



IMPACT REPORT 2025

Restoring communities



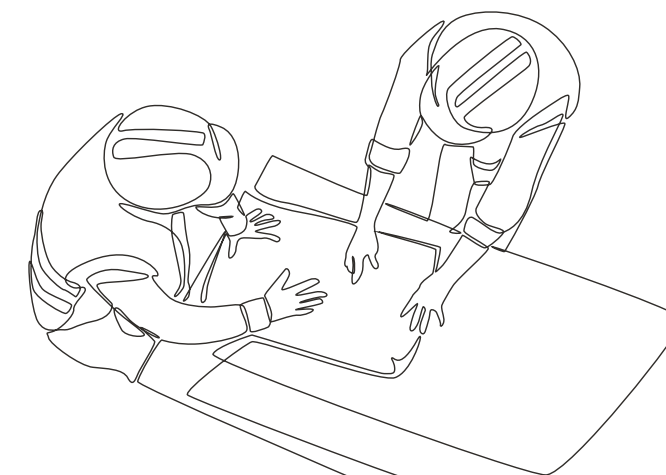
Restoring communities... ...and saving heritage

This is our second impact report, detailing our members' achievements in 2024 and providing a snapshot of their activities at the beginning of 2025. Our first report made a big impression on leaders and decision-makers in the heritage sector and beyond. For the first time, we were not just telling great stories about our member organisations and how they deliver benefits for their communities, but also demonstrating that this activity combines to make a significant impact on places and people throughout the UK.

Community heritage delivers so much for people and places, providing facilities, regenerating high streets, creating jobs, homes, visitor attractions, workspaces, arts venues, and volunteering opportunities, while also improving wellbeing. It also provides heritage benefits, restoring hundreds of sites and removing buildings from the 'at-risk' registers.

2024 was a challenging year for community heritage with a new UK government, meaning that some of the funding streams our members had been pursuing were paused or came to an end, with new opportunities only emerging in 2025. There were also continuing cost pressures. However, as ever, our members have worked hard to meet those challenges.

We also want to tell you about what we have been up to as a Network in the last year: the learning and networking events available, the information provided, the support given to members, and how much our membership has grown and diversified over the past year.



