



Common Ground 2020-2022

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Andrea Spain, March 2023



Introduction

Common Ground (2020-22) has been a 3-year programme bringing together partners from the creative and heritage sectors to enable young people to develop new approaches to heritage interpretation. It has targeted young people aged 13-25 years living in the East of England who

- Have an existing interest in heritage
- Are active in the arts and/or
- Face barriers or challenges such as living in areas of deprivation, being NEET (not in employment, education or training)

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Common Ground has set out to achieve NLHF Outcomes for Heritage:

- Heritage will be better interpreted and explained
- People will have developed skills, learnt about heritage and volunteered time
- In communities, more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage and partner organisations will be more resilient

COMMON GROUND PARTNERS

Colchester + Ipswich Museums

Flag Fen Archaeology Park, Peterborough Limited

Lowestoft Museum

Lowestoft Rising

National Trust

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

Norfolk & Norwich Festival (lead)

The Prince's Trust

SHARE Museums East

Suffolk Wildlife Trust



Young people have been involved in creatively interpreting heritage through the arts and digital content creation

6 heritage partners have hosted 8 creative residencies ('place-based projects')



The Princes Trust have developed new Get Started skills building courses creating social media content inspired by heritage

Young Leaders (aged 18-25) have taken part in masterclasses and produced their own events



Young Artists have been commissioned to create content and support programme delivery

Interpretation outcomes have included films, interactive games and virtual tours



Common Ground has established an Instagram following of 839, of whom 27% are young people

Launched in 2020, Common Ground has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the considerable challenges faced by partners, Common Ground has proved a valuable opportunity for collaboration and professional learning.

This independent evaluation reports findings about the programme's impact and outcomes and makes recommendations to partners.

Common Ground Activity Overview



SOCIAL MEDIA / GROUNDED

Sharing creative ideas for celebrating local heritage via Instagram



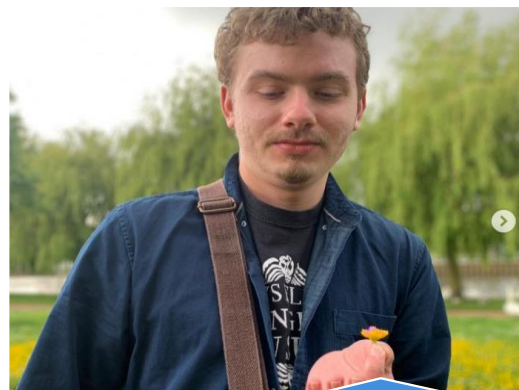
PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

Artist led courses creating new digital and live interpretation experiences for and by young people



COMMON GROUND YOUNG LEADERS

Masterclasses and support for self-led projects by young heritage artists and creative producers



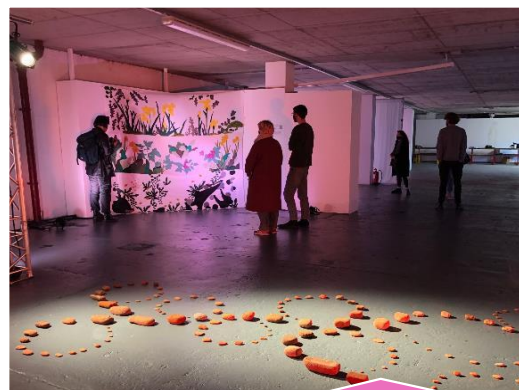
GET STARTED COURSES

Prince's Trust skills building courses for young people to create digital content inspired by heritage



