

# SPALDING HERITAGE STRATEGY

2025 - 2035



# Contents

Forward .....	3
What is the Spalding Heritage Strategy? .....	4
Context .....	5
Spalding Reconnected: Historic Town and Riverside .....	5
Spalding's Heritage .....	7
Why is heritage important? The economic and social value of our shared past .....	12
Engagement .....	15
A note on limitations .....	17
Themes and Priorities .....	19
1. Connectivity and Communication .....	20
2. Nature and Landscapes .....	21
3. Public Places .....	23
4. Heritage-Led Regeneration .....	25
5. Heritage is open for all communities.....	27
6. Heritage and Wellbeing .....	28
Action Plan for Transformative Change .....	29
Acknowledgements .....	30
About Heritage Lincolnshire .....	31
Appendix - Engagement Resources .....	32

## Foreword

Spalding has an incredible range of history and heritage within the town and the people who live here and visit.

From medieval remains of priories and halls to the agricultural industries which have shaped the town in the 20th Century, Spalding's heritage is incredibly important in the fabric of the town and its communities. This heritage has the incredible potential to improve people's lives, make Spalding a better place to live, work and visit and provide opportunities for all communities, young and old, to feel at home in their local area.

The Spalding Heritage Strategy outlines high-level themes and priorities for Spalding's heritage over the next 10 years developed through co-production with the local community and heritage organisations. The practical ways to achieve those goals are detailed in the Action Plan for Transformative Change. These documents aim to show how a focus on heritage across Spalding will create an environment for local people to be proud of with an improved healthy high street, spaces for improving wellbeing and connecting with nature and each other.



Cllr....  
South Holland District Council

signature



## What is the Spalding Heritage Strategy?

The Spalding Heritage Strategy has been commissioned by South Holland District Council as part of Spalding Reconnected, a National Lottery Heritage Fund project aiming to improve connections between the historic town centre and the riverside area in Spalding.

This document aims to outline a distinctive and diverse long-term vision for the future of heritage in the historic market town to support and target funding over the next 10 years. The Spalding Heritage Strategy focuses on Spalding town including the historic town centre, the riverside, conservation area and residential suburbs and surroundings. Co-produced with members of Spalding's community and heritage sector, this heritage strategy is made up of two documents: the **Spalding Heritage Strategy** and the **Spalding Heritage Action Plan**. In order to write these documents, we undertook engagement with local communities and heritage organisations and gathered notes and suggestions for the heritage strategy from our participants alongside extensive research using online resources such as the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record, the National Heritage List and Heritage at Risk Register and many other sources including the information collected by other partners in Spalding Reconnected (see below for details).

The Spalding Heritage Strategy will sit alongside other similar strategic documents such as The South Holland Cultural Strategy (in progress) and the cultural strategies for Boston and East Lindsey<sup>1</sup> making up a cohesive statement of intent for culture and heritage across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (East Lindsey District, Boston Borough and South Holland District). Throughout this wider geographical area as well as in South Holland and Spalding more specifically, these cultural and heritage strategies shine light on the importance of heritage in all aspects of daily life and in our surroundings. Heritage, whether it is natural, built or cultural, is the golden thread which ties our communities together, and makes the places we live, and visit feel welcoming and lively.

This document, the **Spalding Heritage Strategy**, will outline how the vision, priorities and themes proposed by engagement participants can be implemented, how capacity for governance and future funding could be managed to best support the community to achieve excellent results for heritage in the future.

The main aim in delivery of this heritage strategy is to celebrate what makes Spalding unique and enable broad audiences, both local and visiting, to access that heritage, encouraging more people to participate in heritage and their local community and boosting local economies.

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<sup>1</sup>The East Lindsey & Boston Cultural Framework can be found by searching "cultural framework" on the Boston Borough Council and East Lindsey District Council websites.

## Context

### Spalding Reconnected: Historic Town and Riverside

The Spalding Heritage Strategy and the Spalding Heritage Action Plan were commissioned as part of the collaborative project, Spalding Reconnected, which emerged from the Spalding Town Centre Improvement Programme and has been developed in partnership with South Holland District Council, Transported Arts, East Mercia Rivers Trust, Lincolnshire County Council and Heritage Lincolnshire. The project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, made possible thanks to Lottery Players.

Spalding Reconnected aims to celebrate the unique heritage of the market town through a broad range of arts, nature, heritage and wayfinding initiatives. These initiatives will reconnect the historic town centre with the picturesque River Welland for a unified, vibrant environment for the local people and visitors alike to experience.

**The different elements of these townscape and riverside improvements are listed below:**

#### **Arts and Heritage - with Transported Art**

Celebrating the unique heritage of Spalding through visual storytelling to deliver a broad range of arts workshops inspired by the historic town and riverside. These collaborative activities in 2023 helped to inform plans for a co-created living willow sculpture installation. This will celebrate the town's historic connection to eel catching and be a part of unifying arts and heritage to tell the story of Spalding's legacy.

#### **Nature, Riverside, Community and Schools - with East Mercia Rivers Trust**

A series of nature initiatives promoting the importance of supporting and conserving the natural environment including the River Welland. This initiative includes educational partnerships with local schools in Spalding to support the reintroduction of the European Eel to the River Welland (The Eels in the Classroom Programme) and introducing riverside improvements such as wildflower planting.

#### **Wayfinding**

The wayfinding strand of Spalding Reconnected is working to establish a strategic approach to the town's wayfinding and signage methods. This will then be installed to direct visitors and local people alike and reconnect the town with the riverside.

#### **Spalding Heritage Strategy**

The development of this heritage strategy and heritage action plan in collaboration with the local community to build a coproduced plan for what types of and how heritage projects will be delivered over the next 10 years in Spalding.



