Researching the Past Together:
Legacies of Community-led and Co-Produced Heritage Research

A report from the 'Heritage Legacies' AHRC Connected Communities project

Lianne Brigham from York Past and Present ties up a DIY plaque as part of the 'How should heritage decisions be made?' project (2014). Photo: Heritage Decisions.

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Cover Photo: University of Sheffield's Researching Community Heritage Jamboree (2014). Photo: Gemma Thorpe.

In 2011 the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) began to fund projects through a new 'Research for Community Heritage' theme in its Connected Communities programme. Research for Community Heritage developed collaborations between universities and communities through research on the past. It worked alongside the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) 'All Our Stories' research grants programme for community heritage projects, enabling university teams to support over 150 community groups undertaking All our Stories projects.

Between 2011 and 2013, 50 awards of between £15,000 and £80,000 were made by the AHRC through Research for Community Heritage to universities and research organisations, while in 2012 over 500 awards of £3,000-£10,000 were made to community groups across the UK by HLF. The AHRC has also funded community heritage research through other programmes.

The Heritage Legacies project engaged with some of these groups to understand the current state of community-led and co-produced heritage research in the UK.

Our project team

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Colin Shepherd, Bailies of Bennachie community group (Community Co-Investigator).
Jo Vergunst, Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen (Principal Investigator).

What we mean by...

Heritage: What we recognise and learn from the past, together with its influence in the present and what is passed on to the future. Heritage often invokes a sense of community or shared traditions, but it can also be argued over.

Community-led heritage research: An enquiry into the past that explores or creates heritage, undertaken mainly by members of a community working together.

Co-production: In the context of research, a process that involves professional researchers, such as university staff, working together with communities or other groups to make the research happen. Ideally, co-production entails substantial community involvement in all stages of the research.

Legacy: We are interested in the outcomes, benefits / disbenefits, sustainability and value of heritage research. All of these processes feed into its legacies, which in this context can be thought of as the ways in which research or its outcomes continue into the future and have effects amongst people and places.

York Past and Present developed public documentation of buildings as part of the 'How heritage decisions be made?' project (2014). Photo: York Past and Present.

The Heritage Legacies project

Funded through AHRC Connected Communities, Heritage Legacies documented the dynamics of relationships between universities and communities in heritage research. It explored the legacies of such research through four key themes:

- Learning skills: we investigated the spread of heritage research skills amongst communities, and the spread of skills of engaging with communities amongst academics.
- Sensing time: we explored how understanding the past from community perspectives entails bringing it into the present and imagining the future.
- Engaging with materials: We looked into the 'material legacies' created by heritage research – the significance of the things discovered and made through research.
- Working with ethics and politics: We studied the ethical positions and the ethical legacies of community-led and co-produced heritage research, together with the politics of working collaboratively.

Cutting across these themes is the awareness that dealing with difficulties and contestation is an important process. Heritage research is not necessarily easy or straightfoward, but problems can also be productive.

Top left: Keig School pupils working with Bennachie Landscapes Project (BLP), supported by the Univ. of Aberdeen. Photo: Keig School. Top centre: Heritage Lottery Fund All Our Stories (HLFAOS) project with Rotherham Youth Service – Portals to the Past, supported by the Univ. of Sheffield. Photo: Steve Pool. Top right: HLFAOS project with Theatre Nemo at HMP Barlinnie – Who Built Barlinnie? supported by the Univ. of Aberdeen. Photo: Theatre Nemo. Centre upper left: Caerau and Ely Heritage Project, supported by the Univ. of Cardiff. Photo: CAER Heritage Project. Centre lower left: BLP, supported by the Univ. of Aberdeen. Photo: Bailies of Bennachie. Centre: HLFAOS project with Riverside Music Project – All Our Tunes, supported by the Univ. of Aberdeen. Photo: Riverside Music Project. Centre right: BLP, supported by the Univ. of Aberdeen. Photo: Bailies of Bennachie. Bottom lefrt: HLFAOS project with Damned Rebel Bitches Scottish Women's History Group, supported by the Univ. of Aberdeen. Photo: DRB. Bottom centre: Univ. of Sheffield Researching Community Heritage Jamboree. Photo: Gemma Thorpe. Bottom right: HLFAOSproject with Rotherham Youth Service – Portals to the Past, supported by the Univ. of Sheffield. Photo: Steve Pool.