Get in touch



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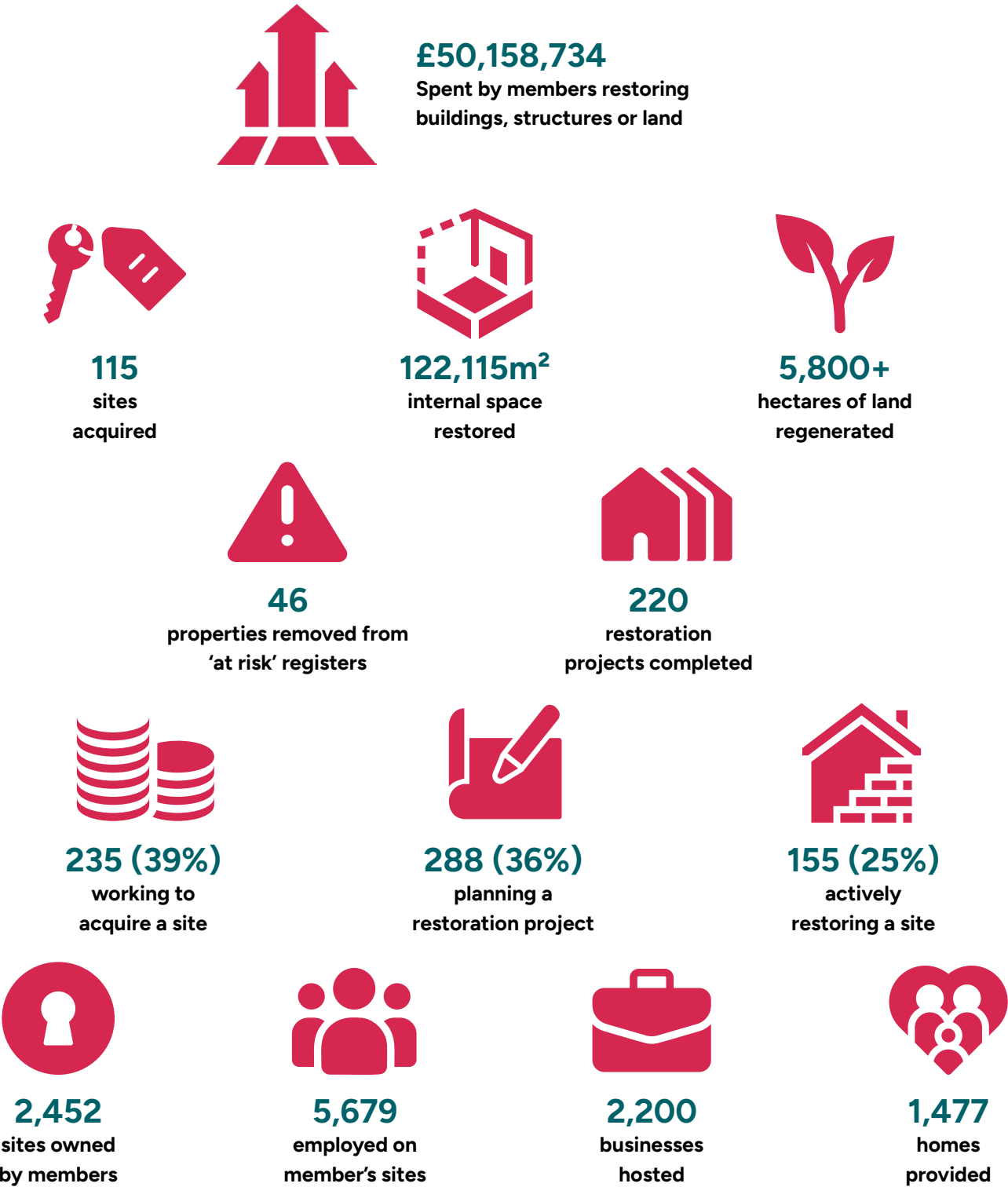