## Spalding's Heritage

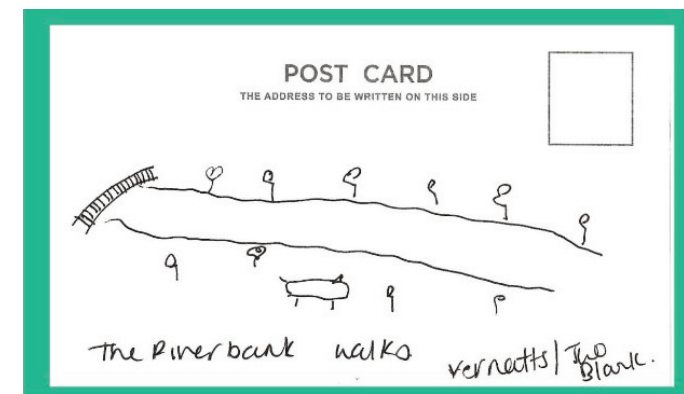
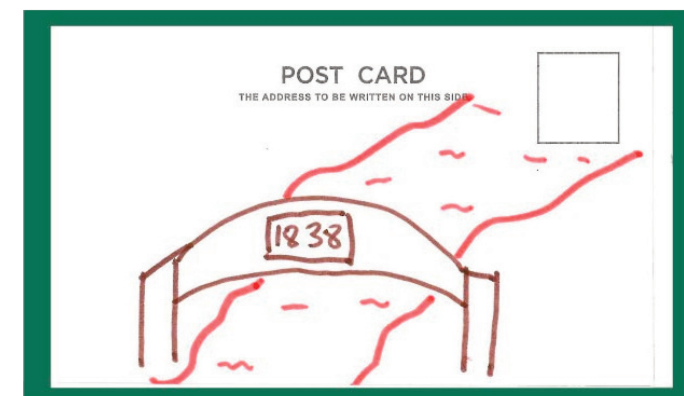
The historic market town of Spalding is located along the River Welland within the administrative district of South Holland, Lincolnshire. Spalding still holds markets every Tuesday and Saturday, hosting small businesses selling fresh produce grown in the local area. According to the 2021 Census the population of the town totals 30,550 people, making it the largest town in the district.

Spalding's history dates back to at least the Roman period with archaeological evidence of salt production and Roman daily life discovered during infrastructure expansion projects over recent years.<sup>2</sup> Spalding's name is believed to come from the Spaldingas, who were an Anglian tribe settled in the area in the 6th Century. In the Domesday book, Spalding is mentioned as a settlement called "Spallinge" with 91 households, which is significant size for 1086, with a market and salt making and fishing industries<sup>3</sup>.

Medieval Spalding was home to a Benedictine priory of which a small portion remains as The Prior's Oven Micropub which has also been used as an outbuilding, prison, shop, and smithy during its long history. Ayscoughfee Hall, which is now home to a museum and remains largely unchanged, was built in 1451 for local wool merchant Richard Aldwyn. Maurice Johnson and his family famously lived at Ayscoughfee Hall and founded the Spalding Gentlemen's Society in 1710, which is the second oldest antiquarian society still in existence and has the second oldest museum in the country after the Ashmolean at Oxford.

The Spalding Gentlemen's Society has had many famous members, including physicist Isaac Newton, antiquarian William Stukeley, botanist Joseph Banks, Poet Laureate Alfred Lord Tennyson and more. A famous event in Spalding's 20th Century history is the Barbeque 67 show which took place on Spring Bank 1967 and featured the Jimi Hedrix experience, Geno Washington, Cream and Pink Floyd and attracted around 18,000 visitors to the venue which could only hold 6,000 people.

The distinct historic character of the town flows from the Georgian terraces that line the riverside to its town centre comprising of mostly Georgian, Victorian and modern commercial properties, with pockets of medieval to post medieval architecture such as the Grade I listed 13th Century Church of St Mary and St Nicholas.



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/538/over-2000-years-of-history-uncovered-west-of-spalding>

<sup>3</sup> <https://opendomesday.org/place/TF2422/spalding/>

Figure 1 - Workshop participants were asked to draw or describe their favourite part of Spalding.

Spalding has several historic and more recently developed shopping areas, such as the Victorian Sheep Market and as you branch out of the town centre, there is the popular retail and leisure destination, Springfields Shopping Outlet, which opened in 2004 redeveloping and transforming show gardens for the tulip and bulb industry owned by Springfield's Horticultural Society.

Spalding is surrounded by idyllic fenland, utilised for agriculture due to its fertile soil. Industries like horticulture and agriculture are integral to Spalding's past and present identity. Its extensive history of tulip cultivation, celebrated through the annual Tulip Parade, which first officially took place in 1959 and continued until 2013 when it ended due to falling visitor numbers and the declining tulip industry. The Tulip Parade has remained a key cultural link for the town's identity and made a revival in 2023 and continued in May 2024.

The town's connection to water is another constant in its extensive history, in the fenland surroundings of ditches and dykes to the River Welland itself, being a key route for trade and transport dating back to the Roman period. Through the 13th century its status as a market town solidified and trade along waterways flourished. As new transport methods arrived, such as the railways in 1848, Spalding saw a decline in water borne transport, but the importance and uniqueness of the river remains present today with new usage and development such as the water taxi service.

During the 1970s, much of the Welland catchment was significantly altered as part of programme to alleviate flooding and improve land drainage. The river was deepened; many meanders, pools, riffles and glides were removed; and the river was constricted within high, straight banks. This changed the natural flow of the river, and the efficient land drainage has led to loss of habitats. Recent initiatives such as the environmental strand of the Spalding Reconnected project are contributing to supporting the rehabilitation of the waterway and its ecology.

The River Welland is not only culturally significant for the vibrant identity of Spalding but also vital for the wellbeing of local people and the health of our ecosystems. It provides a safe haven for some of the UK's most iconic species such as swans and kingfishers and endangered species such as water voles and eels. It provides a reflection space for local people and visitors to unwind and enjoy their natural landscape. The Welland catchment is also an important natural source of public water supply. The river contains typical coarse fish populations and trout, making it a popular area for anglers.

(Cont'd over)



Figure 2 - Workshop participants were asked to draw or describe their favourite part of Spalding.

The course of the River Welland and the now covered Westlode River (was a navigable drainage channel potentially dating from the Roman period which fed the Welland) shaped the historic road layout of Spalding from the mediaeval period developing through to Georgian terraces and into the 21st Century. Man-made features such as the coronation channel, opened in 1953, Arnold's Meadow and Vernatt's Drain, built in the 17th Century as part of efforts to drain the fens, shape the landscape surrounding Spalding and provide essential infrastructure protecting Spalding from inundation to this day and act as havens for nature, wildlife, and leisure.

