

Embedding sustainability principles into the heritage sector

Lead organisation:

Sustainability West Midlands

Project Team: Alan Carr (Senior Sustainability Adviser), Julie Pope (Office & Stakeholder Manager)

Customers:



WM Sustainability Roadmap themes addressed:



Project Duration:

March 2021 – October 2021

The Project

SWM has been supporting the Heritage Fund since March 2018 and has previously run a series of sustainability training [workshops](#) for the organisation, [assessed](#) 118 development stage applications for their sustainability credentials and ran a [further webinar](#) to begin to help staff assess applications themselves. This fourth project brought together all the previous three by enabling us to rollout our training and expertise to the whole organisation. This was born through our positive relationship with [Fit for the Future Network](#) who helped broker the discussions with the Heritage Fund initially.

Aims

- To run seven training sessions for Heritage Fund staff, trustees and Board members from all over the UK to fully embed sustainability principles into the organisation's thinking.
- To provide a series of application assessments, including a step-by-step guide on how these were assessed to allow staff to follow the same approach.
- To produce a framework for sustainability that will be used by all applicants and assessors going forward so that projects that have a sustainability focus are prioritised for funding.

Challenges

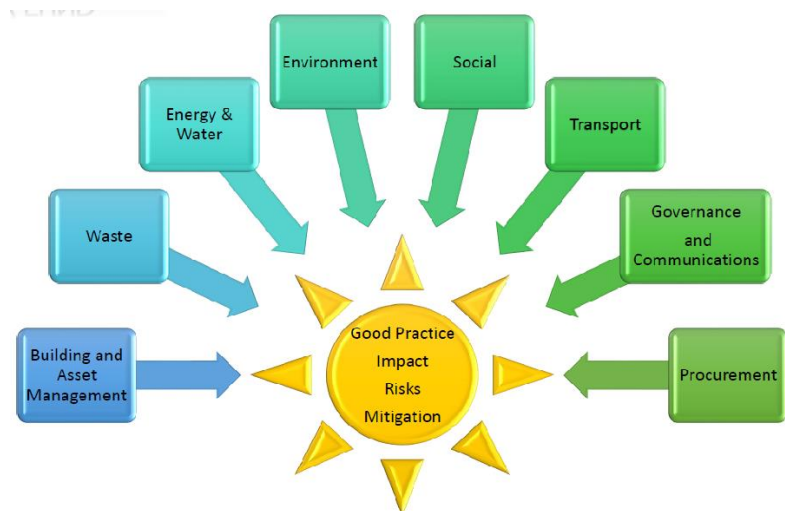
- The training sessions we delivered were relatively 'hands-on' and very interactive. This is more challenging through MS Teams than in person, but of course due to the COVID-19 pandemic the

former was the only option. Despite this and with support from the Heritage Fund’s Learning and Skills Development Manager, the sessions were as engaging as possible and we managed to attract over 200 delegates in total to the sessions.

- The Heritage Fund was supporting the heritage sector in a significant way during the pandemic through its [Heritage Emergency Fund](#) and this absorbed a lot of their staff capacity. However, in the end this did not seem to affect the level of engagement on this topic, which was encouraging.
- Once again, SWM demonstrated its flexibility during the project. Originally, our brief was to produce case studies of applications that have achieved good practice on embedding sustainable principles, but this changed midway through the contract; instead, we were asked to assess eight applications and produce a step-by-step guide on how this assessment took place. We had to quickly adapt and change our approach, but did so with strong results.

The Outcomes

This project concluded nearly four years of support to the Heritage Fund. There were various outcomes throughout the project, but the overarching one was the full embedment of sustainability across the organisation, both through staff training and the development of a framework to allow Development Managers to assess applications for their sustainability credentials in a consistent way in future. This will ensure that all future applicants consider how they can make their projects more sustainable, including reducing emissions, enhancing biodiversity, preparing for climate impacts, integrating inclusivity and sustainable construction practices. The ultimate objective of this is that the millions of pounds of grant funding that is administered by the Fund every year is going towards projects that contribute to sustainability outcomes on a more consistent basis, clearly establishing that to protect our past we need to invest in the future.



In the Future

Through the four projects we have carried out with the Heritage Fund over nearly as many years, we are delighted that our support has contributed to the rise in sustainability as a priority. Providing the framework and the training will allow our legacy to continue indefinitely and this was always the primary objective of our work. For us, it is always a success when we see that a project that we’re commissioned to complete is then used by the client on an on-going basis. In this case, given the impact this client can have on funding sustainable projects across the UK, the positive impact can be felt on a significant scale.

Accolades

Selection of feedback from training session attendees:

“Great facilitation/hosting from SWM. Good range of content and pitched at the appropriate level. Liked how many resources/links were shared for further reading rather than trying to cram it all in.”



“I will be using [the outputs] in my feedback to project enquiries and advice sessions to potential applicants to ensure they think of sustainability when developing their ideas.”

“[The sessions were] dynamic, holding your focus right through.”

“Good presenter, well-paced, good case studies, provoked thoughts about how we will / should use outputs.”

“I will run an environmental sustainability workshop with my development phase projects using the assessment framework to get them to think about the breadth of what they can take forward.”

“Interactive, all could take part no matter [their] previous knowledge.”

“I liked that the training had carefully considered the Scottish context and that lots of effort had been made to use Scottish examples and to make the training relevant to Scotland.”

“I take confidence from the discussions and reflection and do feel more confident engaging grantees to talk about environmental sustainability.”

“[As a result of the training], I will look to use less plastic and have downloaded several of the apps that were recommended in the chat. I would like to do more research independently on how I can improve my home and reduce the impact of climate change.”

“[The session] has inspired me to do more as an individual.”

Contact Details

For further information on the project or to work with us in one of a variety of ways, please contact the SWM team on 07751 930625 or enquiries@swm.org.uk.