

Making History Matter

How children can discover heritage



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Foreword

'England's historic environment is one of our greatest national resources.... The historic environment is something from which we can learn, something from which our economy benefits and something which can bring communities together in a shared sense of belonging.'

(Tessa Jowell and Stephen Byers, Foreword, *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future*, DCMS/DTLR, December 2001).

The Government's landmark policy statement on the historic environment sets out a positive vision of our heritage and its relevance to contemporary life. A central plank of the Government's strategy is to provide free access for all children to historic sites. This proposal could provide an unprecedented opportunity to reconnect young people with their heritage and overcome the barriers of cost, distance and opportunity which exclude so many. How this is done will be critical to its success.

In this paper, the National Trust explores how we can give all our children the best and most valuable opportunities to experience the richness of our nation's heritage and to develop their creative potential through active learning and enjoyment. We welcome views on our proposals, seek support for their development and look forward to helping deliver the Government's commitment to ensuring the next generation can discover more about its roots and identity.

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Front cover: Children making theatre scenery during a London Links community project at Ham House, Surrey. NTPL/Ian Shaw

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Introduction

*'Every child should have the opportunity to visit the widest possible range of historic sites.'*²

The National Trust's proposals for how this vision could be realised are intended to stimulate and canvas support for our belief that every child should have the opportunity to enjoy direct and regular experience of the nation's historic environment and collections as part of their wider cultural entitlement. The Government shares this belief and has proposed the provision of free access for children to historic sites and buildings in England. This paper sets out initial thoughts on how such a scheme might be funded and administered, and we welcome further ideas on how it might be practically taken forward both in England and across the UK.

In preparing this paper, the Trust acknowledges the contribution of the Museums Association and we look forward to working with others to make free access a reality.

Background

Virtually everyone feels that all schoolchildren should be given the opportunity to find out about England's historic environment. A MORI survey in 2000 found that 98% of people thought it important for the education of our children¹.

The Government endorses this view. The need to make the most of the educational potential of our rich built and cultural heritage through structured visits for young people is a clear Government message. Its keynote policy statement, *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* in December 2001, announced its intention to extend the principle of free access to national museums and galleries to the historic environment sector. As the Government says, '*Visits to historic sites and buildings can really help history and other subjects come alive for young people, sparking their creativity and imagination. However research into similar activities in the arts has shown that a poorly organised day trip can be counterproductive and put children off for life.*'²

The historic environment has an important role to play in improving the quality of life in both urban and rural areas. Museums, historic properties and landscapes form an integral part of the identity of a local community and are a collective record of the pattern of life. Heritage is vital in developing concepts of stewardship and responsibility for the environment and our surroundings.

Since 1999 there have been a number of DCMS and DfEE (now DfES) funded museum education programmes where subsequent evaluation has confirmed the enormous value of structured learning experiences in providing positive impacts

1 *Attitudes Towards the Heritage*, MORI July 2000, commissioned by English Heritage

2 *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future*, DCMS/DTLR, December 2001

for pupils. This has brought benefits, not only in terms of new knowledge, but also new skills and new confidence and self esteem³ & ⁴. But these important initiatives have by their nature been short-lived and restricted to particular places.

To meet the Government's objective, there is a need to build additional and sustained capacity in historic sites across the country to provide quality learning opportunities for children, enabling them to develop their creative skills, such as imagination, problem solving, team-work, and concentration. By developing these vital skills, children will be better able to overcome low achievement, achieve their potential and improve their opportunities for future employment. There is also a need to find ways of reducing or removing the barriers – of cost, distance, and opportunity – so all children can benefit from the excellent structured education provision that already exists in so many museums and historic sites. By reaching out to all children, we can ensure that Britain's many diverse communities will also benefit from access to our heritage. This will address the concern raised in the MORI poll by ethnic minority groups who identified a need to make the historic environment more accessible through more inclusive information, interpretation and education.

This paper puts forward two proposals which would meet the Government's aim to give all school-age children the opportunity to develop their potential through participation in structured cultural visits to the historic environment. The proposals will also help schools to deliver Citizenship⁵ learning, which will become part of the National Curriculum from September 2002. Citizenship places emphasis on participation in activities and events which enable children to get involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhood and communities and to encourage pupils to be more self-confident in and beyond the classroom.

Government proposals

In considering a way forward to meet the objective of free access for all children we have looked at the Government's own emerging ideas. *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* floated two options for how the commitment to extending free access beyond the national museums and galleries might be delivered.