The fertility of the land surrounding Spalding also led to the development of agricultural industries whose wealth funded historic development of the town of Spalding, much of which survives to this day. The tulip industry and associated

Flower Parade are perhaps what Spalding is most famous for although this has evolved into a more diverse industry in recent years incorporating daffodils, and pumpkins. The current investment and sector wide focus on the long-term future of agriculture can be seen through the Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone site (based in nearby Holbeach) which indicates an intent to ensure South Holland's agricultural industries continuation as a major local employer and an ongoing growth sector.

Loosely, heritage encompasses the act of saving, sharing, preserving and celebrating places, people and things (tangible heritage) and memory, traditions, languages, local trades and industries (intangible heritage) for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

One participant in our engagement process said,  
*“Heritage is everything.”*



## Heritage can be summarised as:

### Historic Buildings and Spaces

It is feeling connected with a place, through buildings and the built environment such as Ayscoughfee Hall Museum and Gardens and its award-winning cafe, Chain Bridge Forge, Spalding Gentlemen's Society museum, The Old Johnson Hospital, the different types of buildings in Spalding Conservation Area, The White Hart Hotel, The Marketplace, Spalding Cemetery, Spalding War Memorial, the Sheep Market, five historic churches, High Bridge, The Almshouses, The Prior's Oven, the Georgian terraces and more. Locals feel strongly about preserving the architectural character of their town.

### Nature

It is celebrating, promoting and maintaining green spaces like the River Welland and riverside, Ayscoughfee Gardens and the surrounding fens and local peoples' connections to their environment through agricultural industries, appreciating wildlife and leisure activities.

### Documents and artefacts

Honouring memories, local history and events through records like written documents, archives, museums, artefacts, archaeology, art and the items we have collected.

### Local traditions and people

It can be found through things that are hard to capture like traditions, folklore, dialect, languages and personal memories. It can be preserving information about key figures such as the Johnson family who lived in Ayscoughfee Hall and Matthew Flinders.

### Connections and communities

can be the connections to other places through transport methods like the river taxi, railway and roads. Heritage is also in the different communities of Spalding and their interests and backgrounds.



**“Community spirit.”**      *“It's residents and businesses.”*

**“Heritage is a person's unique, inherited sense of family identity: the values, traditions, culture, and artifacts handed down by previous generations.”**

*“Conserving the past.”*

**“Our locality.”**

*“It is in the items  
we have collected.”*

“Local social  
history.”

“Remembering and preserving historic Spalding.”

**“Heritage is everything.”**

**“Acknowledging the past  
shapes the present.”**

**“Feeling proud of where you live.”**

Figure 3 - Responses to “What does heritage mean to you?” from our participants

## Why is heritage important?

### The economic and social value of our shared past

The value of heritage, whether social, economic or health related, is hard to measure. Research from organisations such as Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Heritage Alliance, HM Government and more have sought to quantify the benefits and importance of heritage to peoples' everyday lives both locally and nationally.

The economic value of the heritage sector in the East Midlands region is significant, boosting the regional economy by £1,818 million and providing 29,000 jobs. Nationally, for every £1 of public sector expenditure on heritage-led regeneration generated £1.60 of additional economic activity <sup>4</sup>. There were an estimated 9 million domestic day visits to heritage sites in the East Midlands in 2021 generating £337 million of spending.

Historic England's 2020 report *Heritage and Society* <sup>5</sup> found that local heritage is of value for peoples' wellbeing including outdoor heritage sites. Engaging with or living near heritage correlates with higher life satisfaction and a higher quality of life. Heritage is a proxy for shared identity and connection in communities. Research also finds that people from minoritized backgrounds are more at risk of suffering from health conditions <sup>6</sup>. These groups are unfortunately less likely to engage in heritage <sup>7</sup>.

A more inclusive practise in heritage has the potential to have a huge impact on the well-being of people from disadvantaged socioeconomic groups or minoritized backgrounds. South Holland as a district on average ranks 144<sup>th</sup> out of 317 local authority areas for deprivation in the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation report published by the Office for National Statistics. In Spalding proper, the most deprived area according to IMD2019 <sup>8</sup> is Spalding St Pauls, to the Northeast of the town centre although the town generally shows pockets of low deprivation as well. The measures for deprivation in Skills and Education are higher than other indices of deprivation for the South Holland area putting Spalding St Paul's and Spalding St Mary's in the 10% most deprived areas in England <sup>9</sup>.

Heritage can offer a different approach to learning which is of benefit to adults and children who may not access education and skills development in a traditional manner. This element of heritage as a tool and mechanism for education and skills development is not separate from arguments for the economic importance of heritage and the heritage sector in England: as the GEM describes: "the economic benefit of the heritage sector is inseparable from its educational mission and impact." <sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> BPF, 2017. *Heritage Works*.

<sup>5</sup> Historic England, November 2023. *Heritage and Society*.

<sup>6</sup> Institute of Health Equity, 2020.

*Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On*.

<sup>7</sup> DCMS, 2019. Taking Part 2018-19: *statistical release*.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, 2019.

*English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019*.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, 2019. *IoD2019 Explorer*.

<sup>10</sup> Group for Education in Museums, 2023. *Heritage Education Matters to the Economy*.

