

# Press release: New projects announced to protect cultural heritage overseas

- £30 million Cultural Protection Fund supports conservation of international cultural heritage sites threatened by conflict
- University of Glasgow project will preserve archaeological heritage in a region suppressed by Saddam Hussein's forces

A project to preserve unique archaeological sites in Iraqi Kurdistan dating back up to 10,000 years is to receive investment from the UK Government's £30 million Cultural Protection Fund, Heritage Minister Michael Ellis announced today.

This is one of nine major overseas projects that will benefit from the Cultural Protection Fund which exists to safeguard heritage of international importance threatened by conflict in countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

The Garmian region was part of the front line during the Iran-Iraq War, suffered damage under Saddam Hussein's repression of the Kurds in the 1990s and is only kilometres away from ISIS' 2014 front line. The recent conflicts have led to the damage and destruction of sites containing key information and artefacts from ancient Mesopotamia's civilisations.

The University of Glasgow is constructing a team to document and monitor the damage in Garmian using satellite and aerial imaging, before recommending how the site can be best preserved. The team, which has received more than £300,000 from the Cultural Protection Fund, will also train local archaeologists and work with school teachers in the area to highlight cultural heritage in their classrooms.

Michael Ellis, UK Minister for Heritage, said:

These sites tell the story of human history and show how our early ancestors first farmed and cultivated food. Their protection is therefore not only important to Kurdistan, but to all of humankind.

This project is just one example of how our Cultural Protection Fund is providing essential support to countries where internationally important heritage has been damaged or threatened by war, conflict and terrorism.

Tragically we have seen some of the world's greatest cultural treasures destroyed in recent years. It is important, and right, that we share our expertise and support communities around the

world to help preserve art, culture and heritage of global significance.

Stephen Stenning, Head, Arts and Society at British Council, said:

Important cultural heritage – from archives of music to ancient archaeological sites – is at risk of significant degradation or simply being lost forever.

British Council's work managing the Cultural Protection Fund provides vital support to organisations on the ground working to protect and preserve heritage. This latest round of funding for innovative and ambitious projects, extends valuable and ongoing conservation work, training, and education. By employing local people, developing skills and building capacity, this work also benefits the local economy.

Since its launch, The Cultural Protection Fund has supported work on 41 projects to restore and protect heritage sites in each of the 12 countries it operates in.

### **Notes to editors:**

The Cultural Protection Fund, established by the UK Government and the British Council in 2016, is designed to safeguard heritage threatened by conflict in countries across the Middle East and North Africa.

The University of Glasgow team is led by archaeologist Dr Claudia Glatz. She said:

Our project is unique in Iraq and the Middle East in its approach to cultural heritage protection. We combine research-led archaeological practice as part of the ongoing survey and excavations of the Sirwan Regional Project with knowledge-exchange, capacity building in both practical skills and the social and political implications of interpretation and cultural narrative, and the creation of inclusive museum and community-driven educational resources.

### **The nine projects have been supported in this round of the Cultural Protection Fund are:**

1. Action for Hope Music Schools for Refugees, Lebanon – £290,073 Led by Action for Hope (ASBL), this project aims to enhance the recognition of traditional Syrian music within a population of 20,000 refugee and host communities in Lebanon and Jordan.

2. Archaeological practice and heritage protection in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – £301,178 Led by University of Glasgow, this project will document and monitor site damage to the archaeological heritage of Garmian in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, as well as increasing the capacity of local heritage professionals through skills workshops and field training, and engaging local communities with their cultural heritage.
3. Community Museums of Western Sudan: Omdurman, El Obeid, Nyala, Sudan – £997,000 Led by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), this project will restore three museums after decades of conflict and provide for the educational and cultural needs of their communities, visitors and tourists.
4. An Ark for Iraq: Emergency response programme for the endangered watercraft heritage of Iraq – £99,246 Led by Safina Projects CIC, this year long project expands Safina Projects' ongoing work to revitalise and document the endangered watercraft heritage of traditional boats in central and southern Iraq.
5. Planning the future of Amedi: building community capacity & management frameworks for the protection of the historic town, Iraq – £100,000 Led by World Monuments Fund Britain Ltd, this project aims to enhance and document built heritage in the historic town of Amedi in Iraq.
6. Assessing the condition of the Afghan national art collection, Afghanistan – £50,000 Led by the Foundation of Culture & Civil Society, this project will carry out a preliminary needs assessments and restoration work on 150 paintings within the Afghan National Collection, which were destroyed by the Taliban. Building the capacity to protect Palestinian land and heritage through museology, Occupied Palestinian Territories – £94,650
7. Led by The Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability at Bethlehem University, this project will document Palestinian ethnographic heritage, paying particular attention to agricultural practices along the cultural route of 'Abraham's path' in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
8. "The Life Jacket": The Revitalisation and Development of Rural Jerusalem, Occupied Palestinian Territories – £1,018,470 Led by RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation, which will work with local communities and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to restore the historic centres of Al Jib, Qalandiya, Jaba' and Kafr 'Aqab
9. Preserving the Living Memory of the Pastoral Routes and Heritage of the Bedouin in Lebanon – £100,000 Led by The Institute for Heritage and Sustainable Human Development, this project will aim to collect, archive and share the skills and traditions of the Bekkaa Valleys Bedouins in the Lebanon. The Bedouin are a group of nomadic peoples who have traditionally inhabited areas of the Levant, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.