

Heritage Skills CSCS Card Pilot Project Evaluation Report



BACKGROUND

Between 2011 and 2015, English Heritage operated a pilot scheme requiring all specialist leadworkers working on projects with an element of significant historic leadwork at their properties to hold the Heritage Skills Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card.

The Heritage Skills CSCS card was selected as it requires cardholders to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by achieving one of a range of qualifications or assessments.

English Heritage took this decision as it was demonstrated there was a 'critical mass', a sufficient numbers of Heritage Skills CSCS cardholders within the relevant trade working in the heritage sector, to ensure it was workable. Figures presented by National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) and The Lead Contractors Association (LCA) demonstrated around 75 – 80% of specialist lead workers working in the heritage sector were Heritage Skills CSCS card holders.

The Audley End Representation Project was selected to trial and evaluate this requirement as it included significant amounts of historic leadwork in the essential repairs to the lead sheet roofs and gutters on the south wing.

Since the successful completion of the project, English Heritage has become two separate organisations. The English Heritage Trust, the new charity who care for the historic sites and properties, and Historic England the government's expert advisory service for the historic environment.

This report outlines the three key outcomes from the pilot project, lessons learnt and next key steps for the English Heritage Trust and Historic England.

OUTCOMES OF THE PILOT PROJECT

1. Only specialist lead workers who hold the Heritage Skills CSCS Card worked on the project and the impact of this was evaluated

The Project Team were supportive of the pilot scheme and positive about the outcomes

- There were no negative impacts on the project in terms of time or cost
- There were benefits in terms of skills and expertise available to the project team

Feedback from the consultant Quantity Surveyor and main contractor, Fairhurst Ward Abbott (FWA), confirmed that there were no time implications from this requirement, the cost impact on the tenders was negligible and that no additional resources were required from the main contractor to implement the requirement.

The project team stressed the importance of quality for conservation projects of this kind. All reported a high quality of workmanship had been maintained. Grant Barker, Contracts Director at FWA commented:

‘We have fully supported the requirement of English Heritage to have Heritage Skills CSCS cards for the lead workers on Audley End House. The quality of workmanship is wonderful and a credit to the operatives who all hold the cards.’

The project team lead by the English Heritage Senior Project Manager were:

- Caroe & Partners Architects
- Press and Starkey, Quantity Surveyors
- Fairhurst Ward Abbotts, Main Contractor
- T & P Roofing Ltd, specialist lead work sub-contractor for Phase 1
- Traditional Leadwork & Roofing Ltd, specialist lead work sub-contractor for Phase II

Card Checks straightforward

A clause was added into the contract preliminaries which required the cards be checked prior to individuals being given access to site. See Appendix 1.

On both phases, all specialist leadworkers working for the sub-contractors, T & P Roofing Ltd and Traditional Leadwork & Roofing Ltd presented their Heritage Skills CSCS cards to be checked.

The CSCS card check system provides a simple and effective way for the main contractor to check any CSCS card. Checks are via the CSCS online database, smartphone app, or put it into a Smartcard reader available from CSCS.

From a client’s point of view this gives confidence the requirement is straight forward to ‘police’.

Feedback from the contractors is that while CSCS card checks are common on new build construction sites this is not the case on heritage projects. This leads to questioning by some contractors as to the value of holding the Heritage Skills CSCS card. So requiring a card check will have the wider benefit of reinforcing the value of holding the card among contractors and craftspeople.

Benefits of a skilled and qualified workforce

Michael Cain of T & P Roofing Ltd, the specialist lead work contractor on Phase I highlighted the skills and knowledge the leadworkers brought to the project. This ensured that the repair decisions made during the project matched the client's conservation philosophy. For example, once safe access was available to the roof, they worked with the architect and project manager to determine exactly where and how the lead bays could be selectively replaced rather than the full replacement as in the specification. The detailing of the catch pits also benefited from their specialist input into the lead work design.

Feedback for all of the project team highlighted the good working relationships on the project and benefits of collaborative working. Fairhurst Ward Abbots, Main Contractor commented on the 'good dialogue with Architect and Client team at all times' and that the project benefitted from 'an inclusive decision - making process'.

