England, which are contending with rising demand for statutory services, long-term reductions in funding and limited scope to raise income locally. As statutory services for the most vulnerable are prioritised, resources are

²⁴ [What is Heritage? | The Heritage Council:](#)

²⁵ <https://democracy.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s208848/CG%20NOM%20Looking%20after%20our%20heritage.html?CT=2>

inevitably redirected away from areas such as heritage. In an environment of sustained financial pressure, this has led to the continued deterioration of heritage assets.

To develop recommendations on how the council could work with residents to support the protection of heritage buildings, the group first needed a clear understanding of the barriers currently faced by those responsible for heritage assets. The group spoke to a wide range of witnesses including residents, council officers, other local authorities, custodians of heritage assets, and Historic England. Evidence was gathered across multiple meetings, and this report explores actions that could be introduced to better support the upkeep of heritage assets in the city.

Key Findings

High costs

The most frequently cited issue was the high cost of repairs, which is often exacerbated by strict requirements put in place to preserve the heritage nature of assets. These requirements often mean they must use like-for-like materials, even when they may no longer be fit for purpose. Cllr Birgit Miller expressed this concern about the seafront railings, “The cast-iron foundry is able to repair much but it seems counterproductive to recast missing sections with the same material when we know it doesn’t last”²⁶. Allan Grainger of the Brighton Society questioned why relatively minor repairs to the seafront shelters resulted in disproportionately high costs, which meant nothing was actioned²⁷. The estimated cost was £100k due to the specific materials needed and the amount of work it would take. For some repairs, custodians must follow rigid guidelines on the processes that must be used, which increases the cost considerably. For example, the University of Sussex originally estimated £20 - £30k to clean the facade of a listed building but it ended up costing £500k²⁸. These requirements are barriers to the ongoing upkeep of listed buildings and structures, discouraging owners from making necessary repairs.

If the building is listed or in a conservation area, it might need planning permission which can also take a long time to be granted, during which time the asset continues to degrade and its condition worsens, ultimately increasing costs. Catherine Jeater from Southwark Council spoke of an elderly lady who owned a Georgian property, which was only fully restored following her death and its subsequent sale²⁹. Cllr Miller argued that it is cheaper to be preventative and that national funding needs to be focused on the regular inspection of the state of buildings and that there needs to be more preventative funding available. “We shouldn’t be letting buildings get to such poor states of decay and then spend vast amounts of money to rescue them”³⁰.

Recommendations:

- **Alongside Historic England, lobby central government to introduce more preventative funding for historic structures**

Difficulty in achieving financial sustainability

Individuals, such as Nick Tyson from the Regency Town House, put a lot of their own money into the restoration of heritage buildings and are concerned that there is no legacy³¹; they don’t know what will happen to the asset when they are unable to continue to contribute to

²⁶ Cllr Miller, TFG Meeting 6

²⁷ Allan Grainger, TFG Meeting 5

²⁸ Matt Kitson, TFG Meeting 2

²⁹ Catherine Jeater, TFG Meeting 3

³⁰ Cllr Miller, TFG Meeting 6

³¹ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

these costs. Heritage buildings need to become financially sustainable and generate income in some way. Many of the witnesses reported that repurposing old buildings can save them and generate money, but they need to be fully restored or at least in a good enough state before they can be repurposed. The Regency Town House is still not fully restored and other assets, such as the Pepper Pot, need to be completely repaired before considering repurposing. This involves a large upfront cost, which the Saltdean Lido Trust managed to achieve through fundraising, but that required a lot of capacity and resources. The council could help with this by finding new ways to generate income specifically to put towards heritage assets. Ideas suggested to the group included: using tourist tax if introduced, match-funding with larger organisations such as the i360, the AMEX stadium or Pride, ring-fencing a proportion of ticket sales from other visitor attractions or outdoor events like the marathon, introducing a “Council Lottery”, creating Trusts for some sites which are responsible for its maintenance, partnering with the Business Improvement District and looking into Art Levy to pay for sculptures³².

Recommendation:

- **To explore alternative funding mechanisms where people can choose to invest in parts of the city/heritage assets**

Lack of available funding

The group recognises that the council does not have enough resources to fully restore and maintain all the heritage assets in the city and that its role needs to be more facilitative, supporting custodians to seek other funding opportunities. Some councils, such as Southwark, benefit from high levels of development and can charge high pre-application fees that are used to support regeneration³³. This enables them to fully restore buildings so they can be repurposed and make money, but most local authorities have to rely on funding grants, which are very competitive.