3 Education Challenge Fund, DCMS/MGC (latterly DCMS/Re:source) 1999–2001

4 Museums and Galleries Education Programme, DfES/Campaign for Learning through Museums and Galleries, launched 1999

5 Citizenship provides learning opportunities for pupils to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to play an effective role in society at local, national and international levels. It focuses on social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. There will be a statutory requirement for schools to teach the programme of study from September 2002.

(i) Free entry for all children to properties in the care of English Heritage and other bodies funded by central Government

While this proposal has the merit of administrative simplicity, it would be limited in its impact and have worrying side effects. Put simply, many places which are not included will suffer significant loss of income and important educational initiatives and innovation outside Government will be stifled.

Free entry to Government-funded properties would undoubtedly increase public expectations that all historic sites should offer free admission and educational services, a factor that non-national museums have been experiencing since the, albeit welcome, introduction of free admission to the national museums and galleries.

Many museums, National Trust properties and historic properties in private hands rely on income from educational visits in order to be able to provide such services at all. The National Trust's annual income from school and general visits from young people is estimated to be £3.03 million. This is critical for the support of our educational activities. The Trust uses the incentive of free educational visits to encourage pilots and innovation in the way schools and others use our properties.

Independent museums, in particular, are heavily reliant on income from school visits in order simply to sustain their operations. To give one example, the Galleries of Justice in Nottingham raises 80% of its income from education visits. This provides its core funding as well as enabling it to run a number of highly innovative programmes, such as those with young people at risk of offending.

We believe this option, by concentrating solely on English Heritage and other Government-funded properties, also fails effectively to address the need to increase the capacity and the expertise available to deliver increased non-traditional educational experiences. In addition, it fails to offer any solution to the transport problems – cost and availability – which are so often raised as the major barriers to extending school visit programmes to less accessible heritage sites.

We are not convinced this option, or others which have been floated, such as the promotion of a *Heritage Environment Week*, would effectively reach out to all children or significantly enhance the quality of experiences which are already on offer.

(ii) A voucher scheme for schools to allow free access to any historic property, whether in public, charitable or private ownership

The National Trust has explored this proposal in more detail as it has much more potential to deliver the Government's objective of reaching all children – again and again, throughout their childhood – regardless of location or background, giving unprecedented experience of the wealth of our heritage. We have also explored an alternative proposal, Heritage Partnerships, which has considerable merit.

Proposal One: Heritage Vouchers

The National Trust proposes the creation of a 'heritage voucher', issued to all children on an annual basis. The voucher guarantees free access to an officially accredited structured learning experience at a wide range of historic environment venues in public or private ownership. An additional, integral transport allowance would address the barriers created by the costs of getting to venues.

We believe this scheme, if properly designed, will deliver the following benefits:

- reach all schoolchildren, regardless of social background, location or culture;
- maximise choice and flexibility for children and groups and generate enthusiasm and interest in young people;
- deliver a significantly enhanced range of educational experiences which are 'quality assured';
- help build capacity in the heritage sector and its venues;
- tailor educational provision to the local area bringing greater understanding of the places where children live.

Vouchers would be distributed in such a way as to reach all children. The most practical mechanism would be through schools. This would also serve the purpose of ensuring that the vouchers are used and could provide consistency of delivery.

The use of schools would also encourage children to use their vouchers in groups as this would make it easier to include preparatory activities and follow-up work to reinforce the experience and build it in to a longer-term programme of work. For example, in the case of a museum, pre-visit activities could include a training session for the group leader and a loan kit, possibly including artefacts from the museum's study/handling collection. At historic properties a preliminary visit could be organised with the teacher, followed by an arts-based handling workshop or living history session.

It should be a fundamental principle that the activity offered in return for the voucher should be more than normal attendance at a venue. Vouchers would not be valid simply for free entry to a museum or a historic property that normally charges, but would provide for some form of structured activity or interaction with educational staff, interpreters or artists on site. This could include a hands-on session with museum artefacts, a participative workshop

with a performer or an artist, a living history demonstration or, at the very least, a specially designed children's tour or introductory lecture. An enhanced visit of this kind will be essential as part of any real commitment to meet the needs of new or occasional young audiences. Schools/groups need to have considerable flexibility in how they use the vouchers and we would encourage children to be involved in these decisions.

Cost

It is suggested that each voucher has a nominal face value of £5. This gives a cost for the educational element of the scheme of £35 million⁶. Transport costs are more difficult to assess as not all visits will require a transport contribution. If 50% of visits require the use of the transport pass at an average of £4 per child (based on 50-seat coach-hire at £150–£180 and making an allowance for accompanying adults or a short return journey by public transport with an accompanying adult) an additional annual cost of £14 million would be needed. Total costs of the voucher scheme (not including administration or start-up costs) could therefore be about £50 million per annum. These costs could be significantly reduced if the vouchers were made available every two years or if more capacity for outreach was developed and more local heritage places were made available for visits to reduce transport costs.