Methods and project activities

Heritage Legacies worked with project participants in order to reflect on the progress and outcomes of their work. In all cases, we engaged with other heritage researchers – from universities and communities – to develop our thinking and the outcomes to our work. This report represents another stage of synthesis that will be shared and further developed with participants.

We carried out case studies, interviews, workshops and a questionnaire, together with associated desk research. We had contact with around 50 projects in total, although we worked especially with communities and participants in four AHRC projects with which our team members are associated:

> The Bennachie Landscapes Project in Aberdeenshire (Vergunst, E. Curtis, N. Curtis, Shepherd)
> > http://www.bailiesofbennachie.co.uk/bennachie-landscapes/
> The Caer and Ely Rediscovering Heritage Project in Cardiff (Davis)
> > http://caerheritageproject.com/
> The University of Sheffield's Researching Community Heritage project (Johnston)
> > http://communityheritage.group.shef.ac.uk/
> The 'How are decisions made about heritage?' project based at the University of Leeds (Graham).
> > http://heritagedecisions.leeds.ac.uk/

If you are unfamiliar with community-led or co-produced heritage research, or the funding programmes described above, you may like to visit these project websites as examples of the work underway. This report does not provide case studies of heritage research projects, but instead attempts to synthesise and evaluate their legacies.

- We ran workshops in a wide range of forms, notably in Leeds in May 2014, in Cardiff in July 2014, in Sheffield in January 2015 and in Aberdeenshire in May 2015.
- We carried out visits to each others' projects and to a number of other All Our Stories projects, especially some situated in the north of Scotland.
- We provided a series of 'micro-legacy' bursaries to projects other than our own, which were used to explore the possibility that a relatively small but targeted sum of money could make a difference to the legacies of heritage research.

Heritage Legacies is one of seven projects looking at the legacies of the AHRC's Connected Communities programme. They met regularly in 2014 and 2015 under AHRC Leadership Fellow Professor Keri Facer.

How should heritage decisions be made?' project (2013-2015). Photo: Heritage Decisions.

Heritage Lottery Fund All Our Stories project with Roundabout Youth Housing Charity, supported by the University of Sheffield (2013). Photo: Justine Gaubert, Silent Cities.

Key findings

- The practice of research itself needs to be recognised as a powerful tool for community empowerment in heritage. While the 'authorised' heritage of mainstream heritage organisations is still a significant presence, developing skills of heritage research can enable a community to play a greater role in telling its own histories. Heritage becomes a form of active engagement rather than passive consumption.

- Ideas of 'heritage' are diverse and yet continue to be a real motivating force for community identity in the UK. Of crucial concern here is how spatial notions of scale and location – often using heritage to construct the significance of local place as a counterpoint to regional and national histories – intersect with the past, present and future. Through heritage research, links between places and times can be maintained or created anew.

- Many projects achieved results that could not have been achieved by one partner alone. Communities and universities each brought skills and expertise. One implication of this is that the roles of a university in society become open to question.

No longer the main or sole source of expertise and authority, universities in the heritage research we found were instead resources that communities could draw on, both materially and in terms of skills. Communities in heritage research, meanwhile, were often characterised by reaching outwards rather than creating boundaries around themselves.

Reflecting on the 'All our Stories' programme:

The Heritage Lottery Fund launched the All Our Stories programme in 2012 with the aim of enabling communities to explore and share their own heritage; it was inspired by the BBC television series 'The Story of Britain' presented by historian Michael Wood. HLF and AHRC formed a strategic partnership in which AHRC funded university researchers to support HLF's grantees in their community-led research.

HLF has published an evaluation of the All our Stories programme: https://www.hlf.org.uk/all-our-stories-evaluation.