The main funding body is the National Lottery which provides different levels of funding for the preservation of heritage assets. Nick Tyson of the Regency Town House believes that the National Lottery Fund has been compromised as it was meant to be for the “small fry”³⁴ but government cuts have resulted in all applicants being referred to it, with larger attractions inevitably out-competing smaller ones. There are smaller funders and foundations out there but not everyone knows about them or how to find them. The Heritage Fund has developed a directory of alternative funders which is a valuable resource: [Directory | Heritage Funding Directory](#)

Historic England is often seen as a large provider of funds, but their regional budget is limited for the area they cover and the level of need. Alfie Stroud from Historic England said his team is responsible for the whole of the South East, including London, with a budget of £1.5 - £2 million per year³⁵. It would be difficult for them to fund ongoing large projects like the Madeira Terraces, which could go on for years. Instead, they focus on funding smaller seed projects and help them work through challenges so they can develop sustainable approaches to regeneration.

High competition for funding

Brighton & Hove has a large number of heritage assets, which creates competition for funding at a time of limited resources. Listed heritage assets carry a statutory requirement for protection and are often prioritised over others. For example, the Royal Pavilion, which is

³² Derek Wright, TFG Meeting 5

³³ Catherine Jeater, TFG Meeting 3

³⁴ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

³⁵ Alfie Stroud, TFG Meeting 2

Grade I listed, requires significant investment. Hedley Swain, CEO, noted that “the Royal Pavilion hasn’t had any meaningful capital work or improvement for 40 years ... in the next 10 years they will need to spend around £40–50 million”³⁶. Evidence gathered by the group suggests that the prioritisation of high-profile sites such as the Royal Pavilion can have a detrimental impact on smaller or lesser-known assets, including the Regency Town House and the Pepper Pot, which also require funding. Once a major project within a city has secured funding, it can be difficult to return to the same funder for further support for different projects. Nick Tyson suggested that more collaborative approaches could help address this through cross-promotion, by developing joint ticketing with the Royal Pavilion to encourage visitors to explore lesser-known sites³⁷.

Another way to improve access to funding is to create a clear and realistic development plan for each asset. Then, if funding opportunities do arise, custodians are able to demonstrate that well-developed plans are already in place and can be delivered promptly. As Helmut Lusser from the Hove Civic Society observed, “...if there is already a plan in place, it can be implemented as soon as the investment has been found. If there is no plan, then nothing happens.”³⁸ This highlights the importance of proactive planning and collaboration with community groups to strengthen funding applications and accelerate the restoration of heritage assets.

Recommendations:

- **To support community groups to develop plans or strategies for heritage assets, ensuring that well-prepared, fundable proposals are in place so projects can move forward quickly when funding opportunities arise.**
- **The council to support joint-ticketing and promotional partnerships between larger heritage assets (such as the Royal Pavilion) and smaller assets (such as the Regency Town House) to raise their profile, increase visitor numbers, and improve their long-term financial sustainability.**

Strict Planning policy, Conservation and Climate Change.

To make any changes to buildings and structures that are listed or fall within a Conservation area, the owner must apply for Planning Permission. Depending on the heritage asset, they must also follow other strict policies, such as replacing like-for-like materials and following specific processes. While these requirements aim to protect heritage assets, they can be difficult to comply with in practice. Sourcing appropriate materials or contractors with specialist skills can be challenging and costly. In some cases, this makes some measures financially unviable, resulting in buildings deteriorating further rather than being repaired. In certain locations, additional land protections create further complexity. In Chichester, for example, Owen Broadway explained that planning applications must take account of requirements set by both the South Downs National Park and Chichester Harbour National Landscape, adding further restrictions when trying to maintain or adapt heritage assets³⁹.

