

# HOW ORGANISATIONS WITH LIMITED INFLUENCE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A literature review on influence strategies,  
good practices and evaluation frameworks

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for the National Audit Office

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND ACTION PLAN:

## What English Heritage can learn from the literature review and 'good practice' cases to achieve successful outcomes

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Starting point

- There is now wide recognition in the academic community that 'control' is no longer an appropriate word in management and governance – it exaggerates the effects which any actor or any organisation can have on another. We are now well and truly in the 'age of influence', where 'control' is not available but we are nevertheless expected to find ways in which we can persuade others to do things which further our own goals. So the situation of English Heritage is by no means exceptional – it reflects the challenges faced by many public agencies at all levels of government.
- The bad news is that there is currently no good practice database nor any evaluation framework which gives a lot of guidance on how organisations may effectively lead, influence and work with others over whom they do have some degree of influence. Therefore, the 'hand-picked' case studies in this report should be particularly valuable for English Heritage to get new insights on how to achieve outcomes through influencing stakeholders and partner organisations.

#### Influence strategies

- There is now a wide range of academic theories and concepts which identify influence strategies and ways in which such strategies can be implemented. The literature reviewed in this report includes regulation theory, institutional theory, principal-agent theory, public value, network theory, organisational psychology on persuasion as well as social and public marketing literature.
- While some influence strategies are highly relevant to the context of English Heritage, others are less appropriate. The latter

include political pressure for legislative or regulatory change (except in very special cases) and social pressure based on coercion, given the limited powers of English Heritage. However, English Heritage should be encouraged to look at specific forms of using professional pressure, social pressure, personal pressure, making inter-organisational agreements and mobilising public support for increasing visits from priority groups to heritage sites.

### Good practices to implement influence strategies

- There are different ways in which influence strategies may be implemented. For example, English Heritage may choose to exert professional pressure on other organisations working in the heritage sector by jointly devising a good practice scheme to showcase and reward organisations with effective engagement practices targeted at priority groups. Furthermore, the behaviour of professionals working in the heritage sector can be influenced through a code of conduct promoting equality and diversity. Such a conduct can be combined with a ‘good practice’ scheme showcasing organisations which have implemented the code in an exemplary way. Another way to use professional pressure is to devise a new training scheme for professionals (e.g. front-line staff) working in heritage sites which enables them to deal with priority groups more effectively. More short-term actions may include the recruitment of interns from priority groups to work with English Heritage staff or to implement a coaching scheme for English Heritage managers by working with staff from NGOs or other heritage organisations with experience with priority groups and community engagement.
- Therefore, English Heritage would be well advised to develop an action plan with some short-term actions producing quick-wins but also including medium- and long-term influence strategies which will only gradually show results. As institutional theory points out, changing perceptions and behaviours take time. Therefore, it is important to give the action plan some ‘teeth’ by including measurable performance targets, which is itself a good way of demonstrating the public value of heritage sites for priority groups. The following sections will outline which actions English Heritage may consider for the short-, medium- and long-term.

## Evaluation framework for assessing use of influence

In evaluating the success of influence strategies, a number of key questions can be asked:

- Have the full range of influence sources been used?
- How much leverage is an influence source able to exert through using the mechanism?
- How many mechanisms has the organisation been able to use, by calling up all the sources of influence available to it?
- How many mechanisms have been activated by multiple sources of influence?
- What is the strength of the links between the mechanisms and the influence targets?
- How many influence targets have been hit, through the use of the influence mechanisms?
- How many of the influence targets have been hit by more than one influence mechanism?
- From the point of view of the influence targets, are there any countervailing influence pressures? Are the influence targets being pushed by other influence mechanisms which are being activated by other stakeholders in ways which might counter the pressures which English Heritage is seeking to apply?

We suggest that the use of this checklist may help English Heritage – and those organisations which are holding it accountable – to scrutinise its use of influence strategies to identify ways in which they might be strengthened.

## ACTION PLAN


Here we group a number of the lessons which emerge from the literature review and case studies in terms of actions which English Heritage might undertake in short-, medium- and long-term periods. We do not attempt to make an exhaustive list of all the actions which might emerge from our report but rather to give a flavour of some key actions which might be valuable for English Heritage within these different time scales.