Although it is beyond the scope of our work to provide a further overall evaluation of All Our Stories together with the AHRC's Research for Community Heritage, the projects and communities we came across were overwhelmingly positive about joining together for collaborative or co-produced heritage research. Almost all were proud of their achievements and most were keen to continue either specifically working together or to find ways of continuing their heritage research. Through learning about the details of projects' research, the Heritage Legacies team has been enormously impressed with both the quality of the research itself and the enthusiasm with which it has been carried out. Many examples from All Our Stories are drawn on in this report.

At the same time, issues of contestation and difficulty often remained. These centred both on the nature of the heritage research being undertaken within projects, and on the kind of working relationships between universities and communities that had been developed.

- Issues of ownership and control of heritage were brought into the open through some of the projects. In one of our workshops one community respondent wrote for us: 'Who owns culture? Who owns the training? Why is history hidden?' Despite the push for community heritage research, some found it hard to claim a position and a voice in relation to their heritage as opposed to that of academics or other professionals – yet were still working to do so.

- The sustainability of projects and community groups was also at issue. The All Our Stories programme created many new communities of heritage research. While continuing activity beyond the funded period was hoped for, we found many cases where groups who had been together for some time were better able to sustain heritage research beyond the funded period.. Brand new groups, on the other hand, often found it hard to keep momentum going. This also connected with a feeling among some that timescales for project design were very compressed, and not enough time was available to complete the work, especially for communities whom some felt move at a necessarily slower pace.

- There is not necessarily a single ideal way of funding community heritage research., although funding mechanisms and project design were mentioned to us on a number of occasions. In our questionnaire (a small sample of 23 respondents) 28% said community partners should be purely voluntary, 56% said expenses should be covered, and 17% said partners should be waged (which also reflected the funded of their projects). Many shared the view that 'volunteers should not be out of pocket' (as one put it) while others, especially some contributors to our workshops, felt more strongly: one wrote to us 'P(l)ay fair! Pay partner(s) as equals'. We would argue that the position of 'Community Co-Investigator' should be maintained and further promoted by the AHRC.

- University participants also expressed some difficulties with involvement in community-led or produced heritage research. One project PI described to us how his university did not sufficiently value his work for the community and the public engagement benefits that it brought, which chimed with concerns for valuing co-produced research in universities more generally. A Co-I on a different project related the real difficulties she had faced as a historian in getting to grips with an ethically complicated project involving co-production, raising questions about specific training in working with communities. Another PI described carrying out research amongst and between different communities who did not themselves work easily together, in the context of highly charged senses of identity and heritage.

Bennachie Landscapes Project, supported by the University of Aberdeen (2014). Photo: Bailies of Bennachie.

Learning skills

Skills development was one of the key purposes behind setting up partnerships between universities and community heritage groups in the Research for Community Heritage funding programme. Our research found many positive examples of new skills being learned and shared through heritage research, while also reflecting on difficulties.

Community groups

Community heritage groups identified three distinct sets of skills which their members had developed through partnership activities.

- The skills of investigating the past, including archaeology, archival research, oral histories, and using data to write and communicate. For example, the leader of the 'All Our Tunes' HLF project in Stirling commented on the importance for the members of her traditional music group of the archival work and fieldwork which they conducted. Working with an academic and participating in a Connected Communities festival and a history festival, 'everybody got a real buzz out of that and enjoyed them very much, and felt part of something better.'
- The ability to create learner-friendly historical materials, for those who worked with young people in both formal and informal learning contexts. Some of our participants described the development of skills of making materials accessible to adults who have difficulty reading and/or writing.
- Skills related to broader ideas of inclusion and life-long learning. These skills related to the ways in which participation in community history could help people to find their own voice and 'make a link to place so that you can fit into a community', as one put it. The University of Aberdeen worked with The Theatre Nemo company in Glasgow in their project with prisoners in Barlinnie prison, 'Who Built Barlinnie?' Theatre Nemo staff were shown how to work with archival materials, which enabled prisoners to explore the stories of the prison's 19th century inmates and relate them to their own lives. Many of the prisoners who took part had had disrupted education as children, and the experience of being involved in research was itself a significant one. It enabled reflection on similarities and differences between 19th century prisoners and themselves.