Need for heritage skills

The Lead Sheet Association (LSA) guidelines provide quality standards for the design, specification and application of rolled sheet lead. However, it is notable that this is primarily oriented to new build and it applies to rolled lead sheet only. The full application of the LSA detailing can be difficult, or impossible to replicate on existing buildings e.g. applying the minimum up stands, step heights or laps. Also, cast lead may be specified for conservation work, as was the case at Audley End.

This highlights the need for proven heritage skills and knowledge for specialist leadworkers working on conservation projects such as this. They will need the knowledge and skills to apply the LSA detailing which they would gain from their mainstream apprenticeship or Level 2 training. But they also would need to gain additional understanding of existing buildings and of conservation principles. These are the elements covered in the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction) which then entitles the individual to apply for their Heritage Skill CSCS card (see below for more detail).

Finding specialist skilled and qualified leadworkers

The Lead Contractors Association Register can be used to find skilled and qualified contractors as approximately 85% of the Heritage Skills CSCS card holders are Lead Contractors Association members. Using LCA members brings the benefits to the client of a 25 year guarantee of workmanship and materials for projects over a value of £2,500. This scheme is supported by an assessment which includes sampling of their work and an insurance backed fund which means the cost of remedial work will be covered even if the original contractor is no longer trading. The LCA are very supportive of the Heritage Skills CSCS card and are pro-active in encouraging their members to gain it.



Works in progress to repair the historic leadwork on the South Wing

2. A set of ‘model clauses’ was created and tested, and from this a flowchart was created for use on future projects

From a procurement and practical perspective, it was critical that these additional requirements be incorporated from the beginning of the procurement process into the tender and contract documents, and consistently enforced through the tender and contract processes.

The challenge of incorporating the requirement within the principles of the Public Contract Regulations

As this project was the first time the requirement had been applied in practice a set of ‘model clauses’ was produced by in house staff. These were checked against the Public Contracts Regulations, incorporated into the tender and contract documents and as seen above carried right through to checking the cards before giving access to site.

Feedback from Consultant Quantity Surveyor was that the clauses were clear and straightforward to apply. No queries were raised by tenderers.

At the time of this project English Heritage were a Contracting Authority under the Public Contracts Regulations. The principles of the Public Contract Regulations, equal treatment and openness, proportionality and transparency, were applied throughout the procurement process. For example, early in Phase I, the Main Contractor made enquiries if it would be acceptable to use a sub-contractor whose lead workers were not cardholders but were registered for assessment and were working towards their qualifications or assessment in order to be able to apply for their cards. This was not acceptable because of the risk that a challenge could arise on the grounds that the contract award was not open and transparent, as the requirement was that contractors will hold the Specialist Leadworker Heritage Skills CSCS card or equivalent.

The Heritage Skills CSCS Card in Projects Flowchart (Appendix 1) gives these model clauses. (It should be noted that this project was prior to the Public Contract Regulations 2015, under which Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQ's) and their use by Contracting Authorities is now regulated. This means PQQ's may now not be used in all projects).

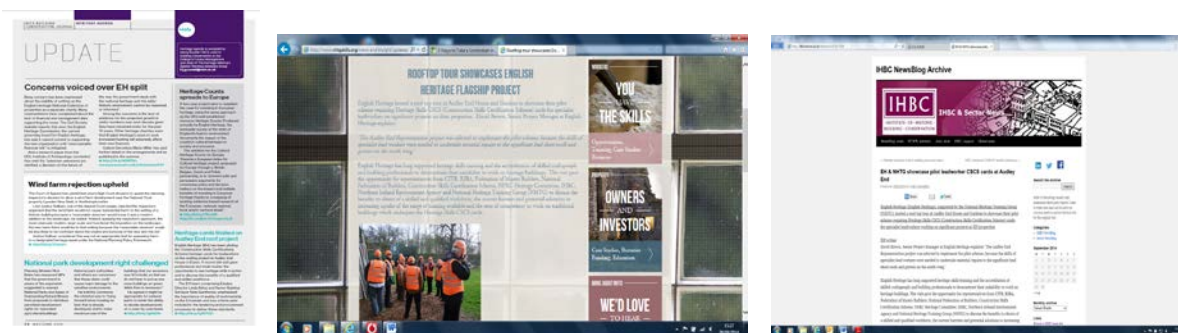
Making the requirement workable in practice