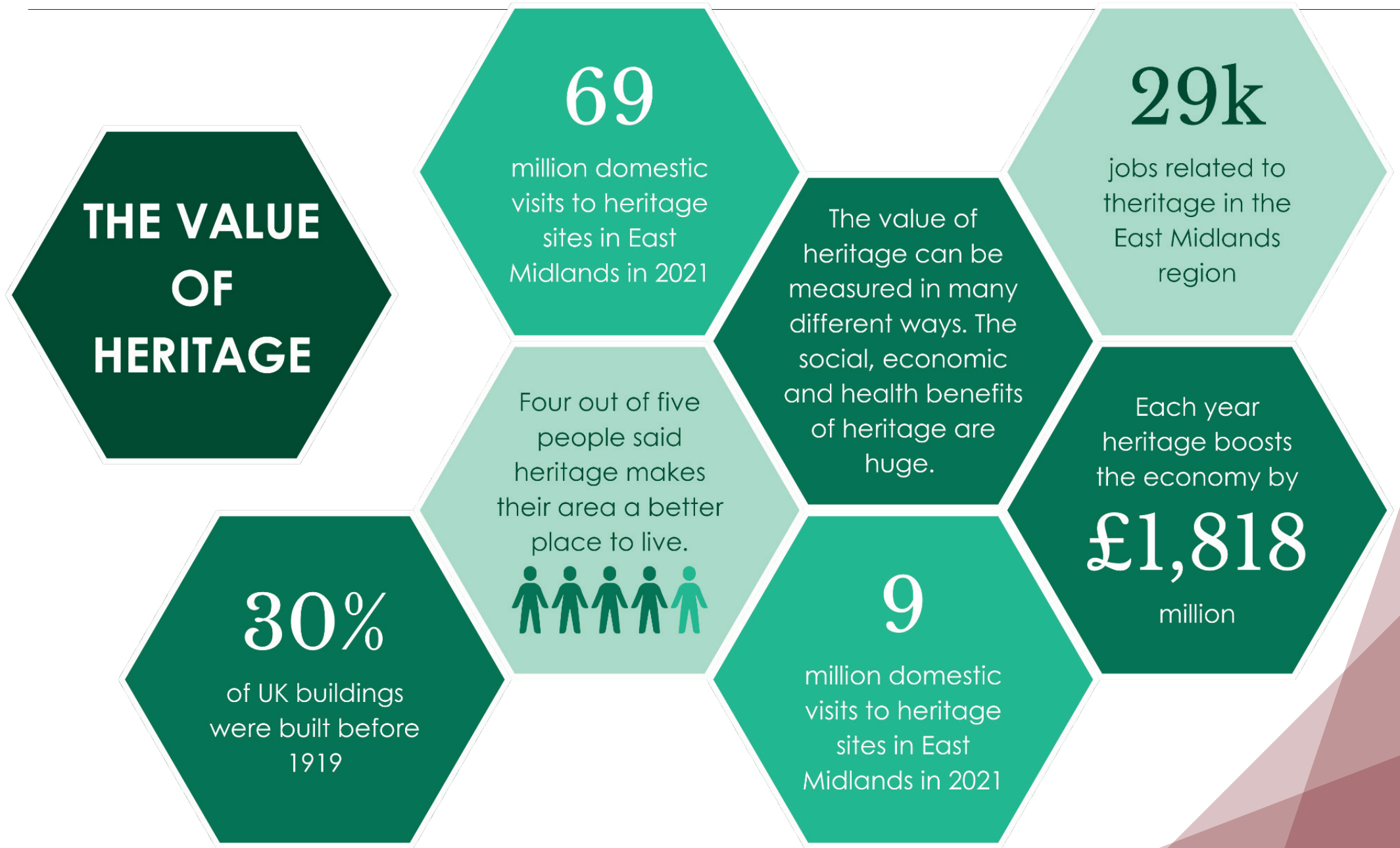


Figure 4 - statistics from DCMS, CEBR, BPF and Historic England.

Data from the 2011 census<sup>11</sup> indicates that approximately 6% of Spalding's population either do not speak English well or at all and the 2021 census<sup>12</sup> indicates that 16.3% of people in South Holland were not born in the UK. These statistics show that even though the proportion of Spalding's population who identify with ethnicities other than white European/British is lower than the national average, there is still a huge need to prioritise initiatives driving greater inclusion and improving access to community resources and assets through heritage.

Including heritage in efforts to develop social prescribing (non-medical interventions to health conditions) is an excellent idea: it is estimated that visiting heritage sites saves the NHS over £190 million each year.<sup>13</sup> All elements of the Centre for Wellbeing's *Five Ways to Wellbeing*<sup>14</sup> are provided in abundance through engagement with different types of heritage: connection with the community, physical activity, being curious and mindful, learning new things, and giving back to the community. South Holland also rates highly compared to its neighbouring districts for loneliness and isolation with 12.7% of local people often or always feeling lonely<sup>15</sup> suggesting that a wellbeing approach in heritage would be especially beneficial to Spalding and South Holland's communities.

Heritage volunteering is also known to be a positive impact to individual wellbeing<sup>16</sup> but also has an estimated SROI (Social Return on Investment) of 350%.<sup>17</sup> Heritage spaces and activities have been shown to be of particular benefit to people with conditions like Alzheimer's and dementia as well as post-traumatic stress disorder<sup>18</sup>. The heritage sector including historic buildings, heritage sites, and local intangible heritage is often a key element to feelings of community and connectedness and plays a key role in individual mental wellbeing.<sup>19</sup>



<sup>11</sup> SHDC. *Spalding Castle Ward Profile. Spalding St. Mary's Ward Profile.*

<sup>12</sup> ONS, 2023. *How life has changed in South Holland: Census 2021.*

<sup>13</sup> Arts Council England, 2015. *Cultural activities, artforms and wellbeing.*

<sup>14</sup> New Economics Forum, 2008. *Five Ways to Wellbeing.*

<sup>15</sup> GOV.UK, 2019. *Official Statistics, Local Authority Health Profiles.*

<sup>16</sup> DCMS, 2019. *Taking Part 2018-19: statistical release.*

<sup>17</sup> Social Value UK, 2016. *Inspiring Futures: Volunteering for Wellbeing Final Report 2013-2016.*

<sup>18</sup> Historic England, November 2023. *Heritage and Society.*

<sup>19</sup> The Heritage Alliance, 2020. *Heritage, Health and Wellbeing.*

## Engagement

From autumn 2023 through to spring 2024 we engaged with local people, heritage organisations, stakeholders and professionals to learn about the things they would like to see over the next 10 years for Spalding's heritage. We did one-to-one interviews and focus groups with local heritage stakeholders such as Chain Bridge Forge, White Eagle, and Spalding Gentlemen's Society amongst others.<sup>20</sup>

We held two workshops and a drop-in session to speak to the public about their ideas for heritage in Spalding. We publicised two digital surveys, the first in autumn 2023 and a final one to ask for people's reactions to our initial findings in April 2024. We also shared our initial findings and first drafts with everybody who took part in our one-to-one interviews and focus groups to properly co-create a strategy for Spalding in partnership with organisations and people interested and active in Spalding's heritage. Overall, through our various methods of engagement we directly engaged with **128** people and reached nearly **8000** (including social media reach).