### Short-term actions

Only a relatively small number of the influence mechanisms picked out in this study are likely to be able to be implemented in the short-term (e.g. within the next year or so). In particular, social marketing techniques can often produce ‘quick wins’, as can partnership agreements with organisations which themselves are good at influencing the target groups (e.g. schools).

#### Improve social marketing

Social marketing aims at influencing the behaviour of priority groups and their communities, which is much more ambitious than advertising the benefits of a product or service in a private sector context. Clearly, this involves consumer-oriented research and consultation, marketing analysis and market segmentation – but none of these activities need take long to carry out. Case Study 10 shows how important it was to change public opinion about the feasibility of a major regeneration project in the town of Hayle in Cornwall. This required the Prince’s Regeneration Trust to undertake consultations and public meetings with the communities concerned and, in the end, this consultation process resulted in the necessary support to raise funds and to gain the commitment of key stakeholders. In Case Study 11, the use of *customer insight techniques* helped Sunderland council to market payment by direct debit more effectively to particular groups of customers by encouraging them to take up local services through a different channel. Similarly, English Heritage might take a fresh look at heritage sites by using the market intelligence gathered by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in their interactive map of minority groups in Britain, showing for 30 cities and other areas the most numerous minority groups in that area – this would allow more appropriate targeting of the kind of influence which it exerts in each area to get site providers to explore new



ways of encouraging BME participation. Case Study 12 shows that a new marketing approach may attract completely new audiences to heritage sites and suggests that there may be pay-offs to English Heritage in working with digital media companies/research centres at universities and local artists to explore new ways of presenting heritage sites so as to appeal to people who are attracted by audio-visual performances – an audience segment who are now making up a growing proportion of the population.

### **Pilot and roll-out partnership working with schools and youth services**

Case Study 6 shows the benefits involved of working with local schools. Even though they may not be resource-rich they have the natural advantage of being in touch with children and young people, and in many cases, with the wider local community as well. “*The way we can see it*” project in the priority ward of Hadley, which has the highest BME population in Telford, engaged local people of all ages in producing a digital snapshot celebrating the cultural diversity of this community through art workshops run at local schools, and brought heritage sites closer to the local population.

Furthermore, English Heritage could explore the development of holiday schemes at heritage sites for young people at risk by working in partnership with local councils and private sponsors. For example, the priority groups may be encouraged to develop a final performance or event or exhibition as the climax of their involvement, so that their family, friends and neighbours can be encouraged to visit on the final day(s) of the initiative. Case Study 9 gives an idea how such schemes may be implemented.

## Medium-term actions

Most of the influence mechanisms suggested in this study are likely to be able to be implemented within the medium-term (say, between one and three years time). Of course, they may often be more effective if piloted first, which adds a little to the timescale within which they will yield significant results.


### Changing the behaviour of the professional community

Cultural change in organisations takes time but also requires new skills in managers and staff. In order to enable professionals working in museums and galleries, the countryside, leisure and recreation services of local authorities to deal effectively with under-represented groups such as ethnic minorities training and continuous professional development approaches will be necessary. Case Study 4 shows the benefits of rolling out a new training scheme in the vocational school of Hansenberg in Denmark. Rather than doing some ad-hoc training of English Heritage staff, a more fully developed training scheme could be developed jointly by English Heritage with other organisations working in the heritage sector.

Behavioural changes of staff may also be achieved through the participatory development of a new code of conduct (e.g. on equalities and diversity). This would send a signal to English Heritage staff and partners to take the equalities agenda more seriously. However, it is vital that such a code of conduct is agreed with representatives of all staff members, including the administrative level and not just imposed from the top.

### Leveraging moral pressure in society to increase heritage attendance levels

The Austrian council of Zell am See managed to tackle its road accident problems successfully by harnessing moral pressure locally to support a series of strong (and potentially unpopular) interventions – e. g. imposition of speed limits and use of radar equipment. The reason that these interventions had more effect in Zell am See than elsewhere was the local growth in the view that irresponsible driving (particularly drunken driving) was simply unacceptable, so that it declined. English Heritage needs to consider if there are some aspects of heritage where increased moral pressure in the population might valuably lead to more attendance by their target groups – e. g. convincing different minority ethnic groups that they should take more interest in the links between their group



and certain aspects of English history which are very evident in some historic buildings or museums (not always links which reflect well on the English government or inhabitants of the time). Examples might include such issues as the African slave trade, the Far East spice trade, the Indian cotton industry, the Caribbean sugar industry, etc, all of which have left major impacts on the English heritage. (Clearly, such approaches to heritage are potentially controversial – but it is perhaps even more controversial to attempt to hide such issues and maintain the situation that many people in England have little idea of the history that lies behind the heritage and their own culture).