From a contractors perspective, FWA, the main contractor did highlight the practical issues in that, 'it limits the choice of subcontractors.....but this did not necessarily affect the client'. They stressed how for tendering purposes and to ensure suitable subcontractors are available to fit with project programmes, it is important to have a number of options for different sub-contractors available. The Senior Project Manager also highlighted the potential risk of restricting the main contractor's choice of sub-contractors and the potential risk for this impacting on the programme or increasing costs. This reinforces the importance of having a 'critical mass' to ensure sufficient numbers of cardholders are available .

Increasing the uptake of Heritage CSCS cards

A measure of success was that the requirement was shown to motivate the uptake of qualifications. A sub-contractor who was consider for the work on Phase I but who was rejected as their workforce were not card holders, then took the opportunity to finalise their Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction), gained their Heritage Skill CSCS cards and then was selected to undertake the work on Phase II.

3. Increased awareness of the need for a skilled and qualified workforce of contractors and craftspeople



Sample of web articles on the pilot scheme

A range of articles increased awareness of the need for a skilled and qualified workforce of contractors and craftspeople across the range of trades. A rooftop site tour lead by the contractors for key stakeholders was particularly successful in promoting awareness of the pilot scheme and Heritage Skills CSCS cards.

Importance of quality criteria in tendering processes

This project highlighted the importance of quality criteria in procurement for conservation works. In this case, quality criteria were built into the procurement process, from the initial PQQ through to the tender stage, which means English Heritage do not necessarily go with lowest tenderer but look for 'best value'.

For example, in PQQ's prospective tenderers are asked to provide details of experience of similar relevant recent projects and the skills and qualifications of their workforce. Tender evaluations typically use a quality / price weighting as the awarding criteria. Questions to test quality include asking about the capability of the workforce, details of qualifications and experience of team members who would be working on the contract, enclosing CVs, copies of certification, qualifications, registrations. This means that contractors with a commitment to skills and training tend to score well. For example, on this project, FWA's direct workforce all hold the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction) for their trade and they have a longstanding commitment to providing opportunities for apprentices and trainees.

Feedback from FWA was it is typical for other clients commissioning repair, maintenance and conservation work look for 'best value' and build quality criteria into tendering processes. They commented that they are asked about their skill sets and experience for most tenders and would normally deliver this information as part of their pre-qualification submission. But interestingly, their feedback was that formal qualifications are not commonly asked for.

Importance of the quality of workmanship and the benefits to clients of a skilled and qualified workforce

The project team highlighted the wider benefits of including requirements for a skilled and qualified workforce for ensuring the quality of workmanship and increasing the skills available in the sector.

But they that stressed the Heritage Skills CSCS card and the assessment behind it must be robust to give clients confidence in it. However, this project has highlighted there can be a good deal of confusion over the Heritage Skills CSCS card. The range of CSCS cards can cause confusion and it is often seen as 'just a Health and Safety card' but this is not the case.

Heritage Skills CSCS cards as proof of knowledge and skills

The Heritage Skills CSCS card was selected by English Heritage as it requires cardholders to have demonstrated their knowledge and skills by achieving one of a range of qualifications or assessment and it must be renewed every five years:

- Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction)
- Recognised craft qualification and a recognised conservation qualification e.g. CITB Apprenticeship or William Morris Craft Fellowship Certification

- Heritage Experienced Leadwork Practical Assessment (HELPA) via the Lead Contractors Association

The [CSCS website](#) has information on the range of trades covered by the cards and how to apply for the cards. The most common route would be via the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction) via On-site Training and Assessment (OSAT). This responds to contractors, craftspeople preference for practical / hands on training and assessment. If additional training is required to achieve Level 3, this can be gained via short duration training to suit the learner through Heritage Specialist Apprenticeship Programmes (HSAP) or Specialist Upskilling Programmes (SUPs).

[CITB grants](#) support a wide range of training and qualifications, from apprenticeship support to management and supervisory qualifications. All employers who are registered with CITB can claim a grant, even those who don't pay levy. There are grants available for CITB register firms, Pay as You Earn (PAYE) employees, labour-only sub-contractors (LOSC) and any agency staff will also qualify for many of the grants that are on offer.

