



Culture Programme



European Heritage Days  
Journées européennes  
du patrimoine



COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS

A joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission

### 2009 EVALUATION FORM

#### I. Country

Country: England

Date: 10-13 September 2009

Theme: No national theme

#### II. Bodies responsible and/or involved in the coordination and organisation of the national EHD (if any changes)

Until recently, Heritage Open Days was co-ordinated nationally by the Civic Trust with funding and support from English Heritage. In April 2009, the Civic Trust went into administration and English Heritage rescued the programme by taking it in-house. Since May the Heritage Open Days has been part of English Heritage's Outreach team which since 2003, has been working closely with the Civic Trust on widening and diversifying participation in the scheme.

#### III. Theme 2009

a) How did you draw attention to the theme during the EHD?

We have no national theme as such as we fear a theme would potentially exclude many places from taking part which is not compatible with the scheme's ethos. As Heritage Open Days invites communities to celebrate their heritage assets and encourages them to take ownership of the programme, it is up to local organizers to choose an annual theme if they wish. In 2009, there was a number of areas though which adopted a thematic approach such as in Lincolnshire where a wide range of imaginative events at historic places celebrated the region's artistic, musical and literary heritage or Mole Valley District in the county of Surrey which chose "Memories and Mysteries" as their theme.

Interestingly, although there has never been any nationally promoted theme, every year one or two topical clusters emerge across the programme. A mixture of growing climate awareness, a credit crunch induced urge for thriftiness and World War II commemorations seems to have re-kindled an interest in skills which went out of fashion some time ago. In response, the 2009 programme offered a host of events which celebrated and demonstrated crafts and skills with opportunities to have a go. It seems that to a certain extent, the annual Heritage Open Days programmes tend to reflect the prevailing zeitgeist.

b) Was the public interested in this theme?

The message of our media campaign which was launched at a private terrace house in Brighton focused on the human face of heritage, on places that at first glance look humble and unassuming but have fascinating stories to tell and on the joy of discovery on people's doorsteps. This message proved very popular.

In the face of the economic recession, the aspect of free access – emphasized by the event's strapline "Free to explore" – played a significant role in raising the event's profile and popularity.

#### **IV. Participation**

1. Number of sites and monuments open to the public (and possible geographical division by cities or regions):

The total of sites and events registered with English Heritage was 4,100. Three quarters of the 2009 event programme consisted of property openings (3,052) while 26% were guided walks or events which brought local history and heritage to life.

All major cities and towns took part. The South East remains the region with the greatest density of events, contributing over a quarter to the national programme. While participation in the top performing county of Surrey reached a plateau at 308 registered properties and activities, new power houses in Oxford and Brighton & Hove, where Oxford Preservation Trust and the Regency Town House significantly raised the bar, led to an overall increase of 20% in the region. Emerging hot spots in Tees Valley and Northumberland, where a newly formed steering group has been promoting the scheme across the county, meant a 20% rise in participation in the North East. The South West (17% up from the year before) benefited from Outreach development work in North Devon and from a series of new eco-house events in low carbon communities in Somerset and Gloucestershire. Yorkshire continued to expand participation by 13% fuelled by Outreach supported activities in Hull and Bradford.

2. Number of other events proposed (please specify):

514 guided walks and tours

534 other interpretive events such as exhibitions, re-enactments or skills demonstrations/workshops

Many events explored cultural heritage in all its forms, ranging from language, song and dance to food and other cultural practices. Highlights included an evening of Lincolnshire folk at a pub in Leadenham, a heritage ale trail in Sheffield, a pie tasting session in Stockport, and a Town Crier Master Class Competition in Hull. This wider definition of heritage not only helps engage with new audience groups, it also helps long-established programmes to remain fresh and relevant.

3. Numbers of visits

Based on figures for 1,362 sites and activities, an estimated 1,060,000 visits were generated over the four days.

4. Number of visitors:

N/A

5. Others:

Among the properties opening up for Heritage Open Days, 45% were not normally accessible to the public, 40% were usually open free of charge but offered something special and 15% waived their admission fees for Heritage Open Days.

## **V. Description of the public taking part in the EHD**

The 2009 visitor study revealed that 82% of respondents considered themselves to live locally and were driven by the desire to learn more about the area or the particular place (64%) they visited over Heritage Open Days.

The research also showed that the event is still generating a significant number of 'new' visitors – half had never visited Heritage Open Days before and 30% only visited heritage attractions once a year or less. However, perhaps not surprisingly after running for 15 years, the number of repeat visitors is growing.

