

# Sharing the Past with Everyone

## Case studies in site presentation

**An emphasis on popular enjoyment of the heritage is leading to exciting new approaches to presenting the past.**

### PROVIDING THE BEST DAYS OUT IN HISTORY

English Heritage cares for more than 400 properties, 115 of which are staffed and charge for entry. In the last financial year income from the operation of these staffed properties totalled over £33 million – a significant contribution to the running cost of the organisation.

Over the next 10 years we have ambitious targets for income growth, and that means ensuring our properties continue to stand out in an increasingly competitive environment. We have to ensure that our customers – whether a visitor looking for an inspirational afternoon, a company looking for a unique backdrop for a product launch or a couple seeking a memorable venue for their wedding – think of English Heritage properties first, have a great experience while they are with us and tell others about it.

Achieving these objectives depends upon two things: that we effectively communicate the experiences that visiting English Heritage properties will provide, and – critically – that we continue to invest in those experiences. We need to give people new reasons for visiting our

properties, and reasons to come back. We need to do this because every year those people are being presented with more and more choices, whether they are other heritage destinations or any of the myriad ways in which people can now use up their leisure time.

However, while we seek to respond to the needs of our customers, we are also careful to listen to the needs of the one thing that does not have a voice – the building itself.

Any investment in a property must be done sensitively. English Heritage is, first and foremost, a custodian of the historic environment. Our properties are not theme parks, they are the real thing and that must be reflected in the way we present them to the public. Nothing we do at our own properties should contradict advice we give to others, or undermine the intellectual integrity of the organisation. It is this integrity – the trust that people have in English Heritage to look after these treasures appropriately – that in turn makes them want to visit, support or sponsor us. Departments within English Heritage therefore work collaboratively to ensure that a balanced approach is taken to development.

The principal mechanism for investment in our sites is the Property Development Programme (PDP). PDP is one part of a long-term investment strategy and aims to ensure that developments take place at properties where the returns – in the form of admissions, retail, catering or hospitality income – are likely to be the greatest.

Projects are initially identified on the basis of commercial potential. Project boards are then established whose composition include representatives of English Heritage's Marketing Department – to ensure that developments are based on an understanding of the needs and expectations of our visitors – and Property Presentation Department – to ensure that any

Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman of English Heritage, and the local MP Julia Goldsworthy take a tour of the improved visitor facilities in the refurbished Royal Artillery barrack block at Pendennis Castle in Cornwall, part-funded by the EU Structural funds.



Guy Newman © Apex News & Pictures

interpretative elements are of the highest quality, and that the scheme as a whole does not compromise the understanding, character or significance of the building.

Throughout the project the team work closely with the local English Heritage inspectors to ensure that the fabric or setting of the building is not compromised. Where appropriate, any plans are also presented for approval to the English Heritage Advisory Committee.

Significant recent PDP projects include:

- Helmsley Castle – a new visitor centre (incorporating the town's Tourist Information Centre) and interpretation scheme
- Pendennis Castle – conversion of the Barrack Block into corporate hospitality facilities, new visitor interpretation scheme and education facilities
- Scarborough Castle – conversion of the Master Gunner's House into new interpretation and catering facilities
- Osborne House – creation of corporate hospitality facilities and a new restaurant in the former Orangery.

An investment strategy that focused solely on obtaining the greatest direct commercial return, however, would soon result in English Heritage operating a portfolio of sites where the most visited 10 or 20 were presented and operated in an exemplary way while the remainder were left neglected. Therefore, alongside PDP there runs the Annual Site Presentation Programme (ASPP). Unlike PDP,

the criteria for prioritising ASPP projects are based wholly on the need to appropriately present and interpret a site, without reference to the direct commercial return.

The benefit of this two-tiered approach is that it ensures that there is a minimum consistent standard of presentation across the portfolio as a whole. This means not only that English Heritage is fulfilling its obligations to *all* the buildings in its care, but also that wherever you see an English Heritage sign you can be guaranteed a level of quality that is matched by few other destinations. Recent ASPP projects include new interpretation schemes at:

- Tilbury Fort
- The Jewel Tower, Westminster
- Haughmond Abbey
- Prudhoe Castle
- Wharram Percy Deserted Medieval Village.

The proof of the success of this approach to product investment can be seen in the results. Investments at Helmsley Castle have resulted in a 143 per cent increase in income; Osborne House has seen a 500 per cent increase in hospitality income; Pendennis Castle, two months after completion of the project, had exceeded its hospitality income target for the year; Scarborough Castle has seen a £70,000 year-on-year increase in catering income. Many of these projects have benefited from EU funding.

Overall, the contribution to the organisation from commercial activities has increased every year for the last three years. And this growth



Helmsley Castle, North Yorkshire. English Heritage's new visitor centre, part-funded by Objective 2 of the EU's ERDF fund, is also the home of the town's Tourist Information Centre.

© English Heritage

in income is not at the expense of customer satisfaction. Over the same period our average visitor-satisfaction score grew to 8.9 out of 10, the highest it has ever been.