Initially, the scheme could be targeted at schools in disadvantaged areas in order to reach out to children who are normally excluded from this kind of opportunity. We would support the development of pilot projects which would be directed at young people in most need in both rural and urban areas.

⁶ This figure is based on 6.99 million children aged 5–15 in England in 2000, *Statistics of Education, Schools in England*, DfES 2001

Proposal Two: Heritage Partnerships

An alternative proposal involves the development of Heritage Partnerships where places of heritage value could develop ongoing relationships with a small cluster (say 2–4) of local schools. This would involve the schools working with the heritage site to decide on a theme and subjects to be explored, how best to use the stimulus of the place and who else to involve, such as a professional artist. Schools might, for example, work on an art and design project designing fashions and fabrics inspired by the property or the collections, or they could choose to explore the science behind the conservation work and produce their own leaflet explaining how objects and properties are conserved.

The schools would have a number of visits to the site each year and the schools themselves would be encouraged to visit each other. Schools involved within a partnership might complement each other, for example an inner city school and a rural school, and children would integrate with other pupils whom they might not normally meet. Each year a display of the work produced by the pupils would be exhibited at the property and parents, friends and the local community would be invited.

This proposal would:

- promote cross community links between students of differing cultural and social backgrounds;
- encourage a sense of ownership of heritage/countryside properties by local people;
- support the National Curriculum and the wider social curriculum with stimulating and enjoyable activities;
- develop a wider appreciation of our built and natural heritage among children and the community.

This model could be taken further by pairing schools with more than one place (for example a National Trust property and a theatre) or forging a more enduring relationship with a professional artist (such as a museum and a sculptor so that the museum's collections could be used as inspiration for the children to create their own artistic responses).

This model is likely to develop high-quality links. Experience from previous partnership schemes has shown that schools continue to work together and develop a sense of ownership and ongoing links with the property with which they have worked.

The Trust is piloting this kind of scheme through its pioneering Schools Partnership Programme supported by Redrow and Arts and Business. This programme will offer opportunities for schools of contrasting backgrounds to work together on curriculum-based activities at Trust properties. Through sharing ideas and skills, children will come together to produce high-quality exhibitions, events and performances that are showcased at Trust venues for the enjoyment of other students, teachers, families and members of the public. Individual properties will seek appropriate schools and, through consultations with LEA advisers, develop the partnership. LEAs have channelled the Trust to schools which do not usually get this experience.

Costs

The costs provided here for Heritage Partnerships are based on the Trust's Partnership Programme, which is a high-quality product at the upper end of what might be expected from this approach. Based on five visits to the property and one exchange visit to each school, costs are estimated to be about £40 per pupil over a three-year period. This includes the fees of a professional artist who would lead a series of workshops and sessions.

Transport costs have been forecast as an additional £25 per child over three years, although again this could be significantly reduced if more capacity for outreach was developed and pilot phases were adopted in key areas.

How would the proposals work?

Venues

We need a clear definition of what is meant by historic environment venues. Ideally, the widest possible interpretation of historic environment should be applied to include museums, galleries, historic buildings, archaeological sites, archives, industrial places, countryside and coast. The adoption of a broad definition would be in line with the Government's policy to encourage a 'joined-up' and holistic approach to planning cultural provision.

Potential venues would be asked to participate in a simple bidding procedure involving a written application detailing the nature of the structured opportunities on offer, an outline of capacity, information on the maximum frequency of visits during the year and – particularly with venues of high conservation sensitivity or limited size – ceilings for visit numbers and size. Partnership proposals between several heritage venues and schools which greatly enhance the learning experience would be encouraged.

Administration

It is proposed that a *Children's Heritage Fund* should be established between DCMS and DfES with an annual allocation made to each region using a similar formula to that used by DfES to apportion finance to Learning and Skills Councils. The formula would need to take account of the different distribution of heritage sites in regions. A regional strategic partnership would be needed to operate the scheme, although there would be merit in considering whether use could be made of existing administrative frameworks, such as Creative Partnerships,⁷ as a brokerage and support role for schools.

The Creative Partnerships programme has provided a useful model in drawing up these proposals, and its structure and commitment to ongoing shared initiatives lends itself, in particular, to Heritage Partnerships. While we understand the intention is to involve museums and historic properties within the Programme, we believe there is potential to widen the scope of the programme so that its objectives embrace and support access to the historic environment, and develop heritage as a key theme alongside art and culture. The structure of Creative Partnerships, in initially targeting disadvantaged areas, is a very valuable approach to follow.

