

Future-proofing heritage: Futures Thinking approaches to aid recovery and renewal during the COVID-19 crisis

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Due to the COVID-19 crisis, our operating environment is ever-changing, and the future is difficult to predict. There are many variables – such as the speed of containment of the pandemic, the impact on the economy and speed of recovery – which can shape possible future scenarios. How can organisations respond to a crisis and plan for recovery when dealing with multiple future uncertainties?

Historic Environment Scotland (HES), like many other heritage agencies around the world, has been facing the challenge to create resilience and sustainability in its operations during this crisis, whilst wading through the limitations of the sector – lack of funding, insular and short-sighted perspectives, and barriers to wider engagement and collaboration. This paper aims to illustrate the approach that HES has been taking to plan for recovery and renewal, by applying Futures Thinking techniques.

I will explore how different Futures Thinking techniques have been used to build flexibility in HES's work when facing an uncertain future. Starting from the premise that 'no scenario is more likely, all scenarios are equally possible', this paper is going to show how scenario planning can be effectively used to map critical uncertainties and identify business priorities across different possible scenarios. I will also examine how the methodology used in this process will aid the development of a Futures Thinking toolkit in support of all our operations.

This is only the start of a long process for HES. This paper aims to illustrate the journey taken so far to embed Futures Thinking techniques in the organisation, how we engaged with these and used them to begin this process.

Biography

Chiara Ronchini obtained her Master of Architecture from the University of Ferrara, Italy, in 2009, specialising in urban planning and the sustainable management of historic centres. She also studied in the Netherlands, Finland and Czech Republic. Chiara has been a Chartered British Architect since 2014. As Policy Manager at Historic Environment Scotland, Chiara plays a key role in delivering a successful strategy and policy development function within the organisation. She's leading on the development and implementation of Futures Thinking and Service Design approaches to policy development in a variety of thematic areas, such as Climate Change, Sustainable Tourism, Inclusive Growth, Culture, Innovation and Communities. Her recent work has focused on improving existing and developing new

strategy and policy frameworks, especially around emergency responses. Chiara has worked for Historic Environment Scotland since 2014, when she started as Project Manager for Scotland's Urban Past – a nationwide community engagement programme about the heritage of Scotland's towns and cities. She also worked as a project manager with Edinburgh World Heritage for over five years and as a consultant on sustainable heritage management for UNESCO in Uzbekistan, Egypt, Croatia and Italy. Chiara's life passions are people and heritage. Chiara is currently a member of the ICOMOS – International Scientific Committee on Energy and Sustainability and sits on the Responsible Tourism Institute Scientific Council, an international advisory body concerning tourism sustainability, social responsibility and other key fields of sustainable development.