Throughout this process we have listened to the needs and wants of people in Spalding and use their ideas and comments to create this document and its accompanying action plan. The process of engagement on the heritage strategy is the start of a conversation around heritage which will continue with new audiences over the duration of the strategy.

Everybody involved in creating the Spalding Heritage Strategy was asked questions around the same four topics:

- What is important to you in your local area?
- What does heritage mean to you?
- What barriers prevent people from engaging with heritage in Spalding?
- What kinds of projects are you planning/would you like to see happen in Spalding over the next 10 years?

Questions and activities were deliberately open ended to encourage more nuanced answers and avoid steering conversations and outcomes too much. Group activities at the workshops encouraged discussion with other participants and facilitators (Heritage Lincolnshire staff) and participants were prompted to record their conclusions on paper for inclusion in the Heritage Strategy data. Naturally, by using open ended questions and more flexible types of engagement as part of the co-production of this document, most of the data we collected is qualitative rather than quantitative.

The notes collected from our workshops, focus groups, drop-ins, one-to-one conversations and our online survey have been organised and summarised into themes and priorities later in this document. Indications have been noted where the common threads and topics of discussion align with the priorities of funders.

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<sup>20</sup> A full list of our stakeholders and organisations involved in the creation of these documents is available in the Acknowledgements section.

## ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATIONS

# 18

people took part in individual and group conversations representing **16** organisations in Spalding



## WORKSHOPS



# 46

people attended two in-person workshops and a drop-in event at Ayscoughfee Hall Museum & Gardens and the South Holland Centre

## SOCIAL MEDIA

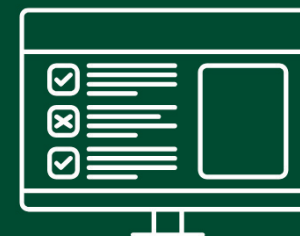
Our social media engagements totaled

# 184

We reached **8155** people overall



## ONLINE SURVEYS



We had two surveys which gained **64** responses and **686** clicks

# 336

interactions overall

The online Spalding Heritage survey was made live from the end of September until mid-December on the Heritage Lincolnshire website and received 43 entries in total. This survey was promoted through our social media campaign via the Heritage Lincolnshire Facebook Page and Instagram account where the posts received a total of 208 engagements and reached 7,155 accounts. This survey was shared further to local Spalding interest group's Facebook pages. The survey was active for the duration of the strategic process enabling a constant flow of thoughts and ideas to inform these documents.

During this process, we have held one-to-one conversations with 18 individuals from 16 organisations including heritage stakeholders, community leaders and members and other people interested in Spalding's heritage. We purposefully chose to conduct a drop-in session at Ayscoughfee Hall, Spalding on 24th of October to coincide with the October half term in the hopes that we could broaden our engagement with families and younger audiences. To encourage this audience, we led a series of free family friendly arts and crafts activities, inspired by Spalding's historic connection to the flower parade. The digital survey was also provided in a physical format at the drop-in session, where people had the opportunity to leave a written response. On the day of our drop in, heavy rainfall and unpleasant weather impacted our engagement numbers.

Our two workshop sessions were held from 1:30-3:30pm on 7th November 2023 at Ayscoughfee Hall (Spalding) and from 7pm - 8:15pm at South Holland Centre (Spalding) on 9th November 2023, allowing people with different availability to engage with the process. The workshops followed a similar structure to the questions asked within our survey and can be found in full in Appendix A. These workshops were advertised on our social media platforms, through an article with LincsOnline and sent as an email invitation to 113 stakeholders (including local interest groups, business owners, council members, community groups, schools/colleges.)

In January 2024 we began work on an initial draft of the heritage strategy which was shared with all of our one-to-one and focus group participants for their comments and improvements. We also shared a summary of our findings from the engagement process online and asked for the general public's response to them via an online survey in April 2024. Our summary findings and survey were publicised via social media and local press over the Easter bank holiday weekend. The feedback we received has fed into the production of this final draft of the heritage strategy.

## A note on limitations

During our engagement process when developing the Spalding Heritage Strategy and Action Plan for Transformative Change, we focused on in-depth engagement with participants. We asked questions which gave us lots of information that is not easily represented by statistics and figures but informed all aspects of the creation of these documents. There is always a limitation placed on the reach and depth of engagement when working in a time limited manner. As such we recommend that as part of further development of the strategy as it is delivered over the next 10 years, that the community remains the key voice in Spalding's heritage and further co-creation is facilitated as projects are created and new ideas form building from the momentum created with this initial effort.

**“Protecting and renovating historic buildings.”**

*“ (Make the town feel) more sustainable and environmentally friendly.”*

*“Maintaining the natural environment of the river.”*

“Family oriented projects that focus on activities for children.”

“Community hub.”

**“A thriving market town...”**

**“Town centre investment”**

*“More local events...Celebrate Local crafts & skills”*

“A more cohesive, welcoming town centre .”

*“Make the river more attractive and a safe place to be...”*

**“Lots of outdoor green space for families to enjoy”**

*“Celebration of the history and culture of Spalding”*

Figure 5 - Participant's responses to being asked, "What would you like to see for Spalding's heritage in the future?"

## Themes and Priorities

From our engagement process, speaking with local stakeholders from different communities and organisations, and through desk-based research, six main themes have emerged to shape Spalding's future vision for heritage. These themes are based on the needs and wants of local people and heritage organisations. They will act as a guide to preserving Spalding's heritage for the future - making it more accessible to all, developing connections, communication and collaboration, and being welcoming, valued and celebrated by everyone.