The average age of adult visitors (i.e. survey respondents above 16 years) has slightly decreased from previous years. But with almost two thirds aged 55+, Heritage Open Days has to reinforce its promotional efforts of targeting younger audience groups.

There was, however, a significant rise in family visits in 2009. With 33% visitors coming with one or more children in their party, this was up by 8% in comparison with the year before. At a closer look, this seems to be due to an increasing number of more mature visitors enjoying a day out with what presumably are their grandchildren.

Visitors from Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds made up 5% of respondents, 3 percentage points more than in 2008, with the proportion being significantly higher in Yorkshire (9%) and the West Midlands (13%). They tended to visit heritage attractions less often (35% stated to visit once a year or less); were significantly younger (64% fell into the 25-54 age group) and more likely to have children in their party (49%). Accordingly, their motivations to visit a Heritage Open Days event focused more on aspects such the promise of an educational day out (43%) and the prospect of a fun day out (30%) which would offer something for the children (20%).

## **VI. Media analysis**

1. What promotional material did you use and how did you distribute it?

We produced leaflets, flyers, posters including printed and electronic templates, open signs, balloons and badges. Their aim was to appeal to a diverse audience, in particular families, promote and increase the use of the website as the primary source of information, and support local organizers' promotional activities.

The material was distributed via Tourist Information Centres, libraries, community centres as well as through the networks of our local organizers.

2. What is your media strategy (press, radio, television, internet or other)?

As Heritage Open Days does not have any advertising budget, we rely entirely on free publicity in print and broadcast media. Due to the demise of the Civic Trust in 2009 which caught the programme mid-cycle, the campaign was temporarily derailed but regained momentum in the final six weeks leading up to the September event. As in previous years, a national launch complemented a series of regional photo calls taking place at the beginning of September. The national launch took place in Brighton with the media being invited to interview comedian, writer and broadcaster Griff Rhys Jones and English Heritage's new chairman Baroness Kay Andrews at a private terrace house in the North Laines area.

3. What were the media results for the EHD (how many TV programmes, articles in the press, etc)?

National media coverage was excellent and largely attributable to three factors: the slightly different angle of the news story, a celebrity acting as a spokesperson and the national launch location's relative geographical proximity to the media centre London. In tune with recession fuelled demand for inexpensive home-grown entertainment, the free aspect of Heritage Open Days was frequently picked up too. As a result, all major broadsheets reported prominently about Heritage Open Days. However, coverage by national radio and TV remained an unsolved challenge. Unless it features in a heritage or history-related programme, it is very difficult to plug the event as a news story on national broadcasting channels.

Although the regional launches yielded a satisfying media response, local organisers reported a decline in interest from regional newspapers and broadcasters. On the other hand, online outlets, such as the BBC websites, online customer information services and blogs are becoming more and more important for the dissemination of event information as they provide instant access to the Heritage Open Days website. For instance, the website [forum.moneysavingexpert.com](http://forum.moneysavingexpert.com) was the source of 4.16% of visits to the online directory.

## **VII. Visibility of the European dimension of the EHD**

The EHD logo is displayed on all marketing materials and our sister events in the UK are highlighted in our national leaflet.

The website dedicates a page and links to the EHD.

## **VIII. Financial analysis**

1. How are the EHD financed? (public budgets, private sponsors, etc.):

Until the demise of the Civic Trust, Heritage Open Days was core funded by a National Capacity Building Grant from English Heritage which was supplemented by private sponsorship. Since the programme's transfer to English Heritage, it has been publicly funded.

2. What is the total budget allocated to the EHD? (explain the division within the budget):

The annual budget is £220,000. But the total costs across the organization are close to £500,000 per year.

3. Involvement of volunteers:

1,443 organizers registered a total of 4,100 events and drew on the support of an estimated 41,000 volunteers. Based on information provided by 343 organizers, we estimate that a minimum of £325,000 was spent on staging Heritage Open Days locally. This equals an average spend of £226 per organizer, £79 per event or 30p per visitor. Organizers devoted on average 66 hours to organizing events, while volunteers donated an average 14 hours of their time. This included giving tours and talks, welcoming visitors, stewarding sites, selling refreshments or souvenirs and carrying out logistical tasks before and after the event. In total, we estimate that organizers and volunteers spent around 655,000 working hours to make Heritage Open Days happen. This equates to an in-kind value of £3,799,000 contributed by organizers and volunteers to the national event (calculated on the basis of the £5.80 national minimum wage).

