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The impact of heritage investment on public attitudes to place: evidence from the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

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This paper is concerned with public perceptions and attitudes to heritage townscapes, and how these might be influenced by investment in such places, focused on their public realm, and building restoration and improvement as a catalyst for urban regeneration. It draws on a ten-year study of the impact of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, on a sample of 16 cases across the UK. By comparing an analysis of changes in townscape quality over this period, with changes in public perceptions (captured through the use of a household survey in all 16 cases at three points in the ten-year period), it draws empirically grounded conclusions about the influence of heritage investment on attitudes and perceptions to the quality of the local environment. The findings from the research suggests that public attitudes are positively influenced by programmes of investment in the built heritage, but that this influence is complex and is not as robust as the physical regeneration itself. The paper also reflects on the relative influence of the post-2008 economic recession on public attitudes to place compared with the influence of heritage investment.

Keywords: townscape; public attitudes; historic conservation

Introduction

In the late 1990s, Pendlebury and Townshend (1997, p. 30) argued that it is “clear that historic townscapes are important to the everyday lives of ordinary people who live and work in them”, but that “the conservation of these areas takes little account of how they are valued by the public as a whole” (p. 20). They went on to suggest that there was, at that time, an absence of empirically grounded research concerned with finding out how the public value the historic environment – particularly in terms of its townscape quality. In many ways, little has changed in terms of published research in this area. However, from the late 1990s, in the UK, there have been at least two major programmes of investment in the physical heritage at the townscape scale. These are English Heritage’s Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme which began in 1999 and built on the success of the Conservation Area Partnership Scheme and the ongoing Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) programme, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Although with somewhat different remits, these programmes, over a decade and a half, have seen a significant amount of public and quasi-public money invested in the restoration of historic townscapes. These programmes have affected several hundred locations across the

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UK. Both projects have been evaluated by independent academic and professional researchers, and there is now a quantum of empirical material which holds the potential for beginning to address the question of how historic environments in general are valued by the public.

The purpose of this paper is to report some of the findings from a significant body of primary research into the impact of the THI in so far as these reveal the influence of investment in the built heritage on attitudes to place. This is done in order to make a contribution to the larger debate concerning public perceptions and valuing of the historic environment. Rather than directly interrogating users with regard to their conscious perceptions and values relating to their local heritage, the paper is based on research which infers these perceptions from the evidence of changes in attitudes to place resulting from heritage-focused investment under the THI programme. This research has been concerned with capturing these changes over a ten-year period, both before, during and after the investment activity, in 16 separate THI schemes (Shipley, Reeve, Walker, Grover, & Goodey, 2004).

The paper begins with a brief discussion of the extant academic and theoretical context for the research, before then looking at the findings from the THI evaluation, and drawing some conclusions about the impact of heritage investment on public attitudes to place.

The theoretical context

There is a very large literature on place perception (Nasar, 1998). There is also a more limited research literature on the impact of, for instance, infrastructure change and place affiliation (Gatersleben, Clark, Reeve, & Uzzell, 2007). But there appears to be very little literature which examines the way in which heritage investment in townscapes impacts on users' sense of place, either positively or negatively. This paper hopes to begin to fill this gap in the literature.

In doing that we focus on two issues: first, the extent to which heritage investment has been used as either deliberate tool for improving attitudes to place, or has had the effect of influencing attitudes, and second the methods for doing this.

