



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

## Values of Conservation: Project Plan 2020

### INTRODUCTION

Icon's charitable object is to "advance the education of the public by research into and the promotion of the conservation of items and collections of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value." In summer 2020, we are undertaking a new research and engagement project to ensure that we can promote conservation effectively and make it more widely understood and appreciated.

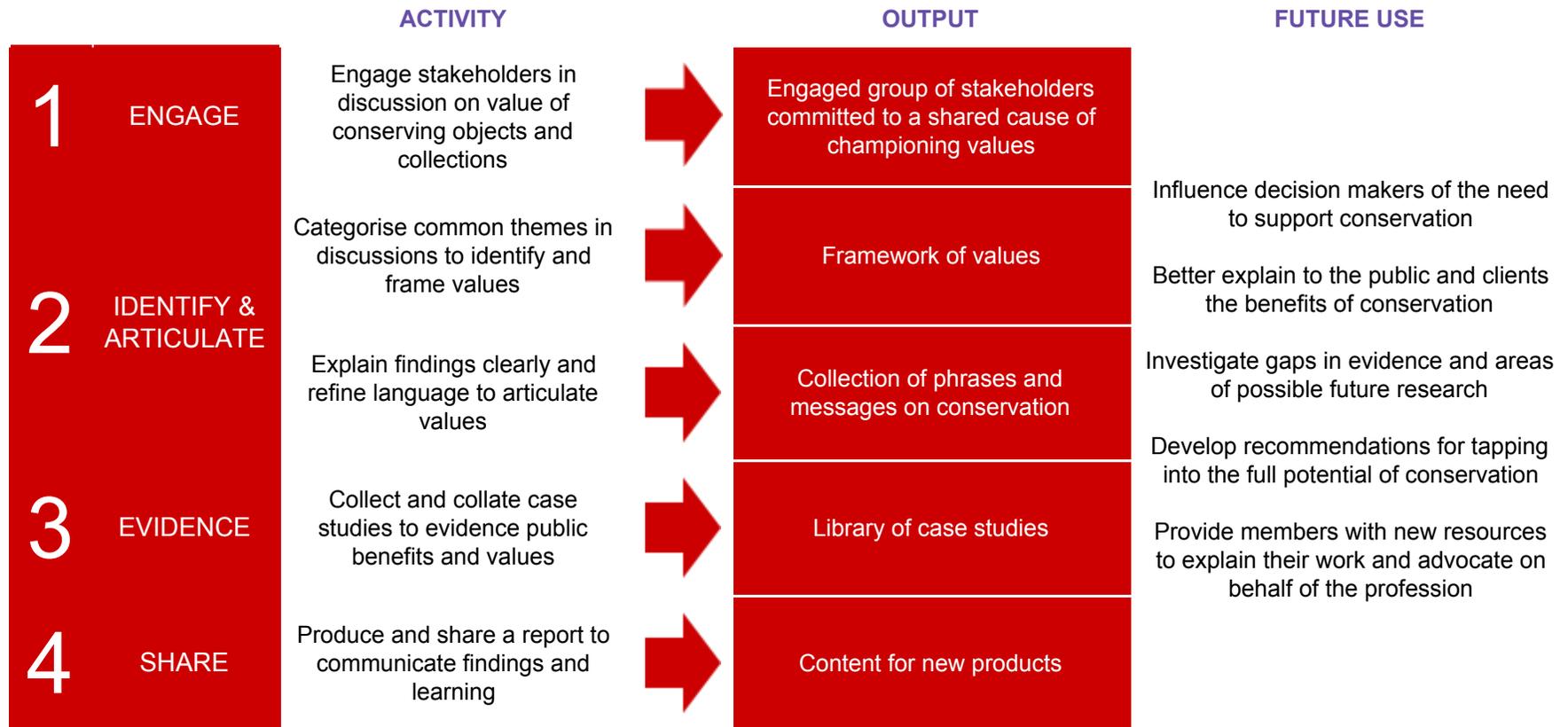
The act of conserving cultural heritage objects and collections makes a significant contribution to society. We need to better understand this public benefit by researching how it contributes to knowledge and understanding, national and local economies, a sense of identity, enhanced wellbeing and empowered communities etc. By identifying, articulating and evidencing the values of cultural heritage conservation to society we will be able to increase understanding of its importance and build public support.

