

HESCAPE

COLLABORATION IS THE KEY TO ADDRESSING SKILLS CHALLENGES: THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SKILLS AND CAREERS ACTION PLAN FOR ENGLAND

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The heritage sector faces many challenges when it comes to workforce development. There are long-standing issues with barriers to career entry and progression, and a range of recorded skills gaps and shortages. These issues are further compounded by global challenges like climate change, which necessitate new and adapted skills.

Collaboration is key to addressing these issues – not just across archaeology but between the different sectors that work in the historic environment.

The Historic Environment Skills Forum, established in 2022, brings together representatives from across occupational areas to share good practices and resources, enable discussions on challenges and collaborate on solutions.

The Skills Forum has an open membership, currently exceeding 235 individuals (many of whom are accredited CIIfA members and represent Registered Organisations or Special Interest Groups), and is led by a Steering Group.

In September 2024 we published the first ever Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England (HESCAPE)
https://khub.net/web/resiliencehub/resources-ddl_display/ddl/1090938873/939835164/maximized

This evidence-based plan provides a framework for addressing skills challenges across the sector. HESCAPE identifies high-priority skills areas, including post-excavation specialist skills for archaeology, and proposes a range of actions and activities, implementable through collaboration, to benefit all skills areas.

Priority activities identified in the current plan period include

- enhancing retrofit training to better reflect heritage
- securing resources for career entry opportunities
- piloting a shared apprenticeship programme for heritage
- embedding heritage more effectively into mainstream education

An extract from the
Historic Environment
Skills and Careers
Action Plan for
England. Credit:
Historic Environment
Skills Forum



2. The Employment and Skills Landscape in England

A quarter of heritage construction firms are experiencing skills shortages, with 15% having to turn down work on pre-1919 buildings due to lack of available knowledge and skills

Around a third of conservation organizations have reported challenges with recruitment, citing low overall numbers of applicants and difficulties meeting the requirements of jobs advertised

The largest Archaeological organizations have seen a 20% increase in those who had to hire-in specialist skills in a range of areas as they do not have them in-house

Technical skills are often not explicitly mentioned in job descriptions, particularly with employers relying on academic or professional qualifications to provide



If you want to see action on skills issues, then you should be part of the solution!

You can now do this through the Skills Forum Working Groups. These allow individuals to engage more fully in specific topics of interest to them and give ownership to the sector to develop the brief for and delivery of HESCAPE activities.

Current Working Group topics include

- developing and improving formal training and qualifications for heritage
- supporting approaches to work-based learning within organisations
- collecting, analysing and using more detailed labour market intelligence
- mapping the skills funding landscape (including procurement) and better sharing and coordination of funding opportunities
- focusing on 'green' skills for heritage

To get involved, visit <https://khub.net/web/historicengland> and click on 'Historic Environment Skills Forum' to join.

Delegates at a Historic Environment Skills Forum workshop helping to develop the action plan. Credit: Historic Environment Skills Forum

Phil Pollard

Phil is Heritage Career Pathways Manager at Historic England, where he manages their strategic approach to improving workforce skills and careers. He chairs the Historic Environment Skills Forum, which has recently published a Skills and Careers Action Plan for England that highlights post-excavation skills in archaeology as one of its priority areas. He also chairs the Historic Environment Trailblazer, which has developed seven new apprenticeship standards, including the Archaeological Technician and Archaeological Specialist apprenticeships. Phil is a Trustee of the Council for British Archaeology and is Vice Chair of the ClfA/UAK Degree Accreditation Committee.