YOUNG HERITAGE ARTISTS

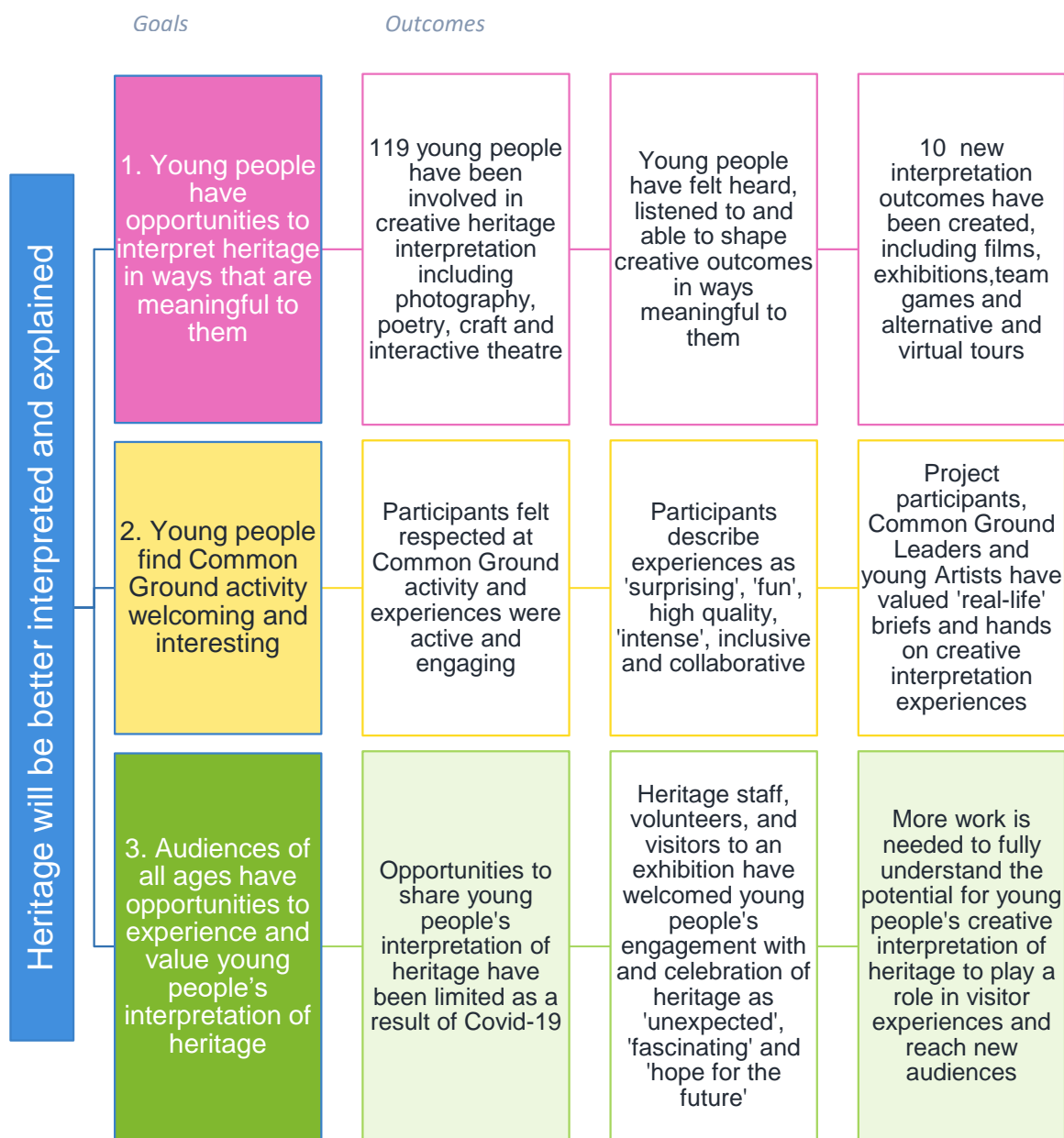
Commissions and paid facilitation roles for young artists inspired by heritage



SHOWCASING

Exhibitions and events showcasing creative responses to heritage by young people

Outcomes for heritage



"The great thing about [creating or playing] a game is that you don't realise you are also learning."