### **Leveraging professional pressure to encourage the spread of ‘good practice’ in ways which might impact on target group attendance**

In line with the lessons from Case Study 3, the development of a ‘Beacon Scheme’ for heritage sites would allow the identification of ‘good practices’ which are externally validated and replicable by others, including innovation in attracting attendances from non-traditional social groups. This approach encourages professionals and managers to recognise from the behaviour of their peers elsewhere that they have been missing opportunities in their own situation. Of course, such a scheme requires considerable investments, so that partnerships with private sector sponsors would probably have to be developed. In most recognition schemes, the work of the ‘evaluators’ is done as volunteering; therefore, it would be beneficial to involve other organisations and networks with access to relevant expertise in the design and delivery of such a scheme.

### **Using inter-organisational agreements to bring in new perspectives**

In line with Case Study 7, English Heritage might encourage heritage sites to recruit young people to run events at heritage sites, identifying them through cultural and other organisations which can reach out to minority groups. Since funding would have to be provided for these young recruits, it would make sense to undertake such activities through agencies such as Connexions, which would fund their employment experiences, so that the outreach to disadvantaged groups would be a spin-off, rather than a direct effect, of the initiative. In the current recession, it can be expected that there will be significantly greater opportunities for such



schemes, which will help to tackle the transition of young people (particularly in BME communities) into work.

Again, following the example of Case Study 8, involving NGOs representing disadvantaged groups in the design, delivery and evaluation of cultural services would help to mobilise new visitors and would give communities (and staff working in the heritage sector) new experiences and insights, which could spark more imaginative marketing of such sites to target groups.



## Long-term actions

In the longer-term, there will be the opportunity for English Heritage to work on creating changed awareness and attitudes – something which can normally not be done quickly, whether this is with the general public or with heritage site owners and operators. In the long-term, too, legislative change is possible, where there is a strong case for making certain behaviours or policies compulsory.

### **Leverage of moral pressure to encourage different attitudes amongst the target groups towards heritage sites and experiences**

In Case Study 5, the success of Solihull in environmental improvement does not rely on spending money, on enforcement of national laws or local byelaws or on marketing a particular service or issue – although all of these mechanisms have indeed been used as part of the campaign. However, the core of the campaign is to get the people of Solihull themselves to exert moral pressure on each other to respect the environment, express open disapproval of those who don't show this respect and display through their own behaviour how important this respect of the environment is to them – all of which makes it harder for other people to continue to abuse the environment as much as otherwise might. In the case of English Heritage, this might involve encouraging a belief in the target group population that heritage matters, that its value can only be sustained by participation and that passing on an understanding of this heritage to one's children and wider family is an important aspect of responsible parenting and family life.

### **Using legislative change to bring about different behaviours in relation to heritage sites**

Legislative change which makes it easier for certain target groups to access or to enjoy services (whether in the public or private or third sectors) may have an important role when all other means of influence fail. Of course, legislative change alone does not necessarily work – although it is likely to have some effect on the behaviour of those to whom it applies, it will only work if it is relevant to improving the experience of the target groups concerned. Consequently, English Heritage might consider what legislative changes might be relevant to improving the interest of target groups in visiting heritage sites (e.g. through the national curriculum in schools) or improving the experience of certain groups once they decide to make a visit to a heritage site (e.g. disabled access, signing appropriate to more target groups such as BSL or minority ethnic languages, etc.).

## Next steps

The Action Plan outlined above is indicative of the potential for implementing this report, rather than definitive in terms of what needs to be done. An Action Plan is more likely to be effective and sustainable if it has buy-in from all the relevant stakeholders.

We therefore suggest, in order to start defining an agreed action plan and getting its implementation under way, it may be useful to launch a small-scale event for organisations working in the heritage sector and NGOs who are involved with priority groups on community empowerment and engagement, with the objective of exploring cooperation opportunities and getting some partnership projects rolling. This should be followed by an effective communication strategy, so that the results of the pilot schemes are communicated to key stakeholders in the heritage sector in order to gain wider support and interest of stakeholders for such activities. On the back of these pilots and the subsequent communication campaign, the full Action Plan could then be launched.