

# Speech: John Glen's speech launching the Heritage Statement

Loyd, thank you for that introduction.

I am delighted to be here this morning, to celebrate with all of you our shared commitment to our heritage and historic environment.

And to launch my Heritage Statement.

I am particularly pleased to be here in this wonderful, historic, Grade I listed building, the home of the Royal Society of Arts since 1774.

This year is the 70th anniversary of the listing system. And Historic England's website tells me that this building was first listed in 1958.

As you will know, Historic England is encouraging people to enrich the list by adding new information about listed buildings and places. So this morning I took the opportunity to enrich the list myself, by noting that in this building on the 5th December 2017, a certain John Glen launched the 2017 Heritage Statement. A historic moment indeed!

My Heritage Statement sets out our direction and priorities for heritage in the coming years. It builds on the commitments we made in last year's Culture White Paper.

It links our agenda for heritage to our wider agendas and strategies: for industry, for regeneration and placemaking, for skills, for the environment, and for an internationalist, outward-looking Britain.

And it focuses on areas where we in government can help to support all of you in the heritage sector and add value to the fantastic work that you are all doing to conserve, protect and promote our heritage.

All of us in this room understand the value of heritage. But there are people who question why we are devoting government resources and public money to heritage when there are so many other pressing issues for us to address.

My Statement seeks to set out just why this government sees heritage as such an important national priority.

Our heritage is an integral part of every community. It is there in the places where we live, work and visit. It provides employment for thousands of people, and learning, training and volunteering opportunities for thousands more. It is part of what makes this country so attractive to international businesses and tourists.

We must continue to make the case for heritage and demonstrate how investing in our heritage and historic environment benefits our economy, our communities, our wellbeing and our quality of life.

Across the country there are some fantastic examples of heritage and historic buildings being restored and placed back at the heart of their local communities, attracting business and tourism. We must celebrate these places and use them to show what can be achieved.

Since being appointed as Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism earlier this year, I have travelled around the country and seen just a small fraction of our nation's heritage and the amazing work being done to protect and promote it.

I have been struck by the sheer variety of our heritage. And I have been impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of the many people – specialists, professionals and volunteers – who care for and promote our heritage.

I was very disappointed not to be able to attend Historic England's Angel Awards last month. They recognise inspiring and dedicated individuals and groups who have achieved fantastic results rescuing our heritage and telling its story. From the restoration of historic places to innovative projects delivered by and for young people, the breadth and impact of these initiatives is truly awesome.

The overall winner this year – the magnificent Piece Hall in Halifax, which is featured as a case study in the Heritage Statement – is a superb example of a historic place being restored and brought back into use for the benefit of local people and local businesses, as well as a magnet for visitors.

Historic England's Heritage Action Zones are demonstrating how our heritage can help to create economic growth and improve the quality of life in our villages, towns and cities. In Hull, which has had an amazing year as UK City of Culture 2017, the Heritage Action Zone will help to ensure that part of the legacy of 2017 is seen in the city's physical environment.

In 2021 another city will benefit from being UK City of Culture. I will announce on Thursday which city that will be. Don't ask me today which city has been chosen – I haven't been told yet!

I have, however, been informed of the next group of places to become Heritage Action Zones. I am delighted to say that there are eight of them, and I am extremely pleased to be able to announce them today.

These places had to beat off very stiff competition to be selected as Heritage Action Zones. They will benefit from working in partnership with Historic England, receiving expertise, advice and grant funding, as well as working closely with other local partners, to unleash the power of their local historic environment. I hope that they will prove to be an excellent vehicle for investment by others as well as Historic England.

The eight new Heritage Action Zones are: Bishop Auckland, Dewsbury Living Market Town, Greater Grimsby, North Lowestoft Heritage Quarter, Rochdale Town Centre, Stockton and Darlington Railway, Stoke-on-Trent, and Walworth in Southwark.