⁷ Creative Partnerships, which is administered by the Arts Council of England, was awarded £40 million as part of the Government's Spending Review in 2000. It will develop long-term partnerships between schools, cultural and creative organisations and artists, offering a range of enhanced and sustained opportunities for children to work directly with and experience the work of artists, cultural and creative organisations. The initiative, which began in April 2002, will focus on 16 pilot areas in England. The choice was based on the need to have a range of locations – rural and urban, large and small – linked to deprivation indices.

Quality control

The educational services offered would need to be assessed and judged against nationally set criteria of quality and value for money (including agreed targets to measure customer satisfaction) and the process should result in the fixing of a set of officially endorsed venues/activities. A system of self-assessment would be needed, including annual reports to assess the suitability of the venue for future inclusion in the scheme together with quarterly progress reports, before the voucher could be redeemed. A system of external evaluation should be established, to enable at least a representative sample of projects to be assessed on a regular basis.

Capacity building

To cope with anticipated increases in demand, the proposals need to be introduced in a way that increases the capacity of venues and the skills available in the sector. While the costs of providing educational visits would in due course be met by venues being able to redeem the vouchers on application and on submission of a quarterly status report, many venues would require a level of initial funding to enable them to invest in building the necessary capacity. There is a particular need to build capacity to make more venues available locally to help children connect with their communities. There are great attractions in the localisation of history and everywhere has a story to tell.

Organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund or the New Opportunities Fund are well placed to build into their funding programmes recognition of the need to increase capacity, in terms of expertise, dedicated materials and other physical resources, linked to the delivery of the voucher scheme. Both the Learning and Skills Councils and the proposed Regional Museum Hubs could play a lead role in establishing skills development programmes aimed at supporting the heritage venue participants. There would also be scope for linking to the new Experience Corps⁸ which was launched by the Home Office at the beginning of the year, the aim of which is to encourage older volunteers to offer their skills and life experience for others to benefit from.

Partnership funding opportunities

These schemes are likely to attract a degree of private sponsorship. The likely benefits to a sponsor's reputation suggest a potential market for co-sponsorship on a national, regional and individual project basis. The success of the National Trust's

⁸ The Experience Corps is an independent, non-profit-making company, funded by a grant from the Home Office, set up to encourage people, aged 50 and over, to offer their skills and experience to benefit others in their local communities.

Guardianship scheme⁹, which is supported by Norwich Union, provides strong evidence to support this. The creation of award and/or affinity schemes also offers good potential for building private sector partnerships.

Publicity and marketing

A national launch will be needed. To save unnecessary marketing expenditure by individual institutions, local or regional directories of activities would be published on the internet under the distinctive *Children's Heritage Fund* brand. While there is merit in establishing a single, distinctive identity on the internet, the Government's new body, *Culture Online*, could also act as 'sponsor' or 'host'. Locally based publicity and advertising will also be required, and local libraries and community centres could play a marketing role.

Transport

Transport costs will be minimised if children are encouraged to use venues close to where they live. However, some groups may have a good reason to want to undertake an activity at some distance from their home. Action will need to be taken to ensure high transport costs do not disadvantage such children. In some cases this may be best addressed by encouraging venues to offer outreach sessions. In other cases it may be necessary to address the problem by funding transport.

Conclusion

The Trust has set out two proposals which have the potential to reach out to all young people, equally and without prejudice. They would offer every child the chance to stretch their imagination, develop their intellect, explore ideas and gain understanding, not just once or twice but systematically throughout their school years. The experiences offered will evolve as the child's knowledge and expectations grow, giving opportunities to deepen understanding and develop commitment to their local areas. Heritage Vouchers and Heritage Partnerships would provide flexible mechanisms to provide enduring benefit to our children and to our heritage.

The National Trust is the largest provider of school visits to historic houses, coast and countryside throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over 600,000 pupils visit our properties every year. The Trust protects over 245,000 hectares of land, 600 miles of coastline and 300 historic houses and gardens and is supported by over 2.8 million members. It is responsible for over 8% of our museums.

⁹ Guardianships involve a school and a National Trust property working in a mutually beneficial partnership. They involve pupils and teachers working with property staff to learn more about the site and the conservation work of the National Trust. They deliver elements of the National Curriculum, including environmental education and education for sustainable development, in line with the School's programme of study. Guardianships are a key route by which the Trust can forge community links. Currently, the Trust has 80 Guardianships remaining in England and Wales.