Universities

Skills development should not be seen as a one way process. Throughout Heritage Legacies there was a strong sense in which university staff also learned about themselves as researchers through working outside the academy. Work in schools provided a rich opportunity for university staff to learn first hand with teachers about the place of heritage in the curriculum (an example being Social Studies in the new Curriculum for Excellence in Scottish schools). A University of Aberdeen early career researcher working with the All Our Tunes project reflected that she had gained confidence in working with young people both in informal settings and in a school. It led her to develop further research with children and adults on funerary landscapes. Another early career researcher made a direct connection between ex-thread mill workers in Paisley researching their community heritage through the All Our Stories programme, and a Canadian First Nations community. The connection resulted in a new pair of slippers made in Canada embroidered with the Paisley threads. This enriched his own understanding of 'community dynamics in the way of doing things and the flows of a small town' as he put it.

At the same time, some university staff found themselves in difficult situations in working with communities that had a range of expectations and levels of prior experience, as detailed above. We would argue for an increased role for staff training and career professional development (CPD) in supporting academics in collaborative and community-based work. The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) offers training in this field which many currently benefit from, and others could do so.
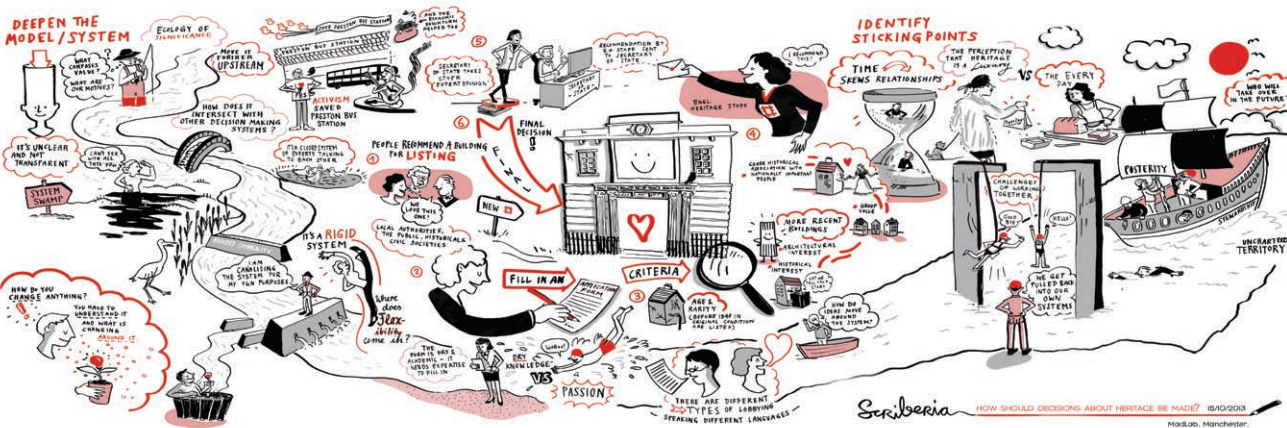
An illustration of how heritage decision making works systemically, developed as part of the 'How should decisions about heritage be made?' project (2013-2015).

Sensing time

Understanding the past from community perspectives entails bringing it into the present and projecting it into the future. In some cases this was an explicit aim of co-produced or community-led heritage. The University of Sheffield's Researching Community Heritage programme of All Our Stories support was grounded in the concept of 'action heritage'. This works towards addressing social inequalities through a dispersed and redistributive model of research practice – linking heritage, social action and social justice. One example involved university staff supporting clients of a youth housing charity in researching the hostel where they stayed, and connecting that history with their personal biographies. Excursions to learn

Heritage Lottery Fund All Our Stories project with Rotherham Youth Service – Portals to the Past, supported by the University of Sheffield (2013). Photo: Steve Pool.

about the architecture and life of Georgian Sheffield offered some vivid moments: on a guided walk around the streets near the hostel, visiting a former nineteenth-century asylum, one of the young people described the electric shock treatment he imagined went on inside and joked, 'I can see into the past'. We also heard from a community group in Walthamstow, London, who were working to maintain community facilities in a valued library building that had been recently closed by the council. The point was about the significance of what might appear as ordinary places for local senses of identity, where deep historical time is not the only form of time relevant to heritage:

'Heritage for most people, especially in an area like East London, it's not museums, it's not houses where famous people are born. Heritage is a living thing. It's a changing thing.'

