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Policy recommendations for sustainable heritage destinations – summary report

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Sources of information

This summary report is based primarily on the following sources of information

- Case studies compiled from SHARE project partners
- Public event presentations and round-table discussion held at the University of Greenwich on 15th June 2022 as part of the SHARE project. The full video of this public event can be accessed online at <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/share/library/#folder=3380>
- Practitioner and academic publications on this topic (see bibliography section of this presentation)

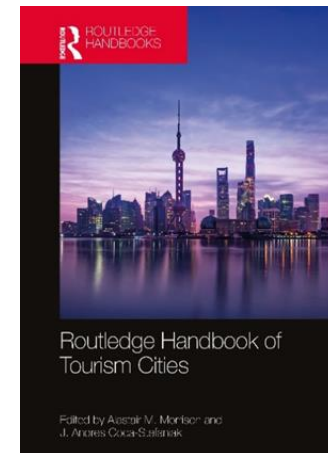
Aims of these recommendations

The policy recommendations set out in this summary report are applicable to some or all of the geographical locations the SHARE project has focused on. However, these policy recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive. Instead, they are meant to trigger discussions among key decision makers, who are best placed to establish priorities locally and/or regionally.

Note: many of the policy recommendations in this document build on the following SHARE project document: “Resilience strategies for sustainable heritage destinations – summary report”.

Recommendation 1 – DMO investment (economic sustainability)

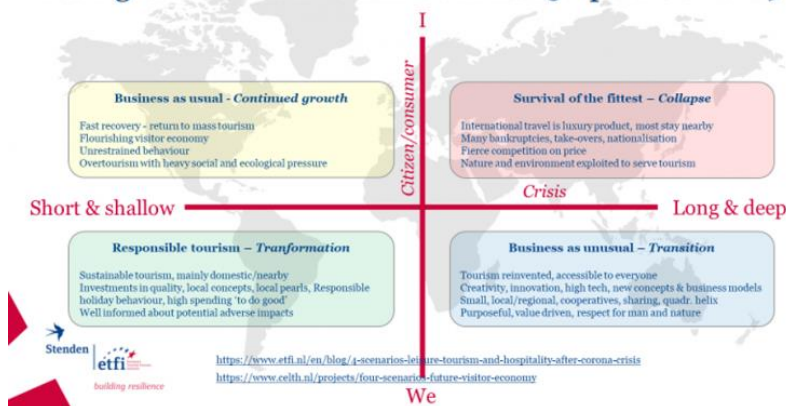
Investment and funding in tourism **Destination Management Organisations (DMOs)** has been in a downward trend over the last 10 years. At a time when a quick recovery of tourism is expected after the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that funding is made available to deliver the extra capacity required by DMOs. Similarly, new funding solutions should be sought for a more sustainable future of DMOs, including the option of private-public partnerships on this front, particularly in the context of heritage sites and cultural events.



Recommendation 2 – local supply chains (economic and environmental sustainability)

Promote the **resilience of local supply chains** by favouring the use of local produce/services at cultural events and heritage sites. This can be done through digital platforms (e.g., TXGB in the UK) that connect supply and demand for these services/produce. In Wales, legislation is in place to do exactly this through “The Well-being of Future Generations Act” (see <https://gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>), which affects cultural events, the visitor economy in general and the rest of the Welsh economy.

Four global tourism scenarios in 2025 –post CoVid-19



What is the **Future Generations Act**?

Introduced in 2016, the Act makes **public bodies*** focus on **long term issues**
*including Government, councils, health boards, national parks, Public Health Wales, Natural Resources Wales, arts and higher education funding councils, national museum and library

Considers the impact policy decisions will have on people in **Wales in the future**

Creation of Auditor General and Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Future Generations Act
Wellbeing goals



Recommendation 3 – accessibility (social sustainability)

The accessibility to heritage sites and cultural events needs to be reviewed with particular emphasis on the mobility needs of more **elderly visitors and those with disabilities**. A combination of interventions to reduce physical barriers and improve the existing offer through technology-enabled solutions (e.g., Virtual Reality, apps for visually impaired people) should be sought.



