

Historic England Industrial Heritage Strategy, March 2021

Icon Response, 1st June 2021

<https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/consultations/guidance-open-for-consultation/>

Comments on the identified priorities

- 5.3 – Icon values the recognition of the need to continue to support the expansion of the training offer to support the care of industrial heritage. However, we believe that the action should more clearly highlight the need to support the development of the skills of qualified and accredited professionals alongside the important and valuable work carried out by volunteers across the industrial heritage sector. Furthermore, we believe that the skills identified should explicitly reference the needs of caring for engineering architecture as well as the broader related collections.
- 5.4 – We welcome the refocussing of the Industrial Heritage Support Officer role. However, we believe that Historic England should commit to continue supporting this role once the current grant has come to an end to ensure continued support can be offered to the sector.
- 9.3 – Icon welcomes the commitment to expand the digital availability of holdings within the Historic England Archive and anticipates further detail in due course as to how this will be achieved.

Suggestions on any significant caps or omissions in coverage

- Overall, the strategy appears to be focused on the built environment. Icon believes that the strategy should take a more holistic view to ensure that industrial machinery and other collections are consistently taken into account throughout the strategy. Taking this holistic approach is essential in supporting the vision of ensuring the wider public recognises, champions and benefits from England's internationally important industrial heritage legacy.
- The strategy should articulate its support for the Association of British Transport & Engineering Museums 'Guidelines for the Care of Larger and Working Historic Objects' – <https://abtemguidelinesorg.wordpress.com/>.
- When considering how greater public recognition of the importance of industrial heritage can be achieved, Icon suggests that the use of the term 'industrial heritage' should be reconsidered. It is likely that 'industrial heritage' is perceived by some to be a

relic of the past and irrelevant to the current time. We believe that the broader idea of conserving technology through discussing the 'history of technology' and the 'development of ideas' offers greater opportunities to connect members of the public with England's industrial heritage. This more inclusive terminology more clearly connects early industrial design and mechanical invention with modern technological achievements, with both being underpinned by the common thread of innovation, problem solving and world-class engineering skills.

- Icon values Historic England's commitment to supporting the development of knowledge and skills needs to preserve England's industrial heritage. However, we believe that the strategy could be strengthened if there were greater focus on developing the skills needed within the heritage sector workforce in addition to supporting volunteers. This could be achieved through more overtly recognising the importance of apprenticeships alongside the other varied routes to enter into the workforce.

Furthermore, the strategy could go further in protecting, preserving, raising awareness of, and advocating for, traditional skills and knowledge employed in the manufacturing and processing industries, and the working elements and related tools and equipment.

- There is an opportunity through this strategy support the overall resilience of the sector by advocating for the development of a network of skilled volunteers which can then be accessed by museums and other heritage institutions that need help. A possible initiative might be to connect people retiring from engineering roles with museums that need people to help maintain their collections. There might also be potential here for intergenerational knowledge and skills transfer from experienced workers to young trainees.
- Icon believes that the closure of the Industrial Maritime and Transport Forum was a significant loss for the sector, having brought together built environment and collections alongside transport bodies and other key stakeholders. We believe Historic England should advocate for its reinstatement with a new Secretariat with strong connections to the Industrial Heritage APPG.

Areas for collaboration

As the professional body, Icon would welcome the opportunity to collaborate on the development of this strategy, in particular priorities:

- 5.3 – This presents the opportunity for the development of training in the principles of caring for large and working objects for preventive conservators as well as others working to care for industrial heritage. Icon would seek to actively support the development of such an initiative, alongside other stakeholders including industrial museums such as Beamish or the Black Country Museum.

- 7.4 – Icon would seek to be included within the list of sector partners to identify and address skills gaps through the development of joint initiatives.
- 8.4 – This research project should include Icon and could possibly also look at independent specialist conservation and restoration firms (for example, for apprenticeships/internships) and how these could be supported and strengthened.
- 8.5 – Encouragement to link up with similar work being done by pan-European industrial heritage organisations and the potential for greater sharing of ideas. This could also contribute to knowledge exchange and soft power agenda. Useful to note this recent publication capturing good practice: <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/en/university/faculties/education-arts-architecture/departments/building-environment/news---events/news/industrial-and-engineering-heritage-in-europe-new-release.html>.