Indeed, the very perception of heritage as a movement through time can easily be overlooked in favour of a narrow spatial perspective when a resource is under threat.

'It feels like a heritage issue for many people, but of course for the council it's a "space". It's a pressure on new housing and things like that. So those are the tensions.'

Legacies through time

The legacies of this research are also developing through time in distinctive ways. We found that communities themselves can coalesce and change through conducting research on the past (see key findings above). The research process itself is conducted over a span of time – unlike a one-off consultation about heritage for example – and the progress of a project might be analogous to how it uncovers the past and makes connections with the present and future. A frequent juxtaposition was the mainstream or authorised heritage understanding of preserving the past 'for ever', as opposed to communities' desires for telling stories and engaging with materials. It is not simply a question of 'short-term' compared to 'long-term' legacies, but rather different ideas of what heritage could and should mean,

where heritage items can play into understanding the present and future as well as the past. Understanding the temporalities – the qualities of time – of community heritage offers important insights into the meaning of 'legacy' for the Connected Communities programme.

Heritage Lottery Fund All Our Stories project with Heeley History Workshop, supported by the University of Sheffield (2013). Photo: Gemma Thorpe.

Engaging with materials

Co-produced heritage research involves working with the material qualities of things and places. While much recent research focuses on the significance of 'intangible' heritage (e.g. cultural traditions and performances) the groups we worked with were involved with the tangible as much as the intangible – often suggesting that the divide between the two is not meaningful.

Handling materials

For many community groups, opportunities to discover and handle objects and historical documents, or to work with places and landscapes, were at the very heart of the research experience. On archaeological digs, the discovery of 'things' is always engaging, and digs can also be an immersion in the landscape for their communities. These material encounters underpin many comments made to us about the hands-on nature of heritage research: 'because you're excavating, you can actually tie things in and find about the lives of the people' as one community participant in the Bennachie Landscapes Project (University of Aberdeen) put it. Others noted the significance of being able to handle original archival documents too.

Caerau and Ely Heritage Project, supported by the University of Cardiff. Photo: CAER Heritage Project.

The politics of materials

Yet in some of the projects we followed, the politics of materials were not straightforward. In community-led and co-produced archaeology projects, there was often concern over where the finds would end up. Many felt that finds belonged to the community and should end up close to their place of discovery. While administrative regimes for dealing with finds differ across the UK, they provide little opportunity for a community voice to be heard, as opposed to that of heritage professionals or individual finders such as metal detectorists. We would argue for a greater say for communities and more opportunities for community organisations to be involved in heritage curation and ownership. At the same time, materials often provided the basis for alternative renditions of heritage. In York, the 'How are decisions made about heritage?' project led by Graham created temporary DIY Blue Plaques with people living locally to commemorate events outside the authorised heritage mainstream. At the Caerau archaeological dig, clay pot modelling activities for children enabled a practical engagement with Iron Age forms and technologies. 'Materials' in community heritage projects are not always to be preserved and kept apart.

Keig School pupil working with Bennachie Landscapes Project, supported by the University of Aberdeen. Photo: Keig School.

Working with the ethics and politics of collaborative heritage research

Two key issues that emerged repeatedly were the question of 'ownership' and the meaning of 'co' in co-production or collaboration. Any simple idea of fully collaborative ownership over a site, objects or knowledge was complicated by the various projects and workshops we ran.

Time and energy

A point made very clearly at our workshops was that university and community groups operate on different timescales and are able to muster different types of energy for projects. Colin Shepherd made the following observation during a workshop:

'An institution has to function in a certain way because of its commitments. It is different to how a community functions. Institutions can manage short high-activity bursts. Communities do low level activity over long periods of time. In Bennachie Landscapes, two things are working in parallel. When funding allows, Jeff can come in from the University and connect into a community of people there, burst of activity for a while, [the academics] can go away again, we retrench back to plod, plod, plod. You can't make universities and community groups function in the same way.'