Some of these strict rules seem counterproductive, especially when considering energy efficiency, sustainability, the impact of climate change and the need for modern standards. Climate change has made the weather more extreme, which affects heritage buildings that were not built to withstand it, “There was not the kind of heavy rainfall when the Pavilion was built and this degrades the building and has a serious effect on mould” Hedley Swain, CEO,

³⁶ Hedley Swain, TFG Meeting 5

³⁷ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

³⁸ Helmut Lusser, TFG Meeting 6

³⁹ Owen Broadway, TFG Meeting 3

told the group⁴⁰. In the past, officers saw fit to restrict permitted development rights for things like solar panels in conservation areas, concerned they would change its look and feel. As technology has advanced, these additions have got smaller and smaller and the argument of public benefit is clear. Historic buildings need to be allowed to modernise, in a careful and respectful way, in order to be fit for purpose and contribute to a greener future. Historic England acknowledges this and has produced an Advice Note to support consistent decision making for Planners on applications to improve energy efficiency and support carbon reduction of historic buildings. The group felt this could be taken further by lobbying central government to review and streamline planning requirements for routine building maintenance on listed buildings to reduce barriers for custodians.

Recommendation:

- **Depending on the outcome of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, the council could lobby central government to review and streamline planning requirements for routine building maintenance of listed buildings to reduce barriers for custodians.**

Working with Community Groups

The group heard from representatives of a number of community organisations across the city that are actively involved in caring for and campaigning for heritage assets. There is a strong level of public interest in heritage, with many residents keen to participate, offering their skills, experience and time to make a meaningful contribution. At a time of limited public funding, there is clear value in the council harnessing this community enthusiasm and capacity, particularly as it can increase resources and build resilience. Many volunteers are retired professionals with a lot of expertise who are willing to give their time. Community groups are also well placed to build local support and mobilise residents to raise substantial funds. The Saltdean Lido Trust reported that there were around 14,000 residents who viewed the Lido as a community asset and having their support was key to driving progress and accessing grants⁴¹. The strength of this local backing enabled the group to fundraise millions of pounds towards the restoration of the Lido. Similarly, the “Save the Madeira Terraces” campaign demonstrated the fundraising potential of community action, raising £17,600 through a raffle, with the associated crowdfunder generating £500,000⁴².

Evidence also highlighted that when community groups become more formal bodies, such as Community Interest Companies (CICs) or Trusts, they are often able to access funding streams that are not available to local authorities. The Saltdean Lido Trust became a CIC, which enabled them to secure funding to cover professional fees. The Historic Coventry Trust took on assets from Coventry City Council to avoid them going into further disrepair as they recognised that the council had more pressing issues to focus on and prioritise resources for. The Royal Pavilion was placed into a different kind of Trust model, where the council remained the owner, and the Trust was responsible for the management of the building. This meant it could access funding more effectively and reduce its exposure to local government budget cuts. This is something that could be explored for smaller assets, such as the Pepper Pot, although there are high set up fees involved.

There are also limitations to relying on community-led approaches. Volunteer involvement is not always sustainable, as individuals have other commitments and availability can change over time. Community groups often operate with limited resources, and the ongoing costs associated with maintaining and managing heritage buildings can be significant and difficult to secure funding for. There is also a skills and knowledge gap in some cases, particularly

⁴⁰ Hedley Swain, TFG Meeting 5

⁴¹ Rebecca Crook, TFG Meeting 3

⁴² Derek Wright, TFG Meeting 5

around navigating council processes or applying for funding. Rebecca Crook from the Saltdean Lido Trust said that “they didn’t understand the council systems and didn’t use them effectively, which wasted a lot of time, during which the building continued to deteriorate”⁴³. Having strong support from a local councillor was particularly beneficial.

Discussions with residents also suggested that relationships between community groups and the council could be improved. There was a perception that some groups are resistant to change and oppose development proposals by default. This risks heritage being preserved in a way that prevents the city from evolving, potentially becoming a pastiche of what it used to be. Helmut Lusser from the Hove Civic Society explained that their society approaches planning applications with an attitude of “yes... but”, whereas other groups default to “no, no, no”⁴⁴. He also described a perceived “us and them” dynamic when working with the council, with community groups sometimes feeling they were encroaching on officers’ roles. Other residents expressed frustration when trying to work with the council, suggesting that it can often feel unapproachable, and that councils need to build community support and communicate more effectively with residents.