These themes were synthesised from common threads and priorities mentioned by participants and roughly align with the priorities of large bodies in the heritage sector such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund: saving heritage, protecting the environment, inclusion access and participation, and organisational sustainability. These themes aim to organise the priorities of local people in heritage and detail how heritage can be a tool to address the needs of local communities and improve local peoples' wellbeing, quality of life and the local economy.



The themes identified are:

1. Connectivity and Communication
2. Nature and Landscape
3. Public Places
4. Heritage-Led Regeneration
5. Heritage is Open for All Communities
6. Heritage and Wellbeing

## Themes

### 1. Connectivity and Communication

Many participant organisations described how better communication and connections would enhance the work they do. It is important in Spalding that communities and organisations working in heritage have the tools and channels they need to properly communicate with each other and develop partnerships to collaborate in the future. During a time when resources are scarce, overheads are very high, and people are dealing with the ongoing cost of living crisis, it is critical that people developing and delivering projects in heritage are able to work together and pool their resources, expertise, audiences, and successes. Additionally,

the ongoing heritage work delivered by organisations in Spalding and the impressive exemplars of project delivery, such as the South Holland Heritage website (which is an incredible resource for exploring and communicating local history and heritage), Chain Bridge Forge and the Spalding Gentlemen's Society should be celebrated within the heritage sector and with the general public. Cross-promotion of successes will only boost the heritage sector in Spalding for everyone and build an environment of collaboration and positive support.



#### Objectives:

1. To work collaboratively across Spalding and South Holland, developing partnerships within the heritage sector and with adjacent sectors such as, health and wellbeing, culture and arts, education and skills, to successfully embed heritage at the heart of wider initiatives and deliver projects which take best advantage of local expertise, resources and knowledge.
2. To develop ways to facilitate peer support, sharing expertise and lessons learnt, within the heritage sector in areas such as communications, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and more.
3. To effectively communicate with other heritage organisations, adjacent sectors and the public about new projects, successes and other news both locally, regionally and where applicable, nationally.
4. To embrace new and different methods of communicating with the public about the ongoing work in heritage in Spalding and South Holland and using lessons learnt and feedback to improve communication with all the different communities in Spalding.
5. To celebrate and showcase successes and the ongoing work of heritage organisations locally.

#### ► Some key projects from the action plan which support connectivity and communication:

- 1.1. Area Based Grant Scheme Officer / 1.3. Heritage forum and online toolkit
3. Digital Blacksmithing and Increasing Opportunity at Chain Bridge Forge
6. Connections to Fenland Heritage / 14. Heritage Tourism

## 2. Nature and Landscapes

Feedback through our engagement process indicated that for a lot of people, Spalding's heritage is intricately connected to the landscape and nature in and around the town. A unique interaction of natural landscape and man-made features.

Nature and ecology interact with built heritage throughout Spalding. For example, waterways such as the River Welland and the Coronation Channel, and town centre green spaces such as Spalding Cemetery and Ayscoughfee Gardens provide abundant habitats for native plants and animals helping to conserve biodiversity. These places are important both for the conservation of nature and heritage and both must be appropriately considered when developing projects and initiatives which impact these places.

A great example of this is how the Spalding Reconnected project has worked to improve the biodiversity of the River Welland through the reintroduction of the European Eel and planting along the water course. This project was developed as a heritage project but focused on biodiversity as it was

understood that the presence of eels is a historic feature of the River Welland and reintroducing them helps tell the story of their depopulation through over consumption as well as furthering ecological development of the river as a habitat for diverse native animals and plants.

Another aspect to Spalding's heritage interaction with nature and landscape is through the economic development of the area as a centre for agriculture and agricultural trade through the port of Spalding. The agricultural development of Spalding has shaped local landscapes with greenhouses and arable land taking advantage of the fertile fenland but also shaped the town's built heritage through port infrastructure and expansion until the late 19th Century. From as early as the medieval period to the present day, trade and the demand of the agricultural industry have brought people to Spalding from far away driving the cultural characteristics of the town and shaping its intangible heritage.



### Objectives:

1. To embed the relationship between heritage and nature in Spalding in projects which incorporate both elements and collaborate across both sectors.
2. To incorporate improvements to the biodiversity, ecology and natural landscape in any large-scale improvements made to the historic built environment in Spalding for example through any heritage-led regeneration efforts.
3. To recognise the importance of the nature and landscapes of Spalding and its surrounding area currently and throughout its history when attracting people to the area whether as visitors or as residents.
4. To promote the protection of the natural environment and its intersection with heritage for boosting well-being through local well-being heritage and nature initiatives.

## 2. Nature and Landscapes cont'd

► Key projects from the action plan which are focused on nature and conservation:

10. Create a town centre green space in The Sycamore / 13. Local List for Heritage and Nature

15. Spalding Flower Parade



### 3. Public Places

Many community members expressed a need for improvements to Spalding's town centre through investment in heritage-led regeneration, improvements in public spaces for families to enjoy the town and attention to the historic built environment. Through our engagement process, it was clear that local people want to feel pride in their town and they want to be able to celebrate the amazing things it has to offer to locals and visitors alike. Spalding has an incredible offer which needs to be supported to effectively improve people's pride of place and enjoyment of their hometown. During the workshops, one participant shared that: ***"First impressions matter"***

Lots of responses noted that public spaces, especially green spaces, such as Ayscoughfee Hall, and along the River Welland are incredibly important to families and others spending time in Spalding. Having freely available access to recreational and leisure places like playgrounds, public gardens, and other outdoor amenities is essential to

the health of a place. While these places are not traditionally labelled as heritage assets, they often use historic sites, provide routes between historic places such as markets, high streets, parks, and more. By acknowledging that all elements of a place contribute to its whole, a more holistic and effective approach of place-making can be achieved which makes a place more appealing and welcoming for all people using the space whether locals or visitors. Prioritising improvements to the public realm in Spalding such as through wayfinding, decluttering or improving public safety make the place more welcoming and let the historic assets of the town shine.