Recommendation 4 – destination image

A post-COVID-19 **review of the strategic positioning** of heritage sites, cultural events and their host tourism destinations should be carried out with a special emphasis on their image and promotion. This review should consider a number of medium to long-term issues, including:

- How does the destination (e.g., cultural event or heritage site) want to be perceived by new generations of visitors (e.g., Generation Z) and existing ones (e.g., Generation X, Baby Boomer generation)?
- How will the destination deal with future crises, including public health crises (medium-term) and crises as a result of climate change (longer term) so that it's reputation remains untarnished?
- In line with the above, what compromises can be made between conservation of heritage and its promotion and management for the visitor economy?

Recommendation 5 – healthier futures for residents and visitors

One of the outcomes of the recent COVID-19 pandemic has been the fragility of existing systems to protect the **mental and physical health** of local communities and those of visitors too. Research in the SHARE project has shown that cultural heritage makes a positive contribution to the mental and physical health of visitors. In line with this, existing policies related to mental and physical health should be revised to capitalise on the benefits of cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage and protect its public funding streams as a health priority. The concept of walking in tourism cities (see <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJTC-09-2018-098/full/html>) should be incorporated into this thinking.

Healthier Futures Academy
Black Country and West Birmingham



Recommendation 6 – social capital for heritage management (tangible and intangible)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very negative impact on younger generations intending on developing a career in the management of hospitality, tourism, events and heritage sites. New post-COVID policies for this sector should consider support for the development of **skills, training and internships for young people** to see this sector as a viable and dignified source of employment, with continued efforts made to reduce its seasonality pitfalls.



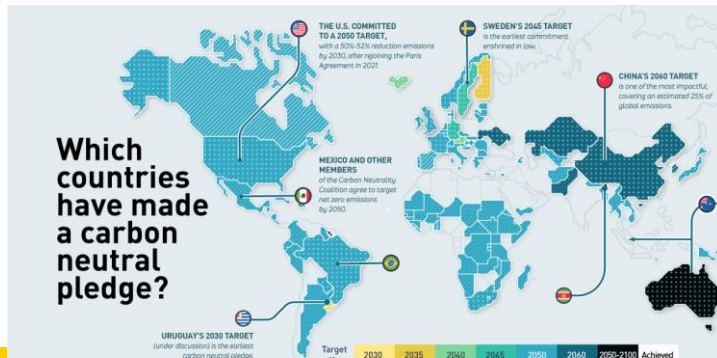
Recommendation 7 – merging natural and cultural heritage

Direct contact with nature will maximise the well-being effects of visits to heritage sites and events. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in local communities and visitors re-connecting with natural spaces, largely to avoid contagion. New policy-making should consider innovative solutions to **bring urban heritage (tangible and intangible) closer to nature**, and viceversa. The recent movements towards the re-wilding of town centres offers valuable insights on this front (see <https://www.ecowatch.com/cities-rewilding-2653383263.html>).



Recommendation 7 – reducing the carbon footprint of tangible and intangible heritage

Heritage sites and cultural events need to contribute to national policy **targets towards a carbon-zero economy**. Sustainable events have made considerable progress on this front and should be used as testbeds for innovation that (tangible) heritage sites can then adopt, in spite of the challenges posed by guidelines related to the conservation of that heritage. New policy making should set targets for a year-on-year reduction in carbon footprint of heritage sites and reward success stories with easier access to public funds to incentivise this further.



Recommendation 8 – role of digital technologies

Heritage tourism destinations (incl. cultural events) are increasing their use of digital technologies (e.g., apps, virtual tours, augmented and virtual reality) to improve the visitor experience. However, research on this front shows that, whilst these are often laudable initiatives, they can sometimes detract from how memorable the experience was. New policy-making should incentivise the use of digital technologies in heritage sites and cultural events where there is a clear element of **‘edutainment’ with a specific focus on issues related to sustainable development**, including environmental sustainability.



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