It is important to go back to the situation as it was at the time in the late 1990s when the HLF's THI was conceived. Many city and town centres had been in decline for years. Urban renewal, the wholesale destruction of older neighbourhoods and their replacement with tower blocks, was a remedy in disrepute. Large-scale urban renewal was more common in the USA but versions of it were also present in distressed areas of Britain and elsewhere. In spite of various efforts, there was still deterioration in urban core areas and a persistent image problem for town and city centres. As one American writer put it, "downtown living was usually restricted to hotels, clubs with sleeping facilities, flophouses, and jails." (Birch, 2005, p. 1) While the situation in many places was quite dire, the Canadian representative to the World Heritage Council was able to say:

Many factors are creating pressure for rehabilitation and new development: among them are population increases, economic activity, the failure of existing building stock, and the demand for higher living standards. The question is not whether to allow rehabilitation and the insertion of new buildings in historic places. The question is how. (Cameron, 2006, p. 3)

It was clear that a new model had to be found. If there was not going to be urban renewal, there had to be what came to be called urban regeneration or re-urbanisation

(Couch, Fowles, & Karecha, 2009). This approach aimed more at recreating the vitality that had once been typical of urban centres.

For some time this movement, as had its predecessor, focused primarily on physical renewal that largely took the form of new building and was driven almost entirely by an economic development ethic. Robertson (2001), for example, reviewed American strategies on revitalisation of downtown retail activities. The establishment of business improvement districts was a popular approach and those were often aimed at servicing visitors (Montgomery, 2003; Perez, Hernandez, & Jones, 2003; Ratcliffe & Flanagan, 2004). The structure of business improvement districts was somewhat specific to the USA and not easily transferable to places such as Britain (Lloyd, McCarthy, McGreal, & Berry, 2003). Nevertheless in the UK some similar strategies were adopted and went by the name of town centre management (Otsuka & Reeve, 2007).

By the mid-1990s, there was the beginning of a movement away from urban revitalisation as a solely economic and physical endeavour. A thoughtful editorial by David Watt appeared in 1999 in the *Journal of Architectural Conservation*. Watt spoke of the “value and effectiveness of public consultation” and said that “conservation, in whatever country it is practised, is now recognized as a crucial means of achieving wider economic and social goals” (p. 5). Two new factors were being recognised here, one was the place of the public, ordinary people, in what had up until then been primarily a professional practice and the other concerned the potential role of saving and reusing existing structures for social as well as economic ends (Townshend & Pendlebury, 1999).

On the first of these points, the inclusion of thinking about the people who actually reside in historic areas, it was landscape conservationists who were among the earliest to discuss “the lived in landscape” (Phillips, 2003). The wilderness conservation movement had been quite successful in preserving pristine areas as protected parks and preserves, but it was apparent that if we were to

maintain a living landscape with its associated living culture, it will not be enough to try to preserve small areas in ‘aspic.’ Instead the challenge is to find ways of adding value to the very processes of land management that underpin the landscape. (p. 7)

While the architecture that typifies places is important heritage preservation thinkers realised what was often missing in their interpretation was the cultural and social context of the way people live in their spaces and places (Cameron, 2006).

Although he was arguing at the time for paying attention to economic factors, Donovan Rypkema, one of the most prolific researchers on heritage subjects, wrote that, “in the long run, the economic impact of heritage conservation is far less important than its educational, environmental, cultural, aesthetic, and social impacts” (2008, p. 1). Furthermore, when one thinks of city and town centre revitalisation undertaken anywhere for any stated reasons, economic or otherwise, “one would be hard pressed to identify a single example of sustained success ... where heritage conservation wasn’t a key component.” (p. 3)

What was emerging is the idea that it is the people as much as the places that are important and that interesting places attracted instrumental and energetic people and that these kinds of people in turn made the places exciting (Graham, 2002). Even earlier Wells, in talking about town centre management in 1991, indicated that social as well as physical aspects needed to be accounted for. The concept of the “knowledge-based city” perhaps began in the UK but found its strongest proponent in the works of Toronto-based researcher Richard Florida and his ideas of the “creative city” and a

“creative class” (2004). When the HLF set out in the late 1990s attempting to rejuvenate town centres by investing in architectural conservation and speculating that such efforts could have a leavening effect on local pride and civic confidence, they were ahead of the wave. The trouble was that as strong as this assumption was, there was very little research at the time to back it up.