The benefits to clients of a skilled and qualified workforce

When acting as a client and procuring the services of contractors, craftspeople and professionals English Heritage have long recognised the benefits of skilled and qualified workforce. English Heritage requires that contractors working on their sites must be registered with the CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) and that all operatives must carry CSCS cards appropriate to their skill. These are mandatory questions on their [e-procurement system](#).

The benefits to clients of a skilled and qualified workforce include:

- **Quality assurance** – that the workforce have the knowledge and skills required for work with traditional (pre 1919) buildings. Mainstream construction education and training does not necessarily prepare contractors and craftspeople for work with traditional (pre 1919) buildings as it is focused on new build construction rather than repair and maintenance.
- **Value for money performance** - getting the work done right, first time, so minimising risks of project delay, variations, additional costs and potential contractual conflicts.
- **Assists procurement** – provides measurable and comparable criteria for PQQ and tendering documents to assist open and transparent procurement.
- **Standards set by experts in the sector** - National Occupational Standards (NOS) are developed by the lead organisations and professional associations in each sector. They set out for a particular sector the skills, experience and knowledge that those working in that sector should aim to acquire.
- **Competency based** – competency based National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) are developed by the sector based on the skills or experience an individual would need to demonstrate they can do the job as set out in the NOS standard. The NVQ system is nationally recognised by employers.

- **Demonstrates practical experience** - the holder of an NVQ has demonstrated that they have practical real-world experience in their chosen field for example, via On-site Training and Assessment (OSAT).



Site tour of roof of South Wing, Audley End

Summary of Outcomes and Lessons Learnt

There were three key successful outcomes from the pilot project :

- 1) Only specialist lead workers holding the Heritage Skills CSCS Card worked on the project and the evaluation was positive
- 2) A set of 'model clauses' was created and tested, and from this a flowchart has been created for use on future projects
- 3) Increased awareness of the need for a skilled and qualified workforce of contractors and craftspeople

The key lessons learnt were:

- No negative impacts on the project in time, cost, or quality.
- Benefits in terms of skills and expertise available to the project team.
- Heritage Skills CSCS card gives a straight forward way to prove the craftsman has demonstrated their skills, knowledge and competence as they have achieved a recognised heritage qualification or assessment.

The pilot project demonstrated that the risk of restricting the choice of contractors can be mitigated. Firstly, by ensuring that there is a 'critical mass', a sufficient numbers of Heritage Skills CSCS cardholders within the relevant trade working in the heritage sector, before setting the requirement. And secondly, on each project ensuring the requirements are incorporated into the tender and contract documents from the beginning of the procurement process to ensure the tenderers are aware of the requirement.

Next Steps

Since the successful completion of the project, English Heritage has become two separate organisations. The English Heritage Trust, the Charity who care for the historic sites and properties, and Historic England the government's expert advisory service for the historic environment. Each organisation will take forward the lessons learnt from this pilot project relevant to their remit.

- 1) The English Heritage Trust will continue the requirement that only specialist leadworkers who hold the Heritage Skills CSCS cards be permitted to work on English Heritage projects with significant elements of historic leadwork. As before, this requirement will apply to capital projects but not to backlog repairs or maintenance.
- 2) The English Heritage Trust will continue to monitor the impact of this requirement on project time, cost and quality.
- 3) The inclusion of further trades will be kept under review by English Heritage Trust. Historic England will monitor 'critical mass' figures going forward, and report these to English Heritage Trust.
- 4) Historic England will disseminate this report and Heritage Skills CSCS Card Project Flowchart (Appendix 1) to increase the uptake of training and qualifications and to encourage other clients to introduce requirements for the Heritage Skills CSCS cards.

Appendix I - Heritage Skills CSCS Cards Flowchart

This flowchart outlines step by step the processes to follow on projects where it is a requirement that the contractors workforce (and all subcontractors) will hold the Heritage Skills CSCS card. The example given here is for Specialist Leadworkers. This flowchart is designed to work with an open or restricted tender process with JCT contracts, and having due regard to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