The group agreed that there is a strong need for a new way of working with community groups. Their role, expertise and motivation were recognised as valuable assets that should not be lost or allowed to dissipate. Concerns were raised about inconsistency in the council’s approach and a gap between the community’s willingness to help and the obstacles preventing them from doing so. Introducing a shared “code of conduct” could help build mutual trust and support more positive, ongoing relationships. It was also suggested that the council should encourage community groups to collaborate more closely, for example through a confederation or network. This would enable groups to work together on larger projects, mentor one another on legal processes and navigating council systems, pool resources, coordinate funding applications and share best practice.

Recommendations:

- **To review council owned heritage assets and consider the different Trust models that exist that could allow community groups to take on the responsibility for some assets, whether through direct ownership or management; and to support groups to do so.**
- **The council to enable and support community-led maintenance of heritage assets.**
- **To introduce a “code of conduct” or “service agreement” between the council and community groups when working in partnership.**
- **Create a network of community groups who can provide advice and mentorship to other community groups wanting to look after a heritage asset.**

Other councils

The group heard evidence from officers from Southwark, Chichester and Bristol Councils, alongside the Historic Coventry Trust, which works in close partnership with Coventry City Council. All speakers highlighted the significant costs and funding challenges associated with maintaining and managing heritage assets. It was noted that councils such as Southwark, where there are a lot of development opportunities, are able to charge higher pre-application planning fees. This generates additional resources that can be reinvested into heritage services, including maintaining a fully staffed enforcement team.

⁴³ Rebecca Crook, TFG Meeting 4

⁴⁴ Helmut Lusser, TFG Meeting 6

Each council officer provided examples of heritage buildings that had been removed from the “at risk” register through restoration and repurposing. These case studies reinforced how difficult it can be to secure the initial capital funding needed to bring a building in poor condition up to a standard where it can be repurposed and become financially sustainable. Examples of repurposed buildings included community facilities, housing, holiday accommodation, an indoor skatepark and football pitch, wedding venues, creative spaces for artists, and workspaces.

Ian Harrabin from the Historic Coventry Trust described what he referred to as the “National Trust Effect”, drawing on the Trust’s partnership with the National Trust at a building known as the Charterhouse. The Historic Coventry Trust had been losing £100,000 per year operating the Charterhouse but once the building was promoted through the National Trust’s channels, visitor numbers increased significantly. “They have 5 million members so all they do is put the building in the brochure on their website and people turn up! It instantly brings in people and it’s vital to sustain this”⁴⁵. This example highlighted the impact that high-profile partners can have on the visibility and financial sustainability of heritage assets.

Peter Insole from Bristol City Council outlined the council’s role in enabling and supporting community groups to take on greater responsibility for the stewardship of heritage assets, emphasising the importance of partnership working. Owen Broadway from Chichester Council described a more hands-on approach to engagement, explaining that officers regularly attend community group AGMs and invite groups into the office to discuss upcoming planning applications. Catherine Jeater from Southwark Council highlighted the use of established forums, including the Conservation Action Group and the Peckham Heritage Partnership Group, through which the council engages with community groups both formally and informally. In these relationships, community organisations often act as a “critical friend”, providing constructive challenge and local insight.

One of the main aims of the Task & Finish Group was to look at how the council could work with residents to facilitate and enable them to protect their heritage buildings. The council cannot do this through allocating funding because there is little available. However, they can support community groups through providing advice and information, supporting them to become Trusts and CICs, helping them access funding, to partner with bigger heritage assets and organisations to help with publicity, to create spaces where community groups can collaborate and support each other, and to review how the relationship between the council and community groups can be more productive.

Acknowledgement of difficult histories

During discussions with Peter Insole from Bristol Council, the group explored how the city has responded to the controversy over the Colston statue. They took a proactive approach to addressing this difficult history by openly acknowledging the city’s role in the slave trade. The statue is now displayed in a museum in its post-protest condition, and the council has developed resources to help residents better understand local heritage. These include a toolkit for community groups and an interactive map, “[Know Your Place](#),” which overlays historical data⁴⁶. An academic has recently created a map on the transatlantic slavery economy, which shows who got compensation payments in 1833. This helps people to understand the ways in which compensation payments underpinned the development of businesses and infrastructure such as the Great Western Railway, the SS Great Britain, the Suspension Bridge, the zoo etc. Part of their new Heritage Strategy is a commemoration memorialisation section that talks about who should be remembered and how. It would be beneficial to include a similar statement within the new Heritage Strategy for Brighton & Hove.