I am also announcing today that we are working with Historic England to

launch a new scheme to enable local communities to identify, mark and celebrate the events, people and places that are important to them. The events that helped to shape their communities. The people who left their mark on history. And the places where history was made.

This new scheme will include a competition to design a plaque or marker to share these stories.

It will encourage more people to find out about the heritage around them and the history of the places where they live and work. It will help to create local pride and an increased sense of belonging. And, by encouraging communities to make the most of the heritage and history on their doorsteps, it will offer more opportunities for increased tourism, employment and economic growth.

And continuing with the announcements, I can also announce today a new World Heritage Wall to Wall Collaboration linking our Hadrian's Wall experts with their Great Wall of China counterparts.

This collaboration is part of the UK – China People to People dialogue. It is a perfect example of the global significance of heritage and how it can be used to strengthen our international partnerships, grow tourism and build a truly global Britain.

There has – rightly – been concern recently over loss or damage to buildings while they are being considered for listing. This is unacceptable and I recognise that we need to protect our heritage while the formal process of listing is in progress. So we are working with our partners to identify the best way to provide appropriate protection while respecting the rights of owners and developers.

A priority for me, over the next few years, will be to ensure that heritage is properly considered in all aspects of the government's policy-making.

To help me in this, I am planning to set up a Heritage Council. I intend to invite senior representatives from those Departments whose policies have an impact on heritage and the historic environment to join the Council, as well as representatives from the heritage sector.

The Council will be a forum for discussing current issues, finding solutions, promoting best practice and supporting co-operation across the heritage sector and between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

A major part of the Chancellor's recent Budget focussed on housing and the need to provide more homes across the country. You may also have heard about proposals to review the planning regime. Let me assure you that I will be in close contact with the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure that the opportunities which our heritage provides for placemaking, as well as the need to protect the historic environment, are factored in at all stages, as these initiatives proceed. The new Heritage Council will play a key role in helping me to do this.

In the six months I have been in office, I have been hugely impressed by the

innovative and imaginative ways in which old buildings are being put to new uses, combined with creative ways to fund them and make them sustainable. But I know that rescuing and breathing new life into historic places is not easy. We need to work together to identify the issues and barriers and to find solutions, so that our historic environment can continue to contribute to our economy and society. My new Heritage Council can help to drive this shared ambition forward.

I know that many of you have concerns about the amount of VAT charged on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings, and about other aspects of the tax system as it applies to heritage and the historic environment.

I want to assure you that I hear and understand those concerns. Whilst tax and fiscal changes are challenging at the best of times, I will continue to work with the Treasury to keep under review the scope for possible changes.

And I would ask that you work together across the sector to identify the changes which are most important to you and to build the strongest possible evidence base to help make the case for those changes.

That evidence base will also help to support and justify further investment and policy measures for our heritage. It will provide a firm basis for funding and investment, not only by government but by private funders and investors.

The National Lottery has generated billions of pounds in funding for heritage – over £7.7 billion since 1994. But I am sure you are all aware of the financial challenge to be faced due to falling lottery receipts. I am confident that the heritage sector can rise to this challenge and find new, innovative sources of funding. My new Heritage Council can help to identify and promote new ways of raising funding and investment.

Finally, I started by referring to the RSA, who are hosting us today in this magnificent place. I would like to end by mentioning our other host – the Heritage Alliance, who have organised this event.

I have talked today about collaboration and partnership working. Fortunately, the heritage sector already has many fantastic examples of excellent partnerships. And the Heritage Alliance is another great example of that. I commend the work of the Heritage Alliance. We are very fortunate to have Loyd, Lizzie and the rest of the team doing the great work that they do for our heritage and for the heritage sector.

Our heritage is a precious part of our country. My Heritage Statement sets out issues we need to address and measures we need to take to ensure that current and future generations can enjoy and benefit from it.

As we take forward the priorities and ambitions set out in the Heritage Statement, we will need your engagement, advice and your support.

I look forward to working with you all on this.