When we turn to the methods that might be used to rejuvenate failing city and town centres, there are a couple of models that present themselves. American heritage advocate Donovan Rypkema said:

By far, the most cost-effective U.S. program for economic development—not just for historic preservation or downtown revitalization, but the most cost-effective economic development program of any kind—is a program of the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation called Main Street. (2008, p. 3)

Main street programmes put a coordinator in place who worked to encourage common opening hours, area marketing, festivals and events, standard signage and numerous other initiatives for increasing business activity in ways that involved local people (Silverman & Taylor, 2008). Often these efforts also involved the renovation and restoration of store fronts and upper floors of buildings. There are examples from Quito, Ecuador, Singapore, the old medina in Tunis and British Columbia in Canada. In the UK context and indeed in other parts of Europe, there has been proportionally more money available for actual building restoration through European Union Funds, Regional Disparity Projects and national programmes. The THI is a good example of the more integrated European approach. However, while the main street idea and the more proactive building restoration schemes are each distinctive approaches, there is some current research which indicates that the two ideas can work effectively together (Shipley & Snider, 2013).

While the ideas discussed above have evolved over the last 20 years, we are now in a position to evaluate the concepts. What we know to date is that not everyone agrees that there is overwhelming public support for heritage conservation or whether architectural conservation leads to improved attitudes and confidence. Recently released HLF analysis cites several studies showing strong support as does independent research (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2012, Graham, 2002). However, some scholars have found tension and dissonance in rejuvenated areas (Pendlebury & Townshend, 1999). One researcher referring to the city of Liverpool states that, “emerging housing sector caters only for a niche population and makes a relatively inefficient contribution to housing supply” (Couch et al., 2009, p. 321).

This paper presents some of the results from research into the THI in order, in part, to ask what evidence there might be regarding the specific influence of heritage investment on people’s attitudes in particular contexts, and thus to be able to generalise the issue.

The THI programme and evaluation

Context for the research

The THI was set up by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 1998, and can be seen as contributing to an established tradition in the UK and beyond, of addressing problems of “disrepair, erosion of quality and under use of structures in areas where historic buildings predominate” (Shipley & Reeve, 2010, p. 221). The key aim of the THI programme, in its original form, was to help communities in areas of both heritage merit and social

deprivation. Investment in the original 118 schemes, focused on a mix of public realm works, and building improvements and restoration. In other words, all schemes had a predominantly public presence, although funding could also be used to restore building interiors if the effect was to bring them back into use (Figure 1).

The THI evaluation was commissioned in 1998, and field work was completed in 2011. The aim of the research was to measure the effectiveness of the programme as a whole, by undertaking a review of a cross section of 16 cases best described as “a longitudinal, non-comparison or self-referenced, time-series approach” (Shiple et al. 2004, p. 525). The philosophy of the research design was based at the time on Rog and Fournier’s seminal text *Progress and Future Directions in Evaluation: Perspectives on Theory, Practice and Methods* (1997).

A detailed account of the design of the THI evaluation is given by Shiple et al. (2004); but in essence, the research attempted to establish a baseline prior to intervention, and then to take the same measurements at key points at a minimum of two subsequent points to see what impact the intervention was having (Weiss, 1997). In terms of the THI, these points were generally five years after each scheme received its funding (the assumption being that any public realm and building works would have been completed at this point); and then at ten years, when schemes had ‘bedded in’ and when it could be reasonably determined whether initial impacts had been sustained.

Sixteen of the original 118 schemes were selected as a reasonable cross section of the total population of projects with some being part of large urban areas and others smaller centres (Table 1).

As can be seen, these are a mix of schemes in large urban areas (Rope Walks, Liverpool, Merchant City, Glasgow); rural towns and villages (West Wemyss, Wigtown); old industrial communities (Creswell, Burslem, Cleator Moor); a former holiday resort (Colwyn Bay); and a variety of other types, spread across the whole of the UK. They also represented a wide range of both heritage assets and heritage needs and potential. All of the THI areas were within or coincident with conservation areas, and thus all had a demonstrable, and possibly intrinsic heritage value.

