

Operating framework

May 2017

Introduction

England's Heritage Cities is a partnership of destinations brought together by common product and interests. Its purpose is to share information, find solutions to common challenges, benchmark performance, champion the heritage product of England and facilitate joint activity, all with the intention of maximising the potential of the cities' visitor economies.

Consortium background

The consortium has existed in different forms for over 15 years and has been known also as Britain's Heritage Cities. On 1 January 2013 the consortium changed its rationale and became a common interest group with a set of shared strategic objectives (see below). The group also settled on a new geographical footprint, England, and a new name, England's Heritage Cities.

The founding members of this new group were: Bath, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Lincoln, Oxford, Stratford, York. Today the consortium has grown to 13 and includes: Cambridge, Canterbury, Greenwich, Lancaster and Salisbury.

Strategic Objectives

1. To raise the profile of England's Heritage Cities and their contribution to the economy with wider stakeholders including Government and the private sector.
2. To share best practice, finding solutions to common issues and aspirations including organisational resilience and performance.
3. To share and interpret trends and data to the benefit of the organisations and the destinations they represent.
4. To provide a coherent voice for England's Heritage Cities in national discussions.
5. To work effectively with Visit England and Visit Britain and other strategic partners.
6. To provide a platform for joint activity and leveraging funding.

Membership of England's Heritage Cities

Membership of EHC is not intended to be rigid, and the group may vary in size over time. To ensure that the group is coherent and mutually beneficial the criteria for membership is as follows:

1. Common aim

Member organisations must have as a main aim to maximise economic return from visitors whilst managing the associated environmental impacts.

2. Geographical location

Member destinations must be situated in England and regard Visit England as their national tourist body. They should also be located outside of Central London.

3. Visitor numbers

The destinations represented should receive a minimum of 4 million tourist trips per annum to the destination (the city and its immediate surrounding area), including short breaks and day visits, as measured using an economic impact model recognised by the UK tourism industry eg Cambridge/STEAM.

4. Value of tourism

A benchmark figure of £200 million per annum has been set in relation to visitor spend, as measured using an industry-acknowledged model.

5. Product compatibility

Members must have a historic city or town as the prime focus/major component of their destination, and have product supporting at least four of the following themes:

- Cathedrals
- Castles
- World Heritage Sites
- An element of the build environment that locates the origins of the city in one or more specific periods of English history
- Architectural 'must sees' for national and international visitors originating in a period of English history
- Visitor attractions/assets that animate the relevant period of English History
- Festivals and events that are designed to attract out of area visitors

6. Endorsement

The Consortium has been confirmed as a viable and desirable grouping by national tourism organisations including its strategic partners such as UK Inbound and VisitBritain and its membership is supported by research into the overseas markets and informal industry feedback from public-facing and trade-facing agencies.

7. Operating principles

Members abide by the consortium's operating principles:

- Members should have a mandate and remit to develop their destination's visitor economy.
- Members should be in a position to take decisions on behalf of their destinations at consortium meetings.
- Members should have access to and be able to share performance data relating to the destination in which they work to support the objective of sharing best practice and finding solutions to common issues and aspirations.
- Members should be in a position to represent the tourism/visitor economy in their destination through local engagement with the tourism industry and other destination partners.
- Decisions affecting all members will be reached by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached then decisions will be based on a majority view.



- Members are not required to participate in joint activity to remain members of the consortium. Where a member opts out of an activity they no longer have a say in how that activity is managed or delivered.
- Members will not be able to veto joint activity on the basis that they do not wish to participate.
- Members must make every effort to attend meetings. An absence from three meetings in a row may prompt a discussion about inclusion in the consortium.

Applications to join the consortium have to satisfy the above criteria. Destinations wishing to apply are asked to submit no more than 2 sides of A4 explaining why they should be considered for membership of the consortium. The final decision on acceptance of new consortium members rests with the existing EHC members who have to agree unanimously. Meeting the criteria does not guarantee admission to the consortium. It is anticipated that the inclusion of new partners would also be subject to advice from the group's national stakeholders and strategic partners.

Finance and commitments of membership

While there is no subscription fee to be a consortium member each member is required to contribute £250 per annum towards the running of the consortium. Additionally each member is required to participate in benchmarking the performance of their organisation and the destination it is responsible for, for example participating in T-stats.

Each member is required to take an active role in the consortium. This includes, for example, taking an official role such as treasurer or vice chair, developing joint projects, delivering joint projects, sourcing partners for joint activity etc.

Governance and management of the consortium

EHC is a self-governing and self-managing consortium. Representation at meetings is through the Chief Executives/senior officer of the destination management/marketing organisation of each city (the organisation may have a wider geographical remit). The group strives to keep representation consistent to enable relationships to be formed and maintained.

The group has an independent chair who is paid a small honorarium to lead and facilitate meetings. The group has a vice-chair drawn from the membership.

A senior staff member from the England team within VisitBritain is invited to act as an observer to the consortium.

Joint activity

All members are able to take part in joint activity if they choose but there is no obligation. By opting into joint activity members agree to the main parameters of the project including any financial contribution. The contribution to any joint activity is equal from all participating members.

Those participating in joint activity are obliged to actively participate in the project, taking responsibility for one or more areas of work and reporting on achievements and challenges at meetings.

The results of any joint activity are shared with all consortium members, whether or not they are participating.

The consortium does, if required, form ad hoc operational group(s) to deliver activity, using staff drawn from the destination organisations plus co-opts and suppliers as required. Examples of tasks that are allocated among project members include: managing budgets, delivering activity, liaising with partners, sourcing partners, planning and evaluation.

Performance measurement

There are no performance measures relating to the consortium.

Frequency of meetings

The group meets 3-5 times a year.

Location

Meetings take place in London, York, Lancaster and Oxford in rotation.

Current roles

Officer roles

Chair	Melanie Sensicle (independent)
Acting Vice Chair	Katrina Michel, Chester
Treasurer	Katrina Michel, Chester

Activity leads

Benchmarking coordination	Barrie Kelly, Greenwich
Commercial development	Emma Thornton, Cambridge
Communications	Michelle Gorman, Durham
Trade	Helen Peters, Stratford