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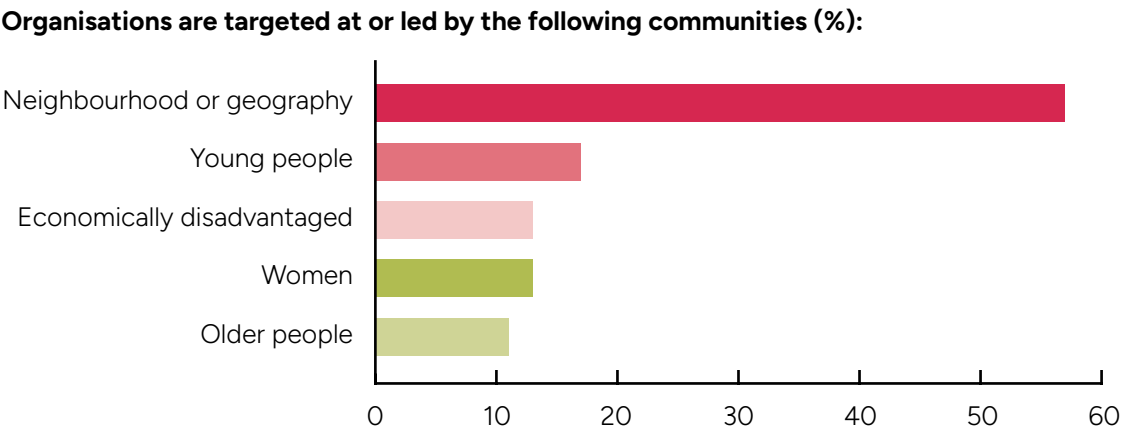
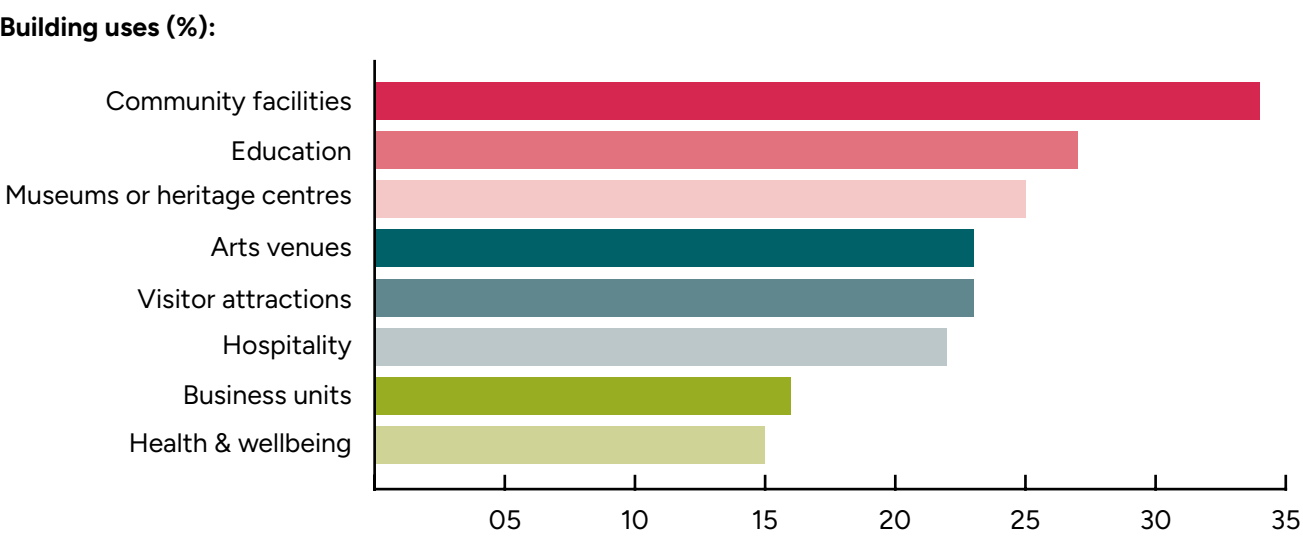
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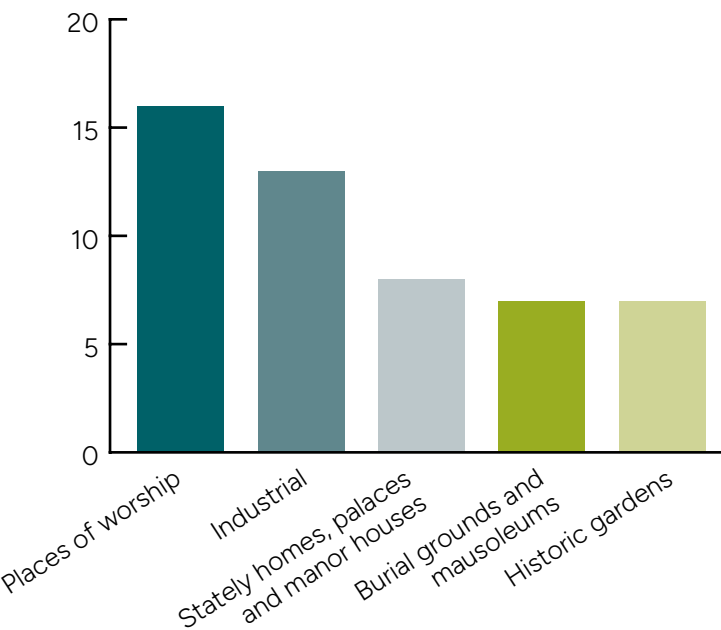
Members' impact in 2024