#### Objectives:

1. To help people get the most out of their time in Spalding such as supporting the visitor economy through walking trails, improving and decluttering wayfinding for locals and visitors navigating between places in the town centre, and providing elements of interpretation such as public art, or information about the history of that place.
2. Improving residents' connection to Spalding and pride of place through place-based initiatives.
3. To improve local people's sense of local pride through place-based heritage-led regeneration initiatives which invest in the built environment and engage with the wider community about the heritage of Spalding encouraging greater awareness and involvement in the heritage of the community and Spalding.
4. To prioritise practical improvements to public spaces and their facilities and infrastructure which public spaces more enjoyable and easier for all people to enjoy including more accessible public spaces for disabled people.

### 3. Public Places cont'd

► Key projects from the action plan that focus on public spaces:

1.1 Conservation Area Appraisal / 1.2 Design Guide / 1.5. Area Based Grant Scheme - Public Realm

9. Installation of "The Bakers" statue in Swan Walk by Spalding and District Civic Society

10. Create a town centre green space in The Sycamores



## 4. Heritage-Led Regeneration

A repeated concern raised during our engagement process was the number of derelict or neglected historic properties around Spalding. Some examples of buildings brought up by participants are the Old Johnson Hospital, The White Horse Inn, Spalding Railway Station, and Spalding War Memorial. There are also two buildings on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register 2023 in Spalding: Broad Street Methodist Church, and the Vetchery which is also known as the Old Land Association Offices in Low Fulney. All these buildings, whether they are listed or not, are important to the community and should be considered for sustainable re-use, repurposing or refurbishment with continuing maintenance for the enjoyment of future generations.

Many participants also mentioned the increased rates of shop vacancy in the town centre and data shows lower footfall in 2023 compared to previous years.<sup>21</sup>

Heritage-led high street regeneration through targeted investment and Area Based Grant Schemes is a proven model for improving occupancy, footfall, and turnover for retail businesses. There are multiple versions of these schemes: Historic England's Heritage Action Zones and their Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiatives (although no longer a funding programme, NLHF still fund area-based schemes).

Other models with direct funding through HM Government such as heritage-led high street regeneration schemes funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up, and the Town Deals open the possibility for funding similar programmes through Long-Term Plan for Towns funding which leverages £20 million for investment in Spalding over the next 10 years focusing on heritage, transport and security.



### Objectives:

1. To prioritise and support projects which improve the quality of the historic built environment, specifically designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets which are of community value and at risk of dereliction and decay.
2. To invest in heritage-led regeneration projects such as the examples given above, to improve the physical and economic sustainability of Spalding town centre against measures such as shop occupancy, building condition and footfall.
3. To encourage ongoing efforts developing capital projects which highlight the value of heritage and history in Spalding with respect to its historic built environment and meets the needs of local people and visitors.
4. To maintain and improve the condition and standard of built heritage assets in Spalding through the planning system and effective enforcement.
5. To support and facilitate a community of cooperation and partnership working which enables sustainable retrofit and reuse of at-risk built heritage assets in Spalding.

<sup>21</sup> Footfall Data from 2022-2023 provided by South Holland District Council concerning Market Place.

## 4. Heritage-Led Regeneration cont'd

### ► Key projects from the action plan supporting heritage-led regeneration:

1.1. Conservation Area Appraisal / 1.2. Design Guide / 1. Area Based Grant Schemes - Building Improvements

1.5. Area Based Grant Schemes - Public Realm / 3. Spalding Railway Station - Building Refurbishment

5. Spalding Gentlemen's Society - Building Refurbishment / 17. The Vetchery, Mallard Road - Heritage at Risk Solutions

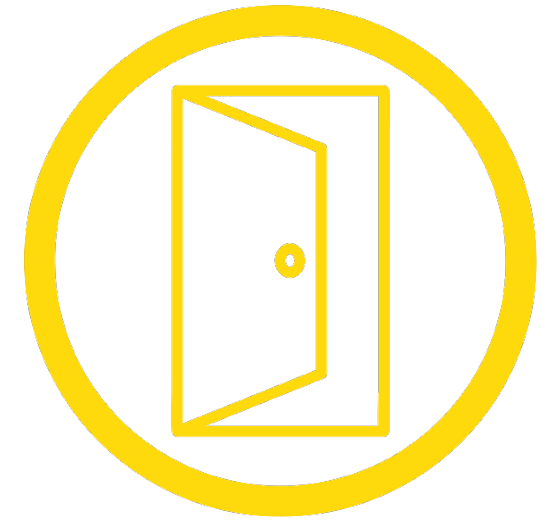
18. Old Johnson Hospital - Finding a sustainable future for this building



## 5. Heritage is open for all communities.

This theme is a commitment to improving access and inclusion for all communities in projects, sites, heritage skills and other initiatives in Spalding's heritage based on issues brought up by participants in our engagement process. It is hoped that through efforts over the next 5 to 10 years as part of this heritage strategy, that people of all communities and backgrounds from Spalding, the surrounding area, and further abroad can see their heritage celebrated and feel welcomed into heritage spaces. For example, autism friendly events and spaces, language and cultural inclusion

at sites and improving disabled access to heritage spaces through building work would all sit comfortably under this theme. Whilst this has been identified as a core theme of the engagement we undertook, making sure heritage is inclusive and accessible should be an essential component to all work in the heritage sector and beyond. This means recognising different types of heritage, cultural events that are meaningful to the different communities of Spalding and providing opportunities for people of all backgrounds to explore heritage careers.



### Objectives:

1. To support projects which enable all communities to access and celebrate the diverse heritage of Spalding, including offering interpretation in multiple languages and making special effort to include people who otherwise might not feel welcomed or catered for in traditional heritage spaces.
2. To deliver diverse and inclusive heritage projects, in collaboration with arts and cultural sectors, acknowledging and including the heritage of all the communities of Spalding through creative and meaningful ways through development and delivery.
3. To further pursue co-creation and community-led approaches in developing heritage projects to ensure that work and projects build on the authentic needs of the community with local people, especially those with protected characteristics, and their voices at the core of projects.
4. To reinterpret and reapproach existing heritage offers with a greater understanding and inclusion of a broader spectrum of Spalding 's community both historically and in the present day.
5. To work alongside local education institutions and heritage organisations to improve young people's understanding of heritage careers and the need for specialised heritage skills locally, improving access to opportunities for skills development and highly sought after and specialist career pathways.

