

Heritage means business



Photo courtesy of Hay Castle

3. Support growth in Wales visitor economy

Heritage drives tourism and will be key to meeting the UK Government's target of 50 million annual visitors, but this requires well-functioning tourism infrastructure. It is vitally important that any revenue raised from visitor levies is ringfenced for reinvestment in the local tourism sector.

4. Improve the planning regime for heritage and the environment

The next few years are critical for Wales' transition to Net Zero, which requires all buildings, including heritage, to adapt. However, for a third of our members, the planning regime is one of their greatest concerns, inhibiting decarbonisation. Adequate funding and training for planning staff are essential to achieving a system that supports energy efficiency without compromising heritage.

5. Stimulate investment in repair projects

Maintaining heritage buildings is enormously expensive. The Welsh Government should press the UK Government to introduce VAT relief on structural repairs and maintenance for publicly accessible heritage sites. Such a scheme would generate a minimum £7 million net benefit for the Treasury, whilst enabling owners to invest in essential repairs, supporting local economies and keeping our heritage alive for centuries to come.

Historic Houses Wales represents almost 100 independently owned historic houses and gardens from every corner of Wales, including some of the country's most iconic and historic places. In 2025, Historic Houses Wales members welcomed over 365,000 visitors, supported over 360 FTE jobs, and generated over £23 million in direct economic benefit for Wales' economy. Many are important tourist attractions, small businesses and local employers in fragile rural economies.

A recent survey found that the most common challenges facing our members are the rising cost of doing business and increasing regulatory and

tax pressures. Without supportive regulation and legislation, the custodians of heritage face an uncertain future.

Heritage supports health, wellbeing and local economic growth. The UK and Welsh Governments must recognise the cultural and community value of our irreplaceable historic houses and gardens by designing policies that allow them to thrive.

We are committed to working with the Welsh Government to create a policy environment that enables heritage attractions and regional economies to become more sustainable, and that encourages visitors to explore every corner of Wales.

Key policy asks:

1. Celebrate and empower Wales' rich heritage

Wales' remarkable heritage and history are central to national identity and safeguarding our historic places is essential to inspiring present and future generations. To protect this legacy, we must create supportive frameworks for the custodians of historic buildings to ensure that Welsh culture thrives.

2. Protect heritage from unnecessary regulatory burdens

Heritage relies upon a supportive fiscal and regulatory framework, so even small regulatory changes can have severe consequences. Over 94% of our members view the 182-day threshold for short-term lets negatively, as it is virtually impossible for small rural providers. The Welsh Government should fully assess the potential economic impact of proposed regulatory changes on heritage.



**HISTORIC
HOUSES
WALES**



HISTORIC
HOUSES
WALES

The economic, social and cultural impact of independent historic houses

Historic Houses Wales members welcomed over

365,000

visitors in 2025

Generated over

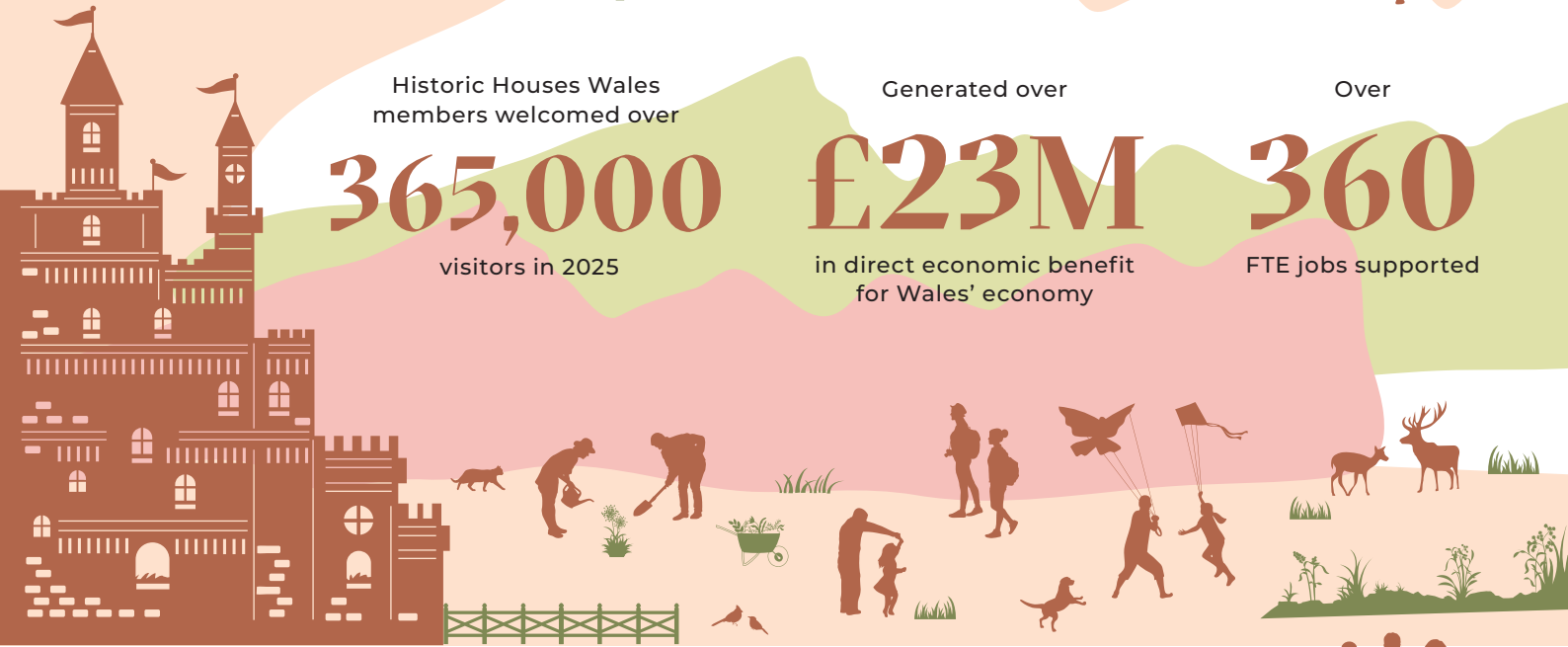
£23M

in direct economic benefit for Wales' economy

Over

360

FTE jobs supported



According to the Historic Houses UK member survey, the impacts of changes announced in the October 2024 Budget include:



87%

of Historic Houses members say they will be **negatively affected** by changes to IHT reliefs announced

54%

say changes to IHT reliefs will leave them **unable to develop/ diversify their business**

41%

say they will have to **make redundancies or freeze hiring** due to changes made in the Budget

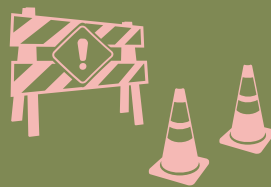
Keeping historic places alive and accessible for generations to come



Our UK members reported a **total backlog of**

£2 billion

of repairs & maintenance work, despite a reported annual spend of **around £160,000 each in 2024**



Over

47%

of Historic Houses places **delayed or cancelled urgent repairs and maintenance works** due to lack of funds between 2020 and 2022



Introducing a **VAT rebate scheme** for listed buildings open to public access could yield

£7 million

of economic benefit and generate an estimated **300,000 additional visits** every year