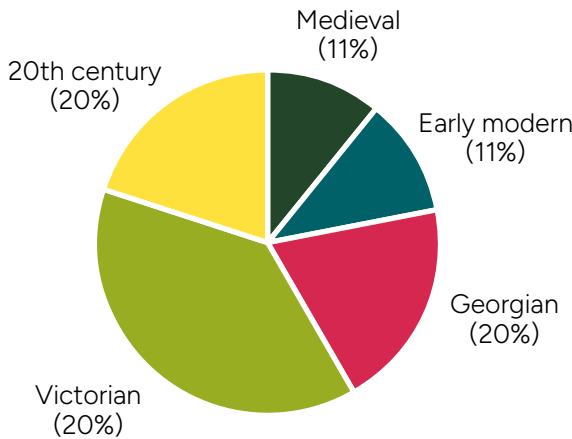
Membership profile



Our members' sites include the following building types (%):



Our members' sites were originally built during the following periods (%):



What were our members doing in 2024?

Tyne Theatre & Opera House volunteers receive Heritage Heroes Award

A group of research volunteers at Grade I listed Newcastle theatre, Tyne Theatre & Opera House, have been nationally recognised for their service to the UK's heritage sector. The Heritage Heroes Awards are the Heritage Alliance's celebration of the outstanding contribution Britain's heritage volunteers make to society.

MARCH

MARCH



Mavisbank receives funding from National Heritage Memorial Fund

Campaigners have fought for decades to save Mavisbank House, just south of Edinburgh. Built by celebrated Scottish architect William Adam in 1723, it was badly damaged by fire in the 1970s. The £5.3 million award means the building can now be purchased and stabilised by a consortium including Landmark Trust.

MAY

JUNE

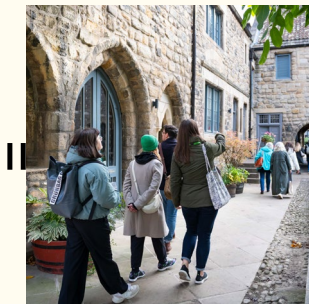


Boost for new Gaelic Cultural Centre

A Project Viability Grant has been awarded to Cultarlann Inbhir Nis by the Architectural Heritage Fund to progress plans to establish a Gaelic Cultural Centre in the historic East Church in Inverness. The centre will provide a space for all those with an interest in the language to come together for entertainment, learning and Gaelic arts and culture in a vibrant, welcoming atmosphere.

JULY

AUG



Leas Lift restoration begins

The team behind the restoration of Folkestone's Grade II* listed Leas Lift have appointed a principal contractor for the construction work. The 140-year-old funicular is one of just three water-balanced funicular railways in the UK and the only remaining cliff lift in Folkestone. It is estimated that it transported an astounding 36 million people. The charity leading the lift's restoration aims to reopen it in 2026.

NOV

DEC

Bourne Town Hall Trust gets go-ahead

A loan from the Architectural Heritage Fund to match funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund meant the conservation and redevelopment of the Bourne Town Hall, Lincolnshire could go ahead. Plans are being developed for the sustainable use of the town hall, with the Trust delivering a programme of volunteering, engagement activities, community consultation and events.

Haverfordwest Heritage gives new lease of life to Temperance Hall

The Temperance Hall will be restored and repurposed to create a new community printworks. This will include providing an exhibition space, print and design workspaces, and a well-equipped workshop with traditional printing presses, which will host an exciting programme of courses.

Chance Heritage Trust secures future

A £250,000 grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund and £165,000 from Historic England will support the Trust for the next three years. The combined capacity-building grants will transform how the Trust operates and help drive the regeneration of the Chance Glassworks and other globally significant industrial heritage sites in Smethwick in the West Midlands.

20th Anniversary for historic workhouse

When Llanfyllin Dolydd Building Preservation Trust took possession of Y Dolydd, the historic Union Workhouse at Llanfyllin in 2004, it needed significant renovation. Today, Y Dolydd houses 20 workshops let to local enterprises: the Meadows Café, a bar, community venue, gallery, second-hand bookshop, a 20-bed bunkhouse and the only workhouse museum in Wales.