### ► Key projects from the action plan supporting accessible and welcoming heritage:

- 1.2 Design Guide / 1.6. Area Based Grant Scheme - Bringing new people into heritage through community engagement and volunteering
4. Digital Blacksmithing and Increasing Opportunity by Chain Bridge Forge / 6. Heritage Open Days
12. Events programme for all the family / 15. Spalding Flower Parade

## 6. Heritage and Wellbeing

In the time since the COVID-19 pandemic, with increasing inequality throughout the UK and unprecedented demand on the NHS, finding alternative ways to improve people's health and wellbeing through non-medical means and social intervention has only become more important. Heritage, which is often a topic that can unite people from many different backgrounds, has immense potential as a proxy for wellbeing initiatives.

The 2021 census indicated that 18.6% of South Holland's population self-identify as disabled with their day-to-day activities being impacted either a little or a lot and there are higher rates of loneliness and isolation locally compared to other Lincolnshire local authority areas with 12.7% of local people often or always feeling lonely<sup>22</sup>.

The benefits of heritage in health and wellbeing initiatives are explored in the chapter above, "Why is Heritage Important?" There is great potential for heritage to add to existing wellbeing initiatives in Spalding. Developing partnerships between heritage organisations and community support organisations such as for example, Lincolnshire YMCA and Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service and the many other charities and local services working to support local communities and their most vulnerable members.

This theme explores how heritage in South Holland and more specifically in Spalding can play a key role in efforts to improve the community's health and wellbeing over the next 5 to 10 years.



### Objectives:

1. To develop opportunities to include heritage in wellbeing initiatives in Spalding and South Holland developing partnerships for delivery with community support organisations and the heritage sector.
2. To also prioritise the inclusion of wellbeing elements in heritage projects and initiatives developed in Spalding and South Holland.
3. To include of people and communities from diverse backgrounds and people who are socio-economically, who are most likely to have difficulty accessing wellbeing support in wellbeing and heritage initiatives.
4. To take advantage of the incredible heritage on offer in Spalding (natural, built and intangible heritage) to improve local people's wellbeing under access to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, which are connection, getting active, taking notice, learning and giving.<sup>23</sup>

### ► Key projects from the action plan which support wellbeing in heritage:

- 1.6. Area Based Grant Scheme - Bringing new people into heritage through community engagement and volunteering
- 10. Create a town centre green space in The Sycamores / 19. Local heritage and arts projects /
- 33. Spalding Cemetery - Green Space / 34. Spalding Cemetery - Chapels and Johnson Mausoleum

<sup>22</sup>GOV. (October 2019) Official Statistics, Local Authority Health Profiles: 2019.

<sup>23</sup>The Five Ways to Wellbeing were developed by the New Economics Forum as a tool for better understanding wellbeing and to structure holistic approaches to improving wellbeing both individually and across communities.

## Spalding Heritage Action Plan: For Transformative Change

This document is accompanied by the Action Plan for Transformative Change, which, alongside this heritage strategy set out practical ways to achieve the themes and priorities listed above. The action plan, which is also formulated using data from our extensive engagement process, outlines projects addressing the needs and wants of local communities over the next 10 years.

Efforts have been made to incorporate helpful information for example, suggested stakeholders and project delivery partners as well as potential funders and where appropriate listing the secured funding. For more detail, and for a full breakdown of the action plan please see the accompanying document.



## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the individuals and organisations who contributed to the creation of this document including the 43 respondents to our online survey and the 38 participants in drop-in and workshop sessions.

Ayscoughfee Hall Museum & Gardens

Chain Bridge Forge

Destination Lincolnshire

Friends of Spalding Cemetery

Lincolnshire County Council - Historic Places

Lincolnshire Gardens Trust

Museum of Technology the History of Gadgets and Gizmos

Peterborough & District Angling Association

SHDC Conservation Planning

SHDC Councillors

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership -  
National Portfolio Organisation team

South Holland Cultural Strategy team

South Holland Heritage/ South Holland Life

Spalding & District Civic Society

Spalding Gentlemen's Society

Spalding Sessions House

Spalding Town Forum

Spalding Transport Forum

University of Lincoln and Transported Art

White Eagle

## About Heritage Lincolnshire

The Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire is a charity, established in 1991, whose activities ensure that the special character and significance of Lincolnshire's heritage is understood, valued, conserved and celebrated for the benefit of local people, visitors and future generations.

The Trust is supported by County and District Councils, national heritage bodies, through commercial activities and sponsorship. We welcome donations [including gift aid] and legacies.

### The Trust's key objectives are to:

- ▶ Provide high quality learning and volunteering activities which attract a diverse audience and raise awareness of Lincolnshire's heritage.
- ▶ Increase participation in heritage activities through community engagement.
- ▶ Develop and deliver conservation projects that secure investment for Lincolnshire and contribute to economic regeneration.
- ▶ Undertake archaeological fieldwork and research that advances our understanding of Lincolnshire's historic environment.

## Appendix - Engagement Resources

The following questions were asked in our Spalding Heritage Strategy Survey which was hosted online and received in-person responses at our drop-in event:

*What does the word 'heritage' mean to you?*

*What kind of places, people and things do you think are important in Spalding's history?*

*What kind of projects would you like to see happen in Spalding in the next 10 years?*

*Do you think there is anything which prevents more people getting involved in heritage in Spalding?*

*Any other comments:*

*Please leave the name of your organisation here (if applicable)*

The following questions were asked during 121 interviews:

*What does your organisation do and how does it achieve its aims?*

*What heritage Networks or Partners do you interact with?*

*What are your priorities for the future of heritage in Spalding?*

*What kinds of barriers (physical, economic or otherwise) prevent people from delivering projects or engaging with heritage in Spalding?*

*Do you have any other comments or things you would like us to know as part of the creation of the Spalding Heritage Strategy?*

The following structure was used to guide exercises and activities during our two engagement workshops:

*Introduction to Heritage in Spalding*

*Networks and partnerships*

*2040 Vision*

*Projects*

*Questions?*