Through the sensible, sensitive, application of commercial principles English Heritage is demonstrating that it is possible to create a financially sustainable future for our properties while remaining an exemplary steward of the past.

**Dan Wolfe**

*Marketing Director, English Heritage*

### ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

**In the past, millions of European euros have assisted the development of historic sites in the UK and other countries. Repairs to historic monuments, new and innovative interpretation, visitor centres and car parks have all received inputs from the European Structural Funds (also known as European Regional Development Funds) in Objective 1 and 2 areas. The main target for this funding has been job creation, and the historic environment has benefited enormously.**

**Since enlargement of the EU to 25 countries in May 2004, all of which are substantially poorer than the UK, it is inevitable that this source of funding will be reduced in future. In its place, new collaboration partnerships are being developed, based on the idea of a shared European heritage. These are about exchanging ideas, conservation guidelines and broadening popular interest in the historic environment across Europe. EU funding on such projects will continue into the next decade, opening up many new possibilities for fruitful work. Here we outline case studies from the Interreg fund, the EU research programme and the Structural funds.**

### Converting Sacred Spaces

Converting Sacred Spaces (CSS), a €9.3 million European Interreg project, brings together the five Member States of Belgium, the UK, Germany, France and Ireland, with England represented by Fountains Abbey. The National Trust, owners of Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal, a WHS in North Yorkshire, is delighted to be working in partnership with English Heritage on a project which will bring both considerable funding to the abbey and an excellent opportunity to learn from the experiences of organisations elsewhere in Europe.

The project's objective is to convert sacred spaces in a way that respects the origins of the religious structure. It aims to give funding that will assist with future plans either to maintain the original function of each religious site as a place of peaceful reflection, meditation or as a green lung in an urban environment, or provide new functions by opening sites up to the public as tourist attractions, museums, art performances or educational facilities.

At Fountains Abbey the project will fund both conservation work and new interpretation facilities, including repair work to the waterways and high altar in the abbey; creating an interpretation base in the abbey gatehouse and producing an audio tour based on the history of the abbey.

As part of the project each partner country is involved in the planning and production of a European touring exhibition and conference. This will focus on religious heritage, looking at the role of abbeys and convents over 1,000 years and their relationship with the physical landscape and people at all levels of society. There has never been an exhibition on religious heritage undertaken by more than two partners, which makes this project an exciting challenge.

The touring exhibition and conference will take place at Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal from July 2006. The conference will illustrate the changing use of monastic spaces,

Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire: the surprise view of the abbey from Anne Boleyn's Seat.



© Paul Harris/National Trust

their evolution of meaning to different sections of society over time and how they can be positively managed in the present for the benefit of all. Themes relating to Fountains Abbey will include Cistercian use of space, post-medieval adaptation of sacred space, tourism and the designed landscape, the role of the state and the creation of 'national assets', and managing sacred space in the present.

CSS will raise the profile of Fountains Abbey in Europe. For hundred of years the ruined abbeys of England have been separated from the mainstream of European monastic tradition. This exciting project will create strong links across the abbeys of Europe in the 21st century and an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge with the present-day managers and carers of abbeys from Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Ireland. They will learn from us, and we will learn from them.

For further information visit [www.nweurope.org](http://www.nweurope.org), then follow the Projects link.

#### Sasha Jackson

*Marketing and Communications Officer, National Trust, Fountains Abbey*

### The Tintagel Regeneration Project

The Tintagel Regeneration Project was aimed at regenerating the local tourist economy of Tintagel village and was carried out in partnership with third parties under the overall management of a team within Cornwall County Council. It was part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (Objective 1) and the South West Regional Development Agency.

The objectives of the project, which was managed and part-funded by English Heritage, included:

- reinstatement of the beach steps (completed April 2003)
- improvements to the English Heritage visitor facilities (completed April 2004)
- purchase of land to improve the access track from the village (purchase completed March 2005; works to be completed in 2005–6)
- improvements to the mainland steps (completed March 2005 – difficulties in purchasing the land significantly delayed the original schedule).

Objectives of a parallel project managed by Cornwall County Council included improvements to the village 'streetscape', new public toilets, a shop-front enhancement scheme, archaeology and wildlife trails and better interpretation and marketing.

The project was initiated in 1998; European Regional Development Fund (Objective 1) funding was confirmed in October 2002 and was completed at the end of June 2005. The project has provided a welcome opportunity to develop understanding and cooperation between English Heritage and local partners, which has assisted in the execution of the project and should also be beneficial in the future. The partnership funding has also allowed English Heritage to invest in work that it may not otherwise have been able to justify on its own account, most notably the reinstatement of the beach access steps. Overall, the physical environment in Tintagel village and the commercial opportunities for the castle and the village have all been improved.

Alongside the regeneration work, English Heritage took the opportunity to develop an educational outreach partnership project with Arts Council England SW. This was successfully integrated into a local Living Legends Project, which was part of the last stage of the village regeneration scheme.

Alongside the management of the project, a Tintagel Forum, consisting of local traders and businesses and attended by English Heritage's local Visitor Operations Manager, was established to provide an opportunity for discussion of the project's aims and progress.