All images on this page by Damien Wootten.

Impact across the UK



The Court House is owned and managed by Open House Festival Ltd and was Northern Ireland's first community asset transfer.

© Open House Festival Ltd

Northern Ireland: The Court House, Bangor

The Court House is a Grade B2 listed arts venue in Bangor, Northern Ireland. Open House Festival took the building on in 2020 as part of their placemaking strategy, transforming it into a thriving arts venue in the town. The Court House is the first heritage building that Open House Festival have operated from.

Open House Festival have committed to developing the Court House for the people of Bangor and bringing together people and place. Since the building opened nearly three years ago, it has become a space for residents to enjoy arts and culture in their own town.

This was recognised in 2024 when the Court House won the Heritage Angel Awards in Northern Ireland, which was decided by public vote. In 2024, they held over 500 events with more than 50,000 people attending throughout the year.



Plans to restore Plas Gunter Mansion will provide Abergavenny with a new visitor attraction, business units and community space.

© Deborah Holland

Wales: Plas Gunter Mansion, Abergavenny

Plas Gunter is Grade II* listed house believed to be built in the 1630s. The plans to restore this mansion as a visitor centre also include linking with wider Abergavenny heritage.

In 2024 the team at Plas Gunter carried out multiple activities relating to the development phase of the restoration project for which they received a £222,340 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. They worked extensively with the local community whilst drawing up plans to ensure that the new spaces met their needs.

The available space was assessed, and plans include a community activity room, dedicated volunteer space and business units to hire, along with restoring many original features, including the second-floor chapel for visitors to explore.



Without the dedication of its hardworking volunteers, the Mill of Benholm would not have reopened to the public in 2024.

© Benholm Mill

Scotland: Mill of Benholm, Aberdeenshire

The Mill of Benholm is situated in Benholm, Aberdeenshire. It is believed that there has been a mill since the 12th century, and oats were milled there commercially until 1982. It underwent a restoration project from 1986 and opened to the public in 1995 as a visitor attraction; however, it closed in 2014.

A group of volunteers recognised the importance of having the mill as a community space, and Mill of Benholm Enterprises petitioned for a community asset transfer which was granted in April of 2024. This enabled the mill to reopen.

Since opening in June 2024, the team hosted numerous events and exhibitions and opened a cafe. The charity consists of around 50 volunteers and over 110 members who are from the local community and have worked tirelessly carrying out maintenance, creating events and promoting the mill.



The Stables project will enable further engagement with Delapré Abbey's community and restore an important part of its history.

© Kirsty Edmonds

England: Delapré Abbey, Northampton

Delapré Abbey is a former Northampton Cluniac nunnery dating back to 1145. Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust have worked to secure funding and developed a plan to safeguard its future for the benefit of the local community.

2024 was a pivotal year in these development plans. The Trust secured delivery stage funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore the 19th century stables into a community hub. The plans include a wellbeing and a young people's programme, retail and even a dog space. Community has always been at the heart of Delapré Abbey and the stables project will provide a space for this activity to develop.

The Stables project will open more of the site to visitors and will add to an already extensive visitor programme of events and exhibitions.

Network news

2024 was a year of transition for our Network.

We completed the development phase of our National Lottery Heritage Fund project, *Essential Networks*. In May we submitted our application for the delivery phase and in September we heard we had been successful. By the end of the year, we had already begun recruitment of new staff, work on a new website and member portal, and activity planning. Thank you, lottery players.

We are also grateful to the Pilgrim Trust who helped match the Heritage Fund’s support and also helped us through the ‘gap’ between development and delivery phase funding.

We continued to help community heritage organisations succeed via:

- Learning and networking events.
- Weekly newsletters with vital information on events, funding, tender opportunities, jobs and sector news.
- Our Toolkit of essential guidance and information.
- Our response to dozens of support requests, providing advice and information or signposting to other members or sector experts.
- Our conference in Dunfermline which attracted over 250 delegates from all over the UK and provided a unique forum for discussion, networking, socialising and showcasing heritage regeneration in the city, Fife and Scotland.