The research design had to address the central ambitions of the THI programme as a whole, which were to do with improvement of the areas benefiting from the investment, measured through changes in quality of life, local economic vitality, and commercial and user confidence in the place. In order to capture these very broad changes, 4 key indicators and 16 sub-indicators were defined.

Informing these indicators were a series of both primary and secondary data streams, including qualitative and quantitative components. Some of this material was statistical, some attitudinal and some based on the observations of the researchers. At the same time, the physical changes in the streetscapes were also measured.

There is not space in this paper to describe all of the sources of data used in the evaluation; however, it is worth saying something more about the key research instrument employed from which the findings reported in this paper come: the household questionnaire.

The main research instrument: the household questionnaire

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to establish, over time, how both residents and business owners, felt about different aspects of the THI area in which they either worked or lived. The questionnaire consisted of 38 questions, predominantly using a five-point scale. In addition, there were some open-ended questions. The scaled

questions focused on the respondents' attitudes to the THI area, both in terms of specific qualities (such as cleanliness, safety, crime and maintenance), and more general qualities (as a place to live, work, socialise and do business). Moreover, it asked respondents to look back and to the future, so that they were required to reflect on how the place had changed, and was likely to change. For example, did they feel their area was now safer than it had been, and was this trend continuing; was it better maintained than formerly and how did it compare in this regard with other places? It also asked respondents to list or name any heritage 'markers', or significant events used to commemorate the heritage (signage and festivals in particular). The questionnaire was also designed to capture the characteristics of respondents, in terms of age, employment, income and length of association with the place – i.e. how long they had lived in the area.

The questionnaire was administered by post, to a randomised sample of 500–750 addresses for each scheme. However, one community – West Wemyss – was too small to allow this scale of sampling, and effectively every household was sent a questionnaire. The survey was self-administered, and conducted on three separate occasions – at baseline (1999/2000), mid-point (2005/6) and (roughly) ten years (2010/11). In all, some 25,000 questionnaires were sent out and the average response rate was 20%. Effectively, 5000 separate questionnaire were returned completed.

Clearly, because the questionnaire was administered to the same schemes, and the same set of addresses on three separate occasions, and because the response rate was adequate in all cases and on all occasions, we could infer changes over time in terms of particular questions, and particular themes; and we could be confident that these perceptions of change were consistent with the respondents – i.e. they could only be explained by the fact that the same degree of randomness applied to each sample. It should be acknowledged that what we have in the results from the questionnaire is descriptive data, rather than data which have been subjected to particular statistical tests; and we would stress that the conclusions drawn from the data in terms of, for instance, trends over time are suggestive rather than conclusive. This is particularly so since the analysis takes the mean score for each question, and the assumption is that the mean is a true representation of the spread of responses at each point in time. In order to check this, we have reviewed the data for each case and each theme where clear trends are evident.

The other methodological caveat that needs to be recognised is that whilst the survey data allow us to describe the direction of change in terms of respondents' attitudes, and even quantify the degree of change; it does not of itself explain that change. In order to do this, we need to contextualise the results of the survey, so that they can be interpreted with some degree of confidence in relation to the place where change has occurred. For example, we need to be able to bracket the investment in the heritage as the only or main cause of change in attitude.



Figure 1. This view of the Liverpool Rope Walks taken at three different periods, 2000 on the left, 2005 in the centre and 2010 on the right, show the kind of dramatic change the area experienced.

Table 1. THI sites listed by size as being either parts of large cities, towns or villages.