#### Loraine Knowles

*Visitor Operations Director (West), English Heritage*



Tintagel Castle, Cornwall: view of the new beach steps installed in 2003 to improve visitor access. The work was carried out as part of a wider Tintagel Regeneration Project part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (Objective 1) and in partnership with Cornwall County Council.

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## PICTURE

The PICTURE project (Pro-active management of the Impact of Cultural Tourism upon Urban Resources and Economies) examines issues relating to the impact of cultural tourism on small and medium-sized European towns. It aims to develop a framework for the creation and management of local tourism policies that will maximise the benefits of sustainable tourism, at the same time promoting the conservation and protection of the built heritage ([www.pictureproject.net](http://www.pictureproject.net)).

Four main objectives are being pursued:

- evaluating the dynamics of the effects of tourism
- identifying and benchmarking innovative urban governance strategies
- providing a method for facilitating the assessment of the impact of tourism
- disseminating existing knowledge and good practices.

The research is nearing the halfway stage, with the three-year project due for completion in February 2007. The work to date includes various studies on the impact of tourism in the following areas:

- a preliminary identification of likely positive

and negative effects of tourism in urban areas

- an analysis of collaborative management styles that can benefit small and medium-sized towns in the sustainable management of cultural tourism
- a survey of the impact on conservation of the built heritage
- the development of methods to measure the impact on the quality of life, to be tested in Belfast (Northern Ireland) and Liège and Mons (Belgium)
- an analysis of the impact on local economies at the European level, based on European statistics and information relating to the development of tourism in towns.

Further work is currently under way on the following:

- the development of a typology of attractors (ie places and events of interest to visitors)
- an analysis of the impact of European Capitals of Culture mobilising local partnerships between towns and private actors
- a first draft of an impact assessment methodology based on the SUIT Project (Sustainable development of Urban historical areas through an active Integration within Towns, EU 5th Framework Programme, completed in 2003), including the development of methods for measuring public perception of tourism development.

Fifteen towns throughout Europe have been selected as case studies including Cambridge and Chester in England, and Belfast and Derry in Northern Ireland. The research is being carried out in partnership with organisations from Belgium, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Northern Ireland, Spain, Luxembourg, Norway and Italy and is part of the EU's 6th Framework Programme; English Heritage's representative on the project is David Miles.

**Valerie Wilson**

*Research Officer, Archaeology Department, English Heritage*

## Crossing the Lines

English Heritage and Essex County Council have joined forces with the municipalities of Mortsel (Belgium) and Utrecht (The Netherlands) in a project which aims to develop restoration techniques, enhance tourism and improve the integration of historic defence lines in terms of spatial planning ([www.crossingthelines.com](http://www.crossingthelines.com)). Project work is taking place at the four locations described below.

- At Tilbury Fort, Thurrock, the project has

The Victorian elegance of the Crown Liquor Saloon, Belfast.



helped to finance a series of improvements to the interpretation and display of this English Heritage property. One initiative is an oral-history project to record the memories of people who lived and worked in the fort, the docks and along the riverside settlements of the Thames during the Second World War. Their recollections will be collected by local volunteers and made accessible to the visiting public via a touch-screen kiosk. A second initiative is the fitting-out of the underground gunpowder magazines of the north-east bastion to restore them to their appearance during the Victorian era. A survey of the fort also funded by the project will help formulate its future management and interpretation.

- On the Essex coast at Jaywick, an early 19th-century Martello Tower is being restored and converted for joint use as an arts facility and coastal watchtower. This site has been chosen as the pilot for an innovative heating and ventilation system, using and adapting the original ventilation channels. A further option is solar-heat collectors to supply additional sustainable heating.

- In Utrecht the restoration of Fort Aan de Klop is addressing the problem of how to maintain two different environments within one structure (the guardhouse dating from 1851). One should be suitable for the inhabitants of the cellar (bats) and one comfortable

for the people using the ground floor as a tearoom. Computer simulations have showed that extra insulation between the two environments is needed. Existing channels will be used for ventilation/heating, probably using gas-fired heaters and perhaps a heat-recovery system. When the restoration and landscaping of the fort is complete, it will re-open as a campsite, inn, teahouse and information centre.

- Fort IV, Mortsel (near Antwerp), is already a centre for culture and events. Here, experts have turned their attention to restoring the fort's once impressive brick façade. Studies to match and replace the original bricks and mortar (dating to 1859 and of poor quality) have been successful and the restoration is well under way. The project also seeks to restore the historic layout of the site by the removal of intrusive buildings and then to establish a multifunctional visitor centre.

It is anticipated that the lessons learned on these four sites will have a wider application on redundant fortifications across Europe. The Crossing the Lines Project receives European Regional Development funding through the Interreg IIIB Community Initiative.

**Sue Tyler**

*UK Regional Co-ordinator, Crossing the Lines, Essex County Council*



Interior of Fort 4, Mortsel, Belgium, built between 1860 and 1865, as one of a line of forts defending Antwerp. The Crossing the Lines Project has restored and replaced damaged brickwork.

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