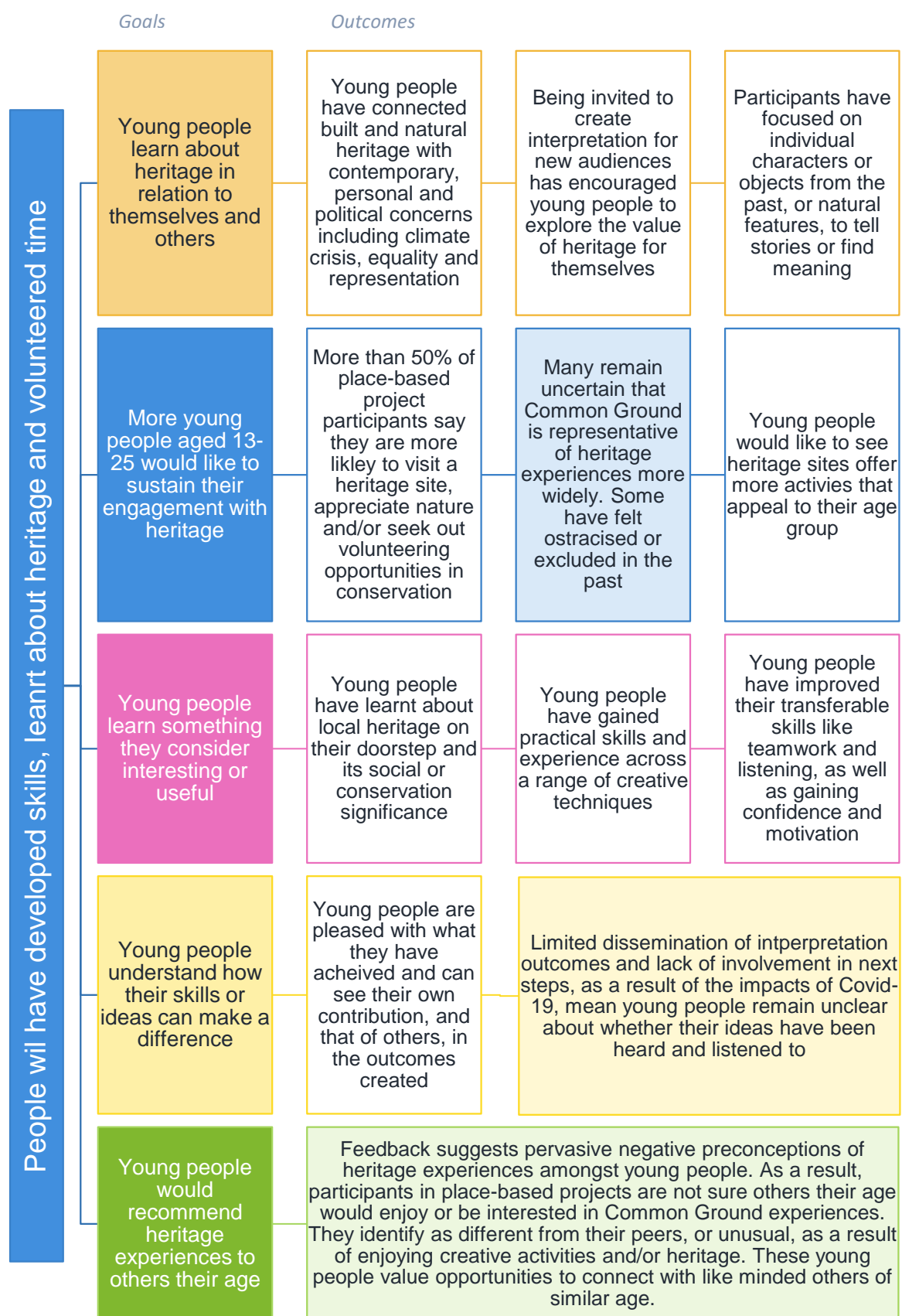
Place-based project participant

"I like that it requires you to think about things, in order to tie the game to the place and make it work for everyone."