⁴⁵ Ian Harrabin, TFG Meeting 1

⁴⁶ Peter Insole, TFG Meeting 4

The group welcomed Bristol's approach and noted that in Brighton & Hove there has been comparatively limited reflection on histories linked to slavery, or to Britain's colonial past. Davinder Dhillon, Chair of the Chattri Memorial Group and Trustee of the Royal Pavilion & Museums Trust, described proposals for a sculpture in the Pavilion Gardens to commemorate Indian soldiers who were treated there during the First World War. However, the funding for the Pavilion Gardens project aimed at taking it off the "at risk" register was to restore the natural boundary from the Regency period, and so far, the decision has been to only focus the designs on this period of time. This was seen to overlook its broader historical significance. The group took a view that Regency design and planting could happily co-exist with commemoration of more recent significant historical events, and were keen to support Davinder Dhillon in fundraising, demonstrate local support and find an appropriate location in the gardens to progress this project.

Similarly, in Cardiff, the National Museum worked with multiple communities to review the collections and develop meaningful responses to this history. Following the murder of George Floyd, it recognised a need to better examine histories of slavery and colonialism⁴⁷. It was noted that the involvement of artists with cultural connections to the history resulted in particularly moving, impactful outcomes.

Recommendations:

- **To add a paragraph to the Heritage Strategy committing to open and honest conversations about commemorating difficult periods in the city's past and sensitively explaining and contextualising their impact for local communities.**
- **To support the installation of a sculpture in the Pavilion Gardens commemorating the Indian Soldiers in the First World War**

Look and feel of the city

The look and feel of the city are important to both the council and residents. Allan Grainger of the Brighton Society noted that "heritage assets impact how we feel about the city", highlighting that the poor condition of the seafront shelters creates a negative impression and may influence tourists' perceptions of Brighton & Hove⁴⁸. The city's heritage forms an intrinsic part of its tourism offer, making it particularly important that assets in high-profile areas such as the seafront are well maintained. However, custodians face a range of barriers that can result in parts of the city appearing neglected.

The Brighton Society was concerned about heritage being disrespected and believed that those funding heritage projects normally want something in return that won't always fit in with the heritage site and can change the nature of the area. There are examples of this across the city, such as Circus Street, which some felt was built too high, affecting the city skyline, neighbouring buildings and being out of character with the area. Other developments have taken the area's history into account, such as the Rox building that was designed to include a nod to its former use as a cinema. Some areas in the city have been protected from this through being listed, such as Brunswick Square, which is subject to the Hove Borough Council Act 1976. This requires all properties to be painted every five years using a specific type and colour of paint⁴⁹. However, it was reported that some buildings to the rear were never listed and have now been converted and that the pavements need to be protected. "The pavement is of very high quality, shipped in from the South Devonian Ranges off Dublin's coastline and laid with great care Utility companies have since brutalised the

⁴⁷ David Anderson, TFG Meeting 7

⁴⁸ Allan Grainger, TFG Meeting 5

⁴⁹ [Brunswick Estate Repainting Specification 2026](#)

pavement during digs and smashed the paving stones”⁵⁰. There was a sense that owners, particularly in an area like Brunswick Square, are subjected to very strict rules when looking after their buildings but that utility companies can do what they like and have little respect for local heritage.

It is important not to forget the lesser-known heritage assets in parts of the city that tourists may not necessarily visit. Throughout the Task & Finish Groups, heritage trails were discussed as a fun and engaging way to encourage visitors and residents to see different parts of the city. Charlotte Barrow of Visit Brighton said visitors tend to come off the train and stay on the stretch of beach between the two piers which creates overtourism in the area. It would be a good idea to disperse visitors across the city and previous sculpture trails and Artists’ Open Houses are good ways of doing this. Incentivising these kinds of trails can be very engaging as people like to tick things off and feel like they have achieved something. Derek Wright spoke of creating lots of heritage trails linking all the wards in the city, encouraging people to walk and learn about heritage and wildlife from information boards along the way, which could include QR codes⁵¹. The Hove Civic Society is working on a project called ‘sculpture in the city’ and have started an arts trail in Hove. They introduced the Hove Plinth in 2018 and have invested £300k into it; it is the proposed starting point for an open-air sculpture gallery, which could initially stretch along the seafront from the Peace statue to the Lagoon⁵². Having everything listed as a heritage trail would bring people visiting the major attractions to also see the more obscure ones if they happened to be on the route. However, it wouldn’t necessarily result in money being raised and spent on the upkeep of those assets.

