



## Operating framework

Last updated December 2023

### Introduction

England's Historic Cities is a partnership of destinations brought together by because they have interests in common. The purpose of the consortium is to share knowledge, benchmark performance, develop insight and promote the importance of the heritage product of England to stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. When opportunities appear it may act as one to facilitate and deliver activity that will help to maximise the potential of the cities' visitor economies.

### Consortium background

The consortium has existed in different forms for over 18 years and has been known also as Britain's Heritage Cities. On 1 January 2013 the consortium changed its rationale from a group of destinations pooling money to deliver overseas marketing campaigns, to a common interest group with a set of shared strategic objectives. The group also settled on a new geographical footprint, England, and a new name, England's Heritage Cities, subsequently changed to England's Historic Cities. At this time the CEOs of the organisations involved dissolved the marketing group and agreed to lead the work of the consortium directly.

The founding members were Bath, Carlisle, Chester, Durham, Lincoln, Oxford, Stratford upon Avon, York. By end 2016 it had grown to include: Cambridge, Canterbury, Greenwich, Lancaster and Salisbury and in 2023 the consortium has 13 members spread across England.

### Operating principle

The consortium operates under the Chatham House Rule which states: 'information disclosed during a meeting may be reported by those present, but the source of that information may not be explicitly or implicitly identified.' The consortium extends this rule to include information disclosed via email where the requests and replies have been circulated to consortium members.

### Strategic Objectives

1. To raise the profile of England's Historic Cities and their contribution to the economy with wider stakeholders including Government and the private sector.
2. To share best practice to help members improve their performance as destination managers and find solutions to common challenges and aspirations including organisational resilience.
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 Historic Cities in national discussions.
5. To work effectively with Visit England and Visit Britain and other strategic partners.
6. To provide a platform for working collaboratively.

### Membership of England's Historic Cities

Membership of EHC is not intended to be static, and the group may vary in size over time. To ensure that the group is coherent and mutually beneficial the criterion 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 associated with operating in an historic environment.

2. Geographical location



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

### 3. Visitor numbers

The destinations represented should receive a minimum of 4 million tourist trips per annum (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 e.g. Cambridge/STEAM.

### 4. Value of tourism

A benchmark figure of £200 million per annum has been set in relation to visitor spend to a destination, 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. The destination should have a product offer that supports 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 and informal feedback from public-facing and trade-facing agencies involved in tourism. It is anticipated that the inclusion of new partners would be subject advice from these same agencies.

### 7. Operating principles

Members are required to meet a small set of operational criteria and abide by consortium's operating principles which are:

- 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 vote.
- Members are not required to participate in projects or collaborative activities to remain a member of the consortium.
- Where a member declines to participate in a project or activity they do not have a say in how that project or activity is managed and delivered.
- Members will not be able to veto the consortium undertaking projects or collaborative activity on the basis that they do not wish to participate.



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- 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.

### **Membership applications**

Applications to join the consortium will need to satisfy the membership criteria, the operating criteria and agree to the operating principles. Destinations wishing to apply should 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 members which must agree unanimously. Meeting the criteria does not guarantee admission to the consortium.

### **Governance and management of England's Historic Cities**

England's Historic Cities is a self-governing and self-managing consortium. Representation at meetings is through the Chief Executive/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 is chaired by 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.

From time to time the consortium may create additional groups to support the core purpose and project activity of the group. They can be time limited or ongoing.

### **Finance and commitments of membership**

While there is no subscription fee to be a consortium member each member is required to contribute an administration fee, circa £250 per annum, towards the running of the consortium. Additionally, each member is required to participate in the annual benchmarking of the performance of both their organisation and their destination.

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, leading agenda items at meetings, researching and sourcing opportunities for collaborative activity, developing projects, delivering projects, sourcing partners for joint activity etc.

### **Joint projects**

All members can choose to take part in EHC projects. By opting into a project members agree to work within the main parameters of the project, which will be discussed and agreed in advance, including any financial contribution. Members that decide to participate should ensure they are able to participate for the full duration. The monetary contribution to any joint activity should be equal from all participating members unless otherwise agreed by the members.

If required, additional groups may be established to deliver projects using staff drawn from the destination organisations plus co-opts and suppliers as required.

Where an operational group is established, the work will be shared among the partners and participating members are obliged to actively contribute to the delivery of projects by taking responsibility for one or more areas of work and reporting at meetings. Examples of work include overseeing projects, managing budgets; delivering activity; liaising with partners; sourcing partners; planning and evaluation.



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Information about the results of any projects or collaborative activities will be shared with all consortium members including those that may not be activity participating.

### **Performance measurement**

There are no performance measures for England's Historic Cities. Performance measurement for projects will be established at the outset.

### **Frequency and location of meetings**

The group will meet 3-5 times a year. Visit England will be invited to at least one meeting each year but are welcome to attend as many as they choose. Two meetings a year will take place face to face in February (York) and September (London). Other meetings will take place virtually. The schedule of dates will be agreed a year in advance.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

Officer roles, except for the chair, are unremunerated.

#### *Officer roles*

Chair	Melanie Sensicle (independent)
Vice Chair	Michelle Gorman, Durham
Treasurer	Cristian Marcucci, Chester

#### *Activity leads*

Annual benchmarking	Rotating responsibility: 2022 data Oxford, 2023 data Stratford upon Avon, 2024 data York.
Website	Kathryn Davis, Bath
England Originals trade	David Andrews, Salisbury
Content development	Vikki Harris, Lancaster.

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