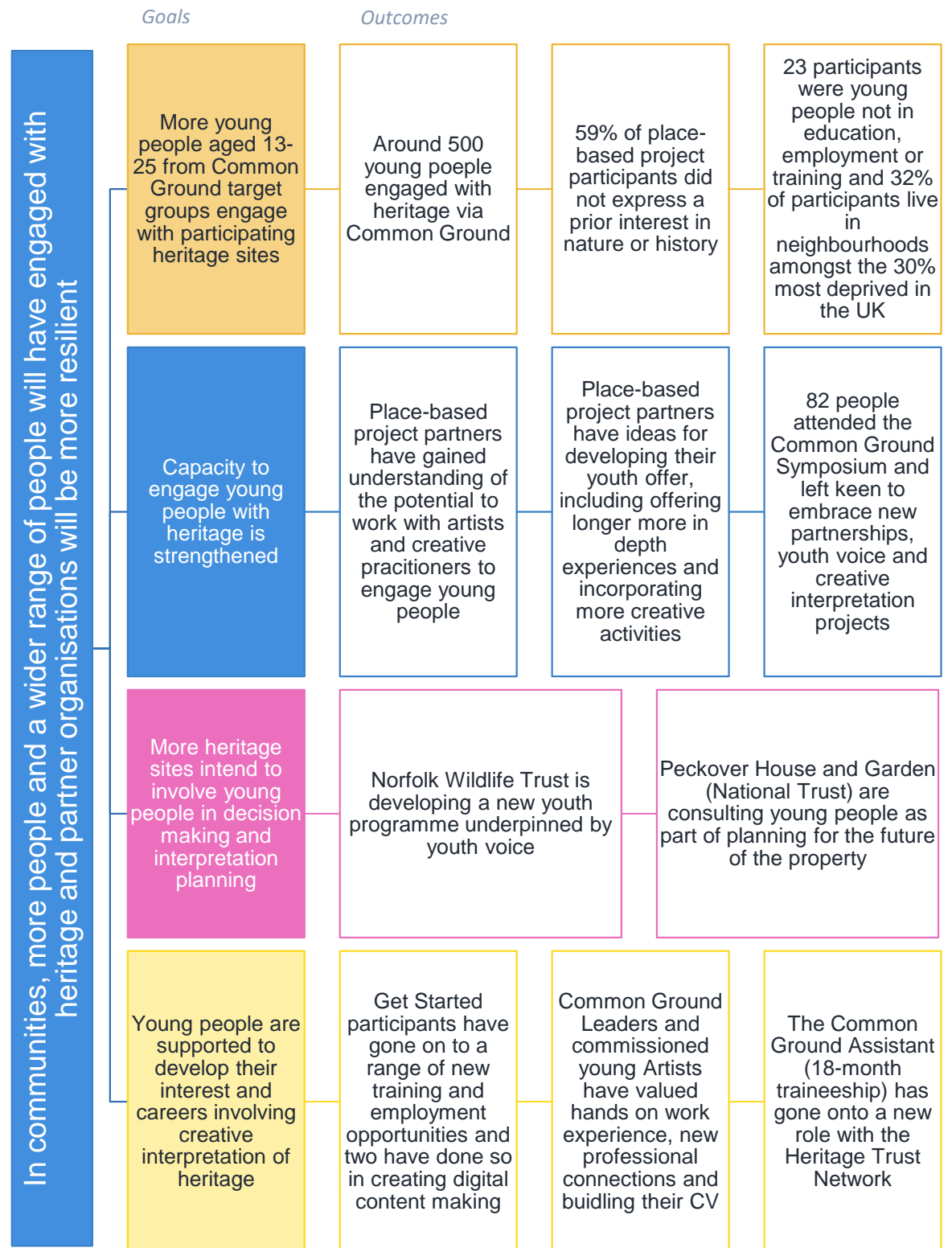
Place-based project participant

"So lovely to see the natural landscape of the county interpreted and represented in such diverse and thoughtful ways!"