Wayfinding is a broader issue across the city, with information ‘monoliths’ that are outdated and, in some cases, covered in graffiti. Legacy signage dating from the period when Brighton and Hove were separate authorities remains in place, which can be confusing. This does not create a welcoming environment for visitors, who may struggle to navigate the city, and it contributes to a poorer overall look and feel. The Hove Civic Society are currently looking for funding to take over responsibility for the Hove Heritage Boards which were set up 30 years ago and are out of date.

Recommendations:

- **The council to undertake a review of signage and wayfinding in the city in partnership with community groups.**
- **To support community groups in creating art and heritage trails to encourage visitors to disperse more around the city and visit areas they wouldn't normally go. To consider using incentives to increase participation.**
- **Consider adding Brunswick Square pavements on the local list**

Changing attitudes

There was a feeling that tensions exist in the city around the idea of preserving heritage sites in aspic, with the Pavilion Gardens project choosing to represent only the Regency part of its history, some community groups always resisting change, and the strict policies and rules custodians have to follow to keep their buildings looking the same as when they were first built. The group felt that these attitudes need to be challenged as they don’t want the city to become a pastiche of what it was. Issues such as climate change, the continued use of materials that are not fit for purpose and unrealistically high maintenance costs demonstrate that things do need to change and not everything can be preserved as it is or was. New

⁵⁰ Nick Tyson, TFG Meeting 1

⁵¹ Derek Wright, TFG Meeting 5

⁵² Helmut Lusser TFG Meeting 6

initiatives and developments need to be introduced in a sensitive and respectful way to the surrounding area. Examples of other buildings internationally show how views change over generations, such as the Eiffel Tower, which was loathed by the locals when it was first built but is today a much loved and iconic tourist attraction bringing huge amounts of money to the city⁵³. The same can be said about the more recent Sydney Opera House or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, where these buildings ended up completely revitalising their areas. Preserving heritage sites should not stop high quality architecture and the new Heritage Strategy should act as a driver for quality. Councillor Birgit Miller said her vision was for “a city where heritage assets and buildings are in good shape, preventative maintenance is undertaken regularly, but also an understanding that there is space for the new and imaginative. We don’t want to be a museum, but a living, breathing, vibrant city – protecting heritage assets should not be about keeping everything the same, but about ensuring that the new is of a sufficiently high artistic quality that it enhances not diminishes a heritage site”⁵⁴.

Recommendation:

- **To ensure the Heritage Strategy protects and restores heritage assets, reflects the full range of the city’s history, and supports good quality new development, so that heritage is not frozen in time but can continue to change and be used in ways that benefit the city and its communities.**

Conclusion

The Task & Finish Group recognises that Brighton & Hove’s heritage is important to the city’s identity, community pride and visitor economy. However, evidence gathered shows that many heritage assets are deteriorating, with current approaches to maintenance becoming increasingly difficult to sustain due to long-term funding pressures, rising repair costs, strict regulations and limited specialist skills. These challenges often lead to delayed maintenance and higher long-term costs.

The group found that while restoring heritage assets can save the building and potentially generate income, securing upfront investment is difficult, particularly for smaller or lesser-known sites. Community groups play a vital role in caring for and promoting heritage, but reliance on volunteers brings its own pressures. The council therefore has an important role as a facilitator, supporting communities through clearer communication and better partnership working.

The Task & Finish Group also concluded that heritage protection should allow for sensitive adaptation, enabling the city to respond to changing needs, sustainability goals and climate impacts without freezing Brighton & Hove in time. Inclusive interpretation and storytelling can strengthen heritage by better reflecting the city’s diverse past.

Overall, the group believes that a more preventative, flexible and collaborative approach is needed. The recommendations aim to support the new Heritage Strategy and help ensure Brighton & Hove’s heritage is cared for in a way that protects and enhances the city for current and future generations.

⁵³ Cllr Miller, TFG Meeting 6

⁵⁴ Cllr Miller, TFG Meeting 6

Appendices

[Appendices](#) - Minutes from Task & finish Groups