Contributions

There was a strong emphasis on the benefit of the different forms of expertise and contribution offered by academics and community members. For example, in the archaeological projects we looked at it was the academics who set the research questions in relationship to prehistoric archaeology but there were also aspects of the research which ended up being driven by the community members, with the recognition that 'the community did galvanize around the more recent histories'.

'Life of its own'

Co-produced and community-led heritage research seeks to engage a variety of different places and audiences, and academic debates are only one site for impact.

'What has been most amazing, co-production took the project which academics started and took it in ways I would never have imagined. A lot of the events are only loosely connected to heritage, artists working in the community. Archaeology has been the inspiration – and then there has been the community's response to it'.

'Where to dig and what to do with that information was driven by academics, but creation of the exhibition and the circulation of the exhibition. It's gone off. I have no idea where it is right now. The community takes you by surprise'.

Negotiating more varied approaches to decision making

Emerging from the research on the legacy of Connected Communities heritage projects is the sense that neither only hierarchical vertical governance of projects nor completely horizontal, collectivist approaches were in operation. As captured by the 'How should heritage decisions be made?' project, what projects often need is a nuanced decision-making processes which can recognise the different energies and timeframes of universities and community groups. For example, there might be a form of central drive that comes from academic leadership but this might be complemented by a shared forum for debate where the variety of contributions can be recognised. Equally it was clear that successful projects also allow for lots of different people and motivations to be unleashed with more DIY, self-generating strands in evidence as well so that projects could spin out and generate a 'life of their own'.

University of Sheffield Researching Community Heritage Jamboree (2014). Photo: Gemma Thorpe.

The Heritage Legacies 'micro-legacy' projects

During the Heritage Legacies project we commissioned a set of small-scale experimental research activities from other projects funded through AHRC Connected Communities. They were intended to create, enhance and help us understand more about the legacies of co-produced and collaborative heritage research. Seven awards of £1000 or less were made following a call for proposals, drawing on a dedicated fund within the Heritage Legacies budget. Each micro-legacy project produced an end-of-award report and these have been made available on the Heritage Legacies website. Here is a brief summary.

Transmitting Musical Heritage micro-legacy project

Led by Kate Pahl, University of Sheffield
The original project explored the diverse contemporary musical heritage of the city of Sheffield. As a micro-legacy, academics and musicians worked together on a substantial piece of writing for publication that discussed collaborative writing and music-making, thinking about improvisation, voice and rhythm.

Digital Building Heritage micro-legacy project

Led by Nick Higgett, De Montfort University
The Digital Building Heritage project worked with 11 different heritage groups on digital resources for community engagement. The micro-legacy work involved a follow-up study to investigate how far the digital resources had been successful in achieving their aims, in order to inform future work.

Sharing and Sustaining Black Heritage in Nottingham micro-legacy project

Led by Susanne Seymour, University of Nottingham
Based on a grouping of Connected Communities projects, an experimental community-focused workshop was held to share and take forward Black heritage research in Nottingham. The well-attended day provided much useful thinking on the nature of collaboration and how to sustain the research.

Who Owns the Heritage? micro-legacy project

Led by Jodie Matthews, University of Huddersfield
The original Connected Communities project reviewed Humanities research on Britain's Romani/Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Micro-legacy funding enabled the identification and further development of the most useful parts of the work for these communities (a bibliography and a podcast), along with a theme on visual imagery not previously considered.

The Lavender Project – Woodend Barn micro-legacy project

Led by Helen Smith, Robert Gordon University
This project was about generating community reflection and feedback on a collaborative art project about historic lavender production in rural Aberdeenshire, undertaken as part of an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Studentship. A film informed by artistic values was made in order to create further dialogue.

Not Lost the Plot micro-legacy project

Led by Colin Hyde, Leicester University
The original 'Not Lost the Plot' community project about the heritage of set of private allotments in Leicester. A film-maker was engaged to produce a documentary film based on interviews with community members and academics. It noted the value of considering legacy as a retrospective activity at one step removed from the research itself.