Living Landscape exhibition visitor



"Previously I just walked around but [this experience] has helped me learn more"
Place-based project participant



"it's been a valuable experience for my CV, and a nice way to meet other creative young people in the county"

Common Ground Leader

"[Common Ground has] given us a way to start to connect with young people, understand the barriers that are there."

Heritage partner

"It has given us an idea of what young people are inspired by and new, fun ways [this place] could be explored"

Heritage partner

Learning what works



Experiencing heritage through a creative lens

- Playfulness, games and storytelling, connecting built and natural heritage with contemporary concerns
- Adding young people's personal perspectives to heritage interpretation
- Spending creative time exploring heritage settings
- Focusing in on individual details, objects or stories



Building a young, creative audience for heritage

- Providing creative opportunities and things to do in rural/coastal locations
- Fostering creative talent with a lived experience of the region's heritage
- Helping young creatives gain real-life, hands on experiences
- Developing young, creative advocates and influencers for heritage



Listening

- Asking young people 'How can we be more welcoming to others your age?'
- Providing structure and support for young people to make decisions for themselves in heritage settings
- Giving young people freedom to explore, allowing them to ask questions and seek out knowledge rather than this be prescribed
- Regular peer review as young people create heritage interpretation



Investing in recruitment

- Building relationships with community groups, schools, referral partners
- Offering real life briefs to complement creative studies at school/college
- Taking activity to young people through outreach and pop-ups
- Offering tasters and encouraging young people to return with friends
- Building a following through youth led social media content



Showcasing young people's responses to heritage

- Promoting appreciation of heritage away from traditional sites e.g. art exhibitions, social media
- Inspiring heritage site visitors with young people's perspectives
- Providing clear editorial guidelines and formatting requirements to ensure interpretation can be used by heritage partners
- Setting aside resources for post-production and involving young people in editing where possible.



Working in partnership

- Building a regional young creative audience for heritage
- Connecting like minded young people across sites and organisations
- Ensuring heritage partners are fully involved and present within creative activities
- Supporting a community of early career stage practitioners

Recommendations

Partners should build on the achievements of Common Ground by

- Developing and making use of interpretation outcomes created as a means of demonstrating that young people's perspectives are welcome and valued
- Putting in place next step opportunities for young people

Partners should build on learning from Common Ground by

- Developing the role of artist led, creative activity in facilitating young people's appreciation of heritage
- Fostering creative ways of seeing and understanding heritage that relate to young people's personal and political concerns
- Experimenting with youth-led and purposeful ways of young people exploring and learning about heritage, with a mission
- Ensuring heritage partner staff are fully embedded and able to build meaningful relationships with young people
- Positioning creative interpretation within a wider youth participation strategy within heritage organisations with opportunities for young people to build on their interests

Partners should continue to collaborate in order to

- Offer and promote a seasonal programme of creative opportunities across a range of sites and locations for young people to respond to and interpret the region's heritage
- Celebrate and showcase young people's creative interpretation online, within heritage sites and cultural venues
- Work with the Prince's Trust to support young people's wellbeing, employability and life chances and, in doing so, their appreciation of creativity and heritage

Norfolk & Norwich Festival should share and promote learning to inform

- Support and networks for young, heritage-inspired creative practitioners, producers and artists
- Showcasing of young people's creative interpretation of heritage
- Opportunities for young heritage artists and creative producers/curators to gain experience, take roles as young leaders and establish careers

To ensure that opportunities are inclusive of diverse young people, partners should

- Invest in outreach and relationship building with communities
- Develop youth-led approaches or 'hold the space open' to respond to young people's needs and priorities
- Ensure that traineeships and young artist commissions are fully supported by systems that define their purpose and parameters and safeguard early career stage practitioners

Acknowledgements

With thanks to all the young people, project partners and staff at Norwich & Norfolk Festival who have contributed to Common Ground and this evaluation.

Colchester+Ipswich
Museums



Prince's Trust



Photography

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