The Coronavirus pandemic and economic downturn have placed even more urgency on articulating the value of what Icon and its members do. In the aftermath of the pandemic, all business sectors will need to describe their contribution to economic rebuilding and society's recovery.

The cultural heritage sector will be called upon to demonstrate how it supports the UK's economy, international reputation and the health and wellbeing of communities and citizens. Widespread understanding of the core values of conservation will be essential to evidencing its relevance and making a successful case for support.

The desired outcome of the project is for the positive effect of conservation activities on society, the economy and individual well-being to be clearly demonstrated and widely recognised.

## PROJECT OUTLINE



## **BUSINESS CASE**

The project supports the following Icon strategic priorities in the Icon Strategy 2017-2021:

- Extending our influence as a strong voice for conservation
- Promoting the value of high quality conservation with our partners and the public
- Becoming the authoritative source of information on conservation in practice, policy and the profession
- Encouraging information exchange and the sharing of knowledge
- Realising the potential of conservation to promote wellbeing, develop a sense of place and encourage active citizens
- Strategic Priority 2020-21: Articulating the value of conservation and sharing the impact of our work

The project also supports the #value theme of Historic England's Research Agenda and DCMS's areas of research interest for culture and heritage.

## **AUDIENCES**

Our research will engage with and provide new information and insight for a wide range of people and organisations associated with cultural heritage. This includes:

- Icon members and staff
- Government departments (UK and devolved),
- Government agencies and their ALBS
- Academics
- Interested members of the public
- Independent heritage organisations (e.g. The Heritage Alliance, BEFS)
- Owners and managers of heritage assets (individuals and charitable trusts )
- Funders
- Commercial sector clients (auction houses etc.)

We will involve stakeholders throughout the research to generate a common commitment to promoting messages on the values of conservation. By engaging people from both within and outside of the sector, we hope to identify the relationships between different values and motivations for conservation (e.g. economic, personal).

## METHODOLOGY

The project will be divided into stages: engaging, identifying, evidencing and articulating the values of conservation.

The project closely interconnects with the research of Anna Presland (Icon volunteer and University of Warwick student) who is investigating the relationship between conservators and the public sphere. Presland's research will study the apparent division between public understanding of conservation and how conservators perceive their work.

### 1. Engaging

The main phase of the project will focus on engaging stakeholders in discussions on the values of conserving objects and collections.

We will set up an Expert Group of interested members and stakeholders that we will encourage to debate the issue, gather thoughts from and test ideas on. The Group will comprise practicing conservators but also commissioners and clients of conservators to ensure an 'outside' perspective.

The Expert Group will be invited to contribute their initial thoughts on a Padlet discussion board and to participate in an online survey. Members of the Group may be encouraged to write "think pieces" for the Icon website.

We will start a series of blog posts titled 'The REAL Repair Shop' that feature conservation stories from the perspective of the conservator and the client. We will commission non-conservators to talk about what their objects mean to them and how conservation has increased the 'personal' value of the objects. Conservators will be asked to share their experience of conserving the objects. The stories will be published on the Icon website and tagged with 'The REAL Repair Shop.'

We will target the broader sector and interested members of the public through Icon's social media channels. This will involve running a series of Twitter polls (once a day for one week/ once a week for one month) on key questions. We will encourage our followers to use a predetermined hashtag and participate in a Twitter Chat on conservation values.

The discussions will be supported by a desk-based literature review on existing research describing the values of cultural heritage and conservation. Key sources will include Culture Counts for Europe and Heritage Counts. We will also gather existing conversations from social media and phrases used to describe conservation. Literature will be summarised in a brief document that can be used as a conversation starter and to organise discussions.