4. Is access free of charge for the public?

Yes. This is a key part of our entry criteria.

5. Others:  
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## **IX. Activities for young people**

861 out of 4,100 sites and events were marked child-friendly, many offering special activities for children and families ranging from quiz trails to dressing up, drawing competitions to story telling.

In addition, a number of state and private schools took part in the event with pupils being involved in guiding and welcoming visitors and performing. This special effort is commendable as Heritage Open Days tends to fall into the first or second week of the new school year which prevents many schools from taking advantage of the scheme.

Young volunteers (16-24 yrs) were involved in a number of local events such as in Northampton and Blackpool.

## **X. Historical analysis**

1. For how many years have you celebrated the EHD in your country?

Heritage Open Days was established by the Civic Trust as national scheme in 1994 after a successful pilot in several areas the year before.

2. Please describe the evolution of the EHD from the beginning until 2009:

Starting out with some 700 properties opened up by 380 organizers in 1994, Heritage Open Days has since grown into England's largest and most popular grassroots heritage event. A record 4,100 approved property openings and activities (not counting events which were cancelled before 10 September) were listed in the 2009 event directory. This further increase of almost 400 listings took the event's continuous growth into its eighth year. The expansion was fuelled by a steady increase of the event's profile, the arrival of the English Heritage Outreach team in 2003 and Heritage Open Days' collaboration with its History Matters Campaign partners in 2006, which saw all major heritage organizations in England choosing the Heritage Open Days Saturday as their national open day. While 2,177 properties and activities took part in 2002, 2,800 were registered in 2004. The number of entries soared again in 2006 with 3,512 listings in the directory, including over 300 National Trust, English Heritage and Historic Houses Association sites waiving their usual admission charges. Since 2001, which saw the number of entries drastically dipping after a bumper participation in the Millennium year, the programme has grown by 92%, while the number of organisers rose by 80%.

The number of visits did not increase proportionally with the number of participating properties and events. Over the last four years attendance reached a plateau at around 1 million. The number of visits does however not reflect the actual interest in and awareness of Heritage Open Days. Likewise, an increase in visiting opportunities does not necessarily mean an increase in overall visiting capacity. Due to the fact that many sites and events have limited access and run timed pre-booked tours, their impact on visitor figures will always be minimal.

3. Are the EHD as popular as at the beginning or more so?

See above.

## **XI. Logos used**

Heritage Open Days, English Heritage, EHD/CoE, Department for Culture, Media and Sport

## **XII. Global assessment of the 2009 edition**

Heritage Open Days 2009 was undoubtedly the most successful event in the fifteen-year history of England's annual celebration of local architecture, history and culture. A record 4,100 properties and events – almost 400 more than in 2008 – attracted over 1 million visits across four days. Eight years of geographical and demographical expansion have consolidated Heritage Open Days' position as England's leading voluntary cultural event. This record participation is the more remarkable considering the Civic Trust's demise in April 2009 which caught the programme mid-cycle. Thanks to English Heritage's prompt intervention, the programme was rescued and its future secured.

## **XIII. What do you expect of the EHD coordination at the European level via the Council of Europe and the European Commission?**

- Facilitating the liaison between national co-ordinators in person and online
- Encouraging best practice and skills sharing between co-ordinators
- Developing a vision for EHD in consultation with national co-ordinators

- Developing funding streams which local participants could tap into and would act as incentives for exploring European angles of interpretation and CoE priorities (e.g. young volunteers, education)

Given the advanced stage of devolution in the UK, it would make sense if the CoE reconsidered its policy of only funding travel expenses to the annual EHD Forums for only one co-ordinator from Britain.

**XIV. If appropriate, please inform us if the format of the Forum “Heritage, Creativity and Innovation” (Ljubljana, 22-24 September) followed by the annual meeting of the Coordinators met your expectations:**

N/A

**XV. What is the added value of coordination at European level?**

Unfortunately, I cannot say that the co-ordination at European level adds any noticeable value to the national co-ordination of the event. Media and participants however tend to be impressed when they learn that the open days are a Europe-wide movement. More could be made of the sheer scale and diversity of the European scheme because 49 countries celebrating their common as well as distinctive heritage is a great story.

**XVI. Others / Remarks**

**XVII. Theme and dates chosen for 2010 (if already available<sup>1</sup>)**

9-12 September 2010

No national theme

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed request for 2010 dates and theme will be sent to coordinators early in 2010