Our work in Scotland continued to flourish thanks to funding from Historic Environment Scotland and National Trust for Scotland. Working with communities hoping to secure the future of their churches continued to be a big part of this work. We were committed supporters of the *Make Your Mark* campaign to promote heritage volunteering. A new online learning programme for early stage organisations was delivered.

As we approached the end of our current funding from Historic England, we began to work with them on proposals for the next three. This will include a Development and Outreach Officer and a Heritage Trainee for England to match our capacity in Scotland. During the year, we delivered monthly carbon literacy training events for Historic England, and all of these were fully booked.

At the end of the year, we secured a contract, in partnership with Locality, to deliver learning events for heritage organisations in West Yorkshire. This will dovetail nicely with our plans for Conference 2025 in Bradford.

Support from Cadw enabled us to employ a Heritage Trainee for the first time to support members and organise events in Wales. In Northern Ireland, through our committee of volunteers supported by UK staff, we continued to offer events and member support with funding from the Department for Communities.

Our Youth Forum continued to grow. This informal network of early-career professionals, students and apprentices created a placemaking manifesto that was presented at Conference. They were consulted on how to work with young people by various heritage organisations and continued to develop their advice library.

We also welcomed many more heritage businesses and local authorities into membership during the year.

A key element of this year of transition was our change of identity. We began 2024 as Heritage Trust Network and ended it with the working name Heritage Network. This reflects the breadth of our membership, which includes many organisations that do not identify as ‘trusts’, including those that do not have ‘heritage’ in their objects but operate from historic buildings.



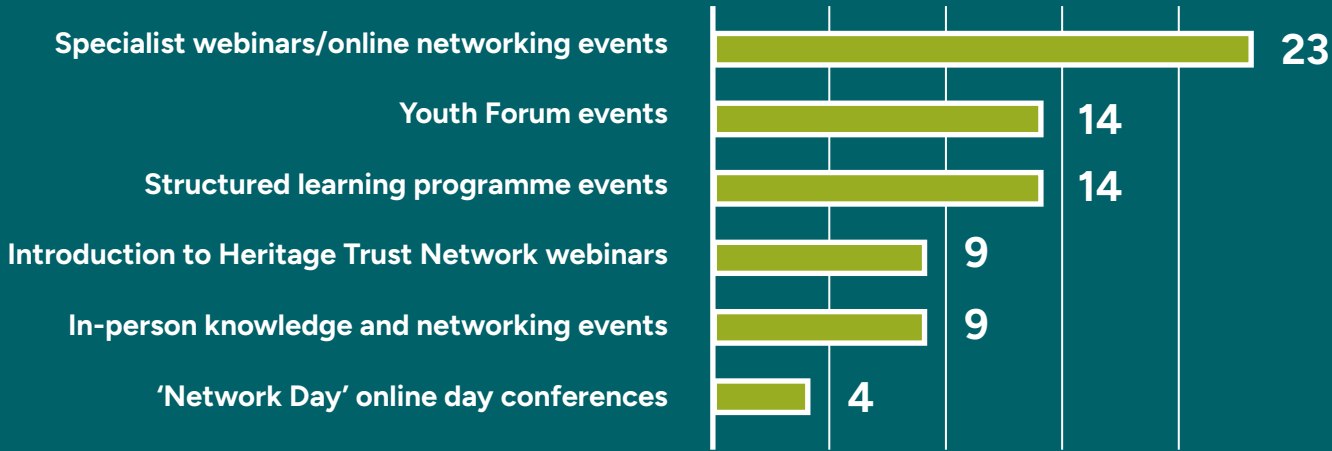
948
members



85
events



1,568
participants



137
member
support cases



254
Youth Forum
members



2
paid heritage
traineeships

Figures relate to the 2024-25 financial year.