## 2. Identifying & Articulating

In the second phase we will use the results of the stakeholder engagement exercises to draft a framework loosely categorising the values of conservation. We will look for common themes in the discussions to identify key pillars for describing the values. We will invite the Expert Group to feedback and refine the draft framework. The document will be redrafted as appropriate into a final framework of values, presented in concisely visually, for example in the form of a factsheet.

We will work with the Expert Group to develop clear and concise language to explain conservation and its values. We will draft a collection of phrases, arguments and messages supporting the framework's values that uses language accessible to a lay audience. The phrases will be presented as a complimentary document or part of the framework.

## 3. Evidencing

To test the framework's relevance and applicability, we will launch a call for case studies demonstrating the values. This will take the form of a Google Form (or similar) on the Icon website inviting members to share case studies of the impact of their work. Existing impact case studies will also be collated and categorised under the values.

## 4. Sharing

We will share the results in a report presenting the framework and collection of case studies. This could be presented in a similar fashion to the Heritage Alliances' Creative Industries and International reports. The paper will also outline the project's objectives, methodology, evaluation and lessons learned.

A communications plan will be prepared for sharing the research. We will publish the report on the Icon website and disseminate it to partners. The report will be presented to Icon's Board of Trustees. Further activities are likely to include presentations at conferences and events, and a launch event.

There are many opportunities for incorporating the research into Icon's ongoing and future work. Findings will be used to inform advocacy messages and to draft arguments and recommendations to policy makers. We will refine the language on our website and produce content for explaining conservation to our audiences, in the form of short explainers or factsheets. The findings will help us develop new resources for our members such as guides to talking to clients and advocating for conservation to colleagues.

The project is also likely to expose gaps in evidence to back up arguments, which will help target future research.

## PROJECT STAGES

	Phase	When	Activity	Details	Output
1	ENGAGE	June	Undertake a desk-based literature review on values.  Collect good examples of where others have explained conservation well e.g. recent phrases picked up on twitter	Sources to include: Culture Counts for Europe and Heritage Counts, Twitter	Literature review document
		May - June	Set up an Expert Group	Call for volunteers on Twitter  Send Iconnect to members  Target stakeholders with known/potential interest in project	Expert Group membership
		July	Invite Expert Group to contribute ideas on values on a Padlet wall.	Categorise pins into loose categories.	Padlet wall
		July	Send Expert Group and Policy Advisory Group a questionnaire with specific questions around values.	E.g. using Survey Monkey or Google Forms	Questionnaire
		July-August	Commission Expert Group members to write think pieces/ articles/ other content on conservation.	Content ideas: 'What does conservation mean to me?'	Blog posts on Icon website
		August	Publish a series of Twitter polls to engage the wider sector and interested public.	Content ideas: 'Which emoji best describes your work?' 'Conservation or restoration?' 'How does this make you feel?' (image of damaged item)	Summary of poll results

2	IDENTIFY & ARTICULATE			New angle to disaster stories	
		August	Run a Twitter Chat to engage the wider sector and interested public.	Content ideas: 'How would you describe the purpose of what you do to an 8 year old?'  'Biggest myth about conservation?'	Storify summary
		August	Cross-reference public engagement results with results of Anna Presland's public survey.		
		September	Engage Icon staff in the discussion by presenting initial results of stakeholder engagement exercises and seeking input		Brainstorm session at staff meeting
		September	Collate results of stakeholder and staff engagement activities		Stakeholder engagement results report
		September	Cross-reference results with Anna Presland research		
		September	Draft a framework of values and set of phrases and messages based on literature review and stakeholder engagement.		First draft framework
		September	Circulate draft framework to Expert Group for comment.		
		September	Redraft framework using results of Expert Group comments.	To be presented as a short visual document, e.g. a fact sheet.	Final framework
		3	EVIDENCE	October	Invite members to share case studies that demonstrate the values

4	SHARE		Select and collate case studies		Case studies report
		October	Use framework and case studies to write a report on the research and its findings		Conservation Values report (comprising framework and case studies)
		October	Publish and disseminate material	Promotion ideas: Launch event Presentations at conferences and events	New resources on website