Discovering First World War Heritage and Leeds Stories of the Great War micro-legacy project

Led by Alison Fell, Leeds University
This micro-legacy work produced a large showcase event for a group of First World War community heritage projects. Projects shared their findings with each other and the wider public, and legacy interviews with participants also took place. A particular benefit was in enabling re-connection and continuity between different groups and projects.

Learning from the micro-legacies

•   Legacies do not necessarily emerge straightforwardly from the funded period of research. Providing projects with a small but additional resource after the funded period enabled specific legacies to be generated: new forms of reflection and learning with participants (Hyde, Higgett, Smith), new research directions (Matthews, Seymour), and new forms of dissemination and engagement (Fell, Pahl). These all contribute to sustaining the research and its outcomes.

•   Projects now usually consider 'impact' at the start of their research, but planning for legacy is also important. The AHRC could consider mechanisms for resourcing legacy work for projects after the formal funded period. While follow-on grants exist, our micro-legacy bursaries demonstrated that for co-produced heritage research at least, a further 'large' grant, with all the effort and commitment that entails, is not always what is needed. If the micro-legacy experiment is seen as successful (and we would argue that it was), the point is not that it necessarily needs to be scaled up into ever larger grants or projects, but rather that community projects may value a relatively easily accessible but small sum with which to capture further benefits of their work following the funded period.

•   There is a broader point here about the success of spreading funding fairly broadly in the AHRC's Researching Community Heritage, rather than supporting a small number of large grants (which are present in other parts of Connected Communities, for example). Community heritage is frequently positioned against the mainstream or 'authorised' accounts of the past, and it may be that a funding model that reflects this bottom-up approach to heritage works well for universities too. Local heritage organisations may have more confidence and capacity for handling these grants, which enable smaller or non-mainstream organisations to have an active role in heritage research.

The DIY Heritage Manifesto, developed by Danny Callaghan as part of the 'How should decisions about heritage be made? project (2013-2015).

Conclusions: the future of co-produced heritage research

Imagine ourselves ten years from the publication of this report, in 2026. What does co-produced and collaborative heritage research look like, and what have the longer-term legacies of research carried out in the early 2010s been? The following speculates on a best-case scenario.

Funding agencies

Funding agencies have built on the experiments led by the AHRC and HLF in funding collaborative and co-produced heritage research. Community Co-investigators are now embedded in research projects in numerous disciplines. Further mechanisms for funding community involvement, including appropriate organisational overheads, expenses and honoraria for volunteers, have diversified and now form a suite of possibilities to suit different forms of collaboration. Funders frequently work together to create new initiatives – often with an emphasis on working from the bottom up – and cross-refer proposals to each other for assessment. Research Councils and other partners have successfully made the case to government that heritage research creates multiple benefits for social inclusion and sustainability.

Communities

Communities have been enabled to have a much greater role in researching and telling their own heritage stories. Many groups built on their successes during the initial AHRC / HLF programmes to develop long-term and broad-based research practices. Some have taken the initiative in connecting with universities and other community organisations, including internationally, and their members are able to publish and disseminate their work in a variety of forms. Legislation has been introduced across the UK to institute a greater community say in what happens to archaeological finds. Community-based organisations, including schools, have become accredited holders of certain classes of finds, and regularly loan items of national significance for research and display.

Universities

Research on heritage is now recognised as being at the vanguard of universities' roles in their communities, both local and global. Projects focused on contemporary place and community are expected to include heritage research, while heritage projects routinely create legacies for current and future generations. Universities have shifted from valuing collaborative work with communities not just as public engagement or impact but as primary research. Universities' values, as described in their mission statements, are becoming based in democracy and participation, not in a narrow conception of specialist expertise. They provide training themselves and bring in training provides, for staff and community members on how to work collaboratively, based on extensive experience and long-standing relationships.

*Photo right: University of Sheffield's Researching Community
Heritage Jamboree (2014). Photo: Gemma Thorpe.*

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