Districts within large cities	Towns	Villages
Buslem	Bodmin	Creswell
Merchant City, Glasgow	Colwyn Bay	Cleator Moor
The Rope Walks, Liverpool	Newport Pagnell	Draperstown and Moneymore
Middlesbrough	Newry	
Bloxwich	Pembroke Dock	West Wemyss
Newport	Wigtown	

Linking survey findings with perceptions of impact of the THI investment

The survey results contain an enormous wealth of potential complex information and potential evidence of changes in attitudes over time, to an array of different issues ranging from job prospects, to experience of crime and to awareness of the heritage. However, in order to focus our interpretation of the material on the key aim of this paper, which is to better understand the impact of heritage spend on attitudes to place directly linked to the physical investment, we have done two things. First, we have isolated half a dozen key questions and grouped these by theme. These are as follows:

Theme 1 – Appearance and up-keep

- *Question 19*¹: Over the last five years, in terms of cleanliness, upkeep and appearance <place> has got a lot better/got better/stayed the same/got worse/got a lot worse
- *Question 24*: compared with other places, in terms of cleanliness, upkeep and appearance <place> is a lot better/better/the same/a bit worse/a lot worse

Theme 2 – Investment in public realm

- *Question 9*: I feel the council cares about <place> strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree
- *Question 10*: Over the last five years the council has invested in <place> strongly agree/agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree/strongly disagree

Theme 3 – Awareness of the history of place

- *Question 7*: I know the history and significance of <place> Very well/reasonably well/passably/not very well/not at all
- *Question 30*: are you aware of the THI in <place> yes/no

Theme 4 – General quality of life

- *Question 1*: As a place to live <place> Couldn't be better/OK/could be improved/has some problems/has serious problems
- *Question 18*: In general over the last five years <place> has got a lot better/got better/stayed the same/got worse/got a lot worse

Second, we have been guided in our analysis by a particular hypothesis, derived from the literature², which links changes in attitude of respondents to the degree of positive townscape change: *we would expect the highest degree of positive change in attitude amongst respondents to have occurred where the heritage investment has been most visually apparent* – which is to say in the public realm and building restoration and maintenance.

The questionnaire provides us with data relating to changes in attitude in the cases studied; data on townscape change is provided by a second component of the research. This involved an independent evaluation of changes in townscape quality using a scoring system applied in the field at each of the three survey points – that is, the townscape scoring coincided with the household survey, and we can be confident that what we measured was the same as what was experienced by respondents (see Figure 4). There is not space here to go into the methodological design and the administration of the townscape scoring approach in any detail but information concerning the approach can be found in Shipley et al. (2004) and Reeve, Goodey, and Shipley (2007). The salient characteristics of this part of the research involved defining a set of elements that could be observed (see Figure 2), constructing appropriate criteria for scoring each of these against a numerical scale – out of five; identifying a series of views within each case to be scored and scoring these in the field.

As Table 2 makes clear, the impact of the THI programme with respect to townscape varies considerably across schemes. It should be noted that the physical appearance of all schemes has improved, and some dramatically.



Figure 2. West Wemyss at the top is pictured in 2000 at the left and in 2006 on the right. The view of Bloxwich is seen in 2000 (left), 2006 (centre) and 2010 (right).

Table 2. Percentage point change in Townscape based on Townscape survey results comparing baseline with 2007 and 2011 report data.

Townscape	% Change BL to 2007	% Change 2007–2011	% Change BL to 2011
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	10.3	20.79
Creswell	12	5	17
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	3	13
Newport	2.49	9.22	11.71
Newry	2.4	8.32	10.7
Moneymore	8.1	2.3	10.4
West Wemyss	9	0.7	9.7
Middlesbrough	2	6	8
Colwyn Bay	1.08	5.55	6.63
Burslem	6.81	-0.48	6.33
Pembroke Dock	5.7	0.6	6.3
Bloxwich	5	0.5	5.5
Wigtown	4	0.2	4.2
Bodmin	8.5	-4.5	4.07
Cleator Moor	-1.1	4.55	3.45
N. Pagnell	3.4	-1.2	2.2
Draperstown	2.32	-0.5	1.82
<i>Sum % change</i>	5.42	2.91	8.34

In order to simplify the task of making sense of the data, and to more efficiently address the key question for this paper – is there a link between independently assessed improvements in the townscape, and attitudes to place? – we have focused on essentially two groups of cases. The first is the best four performing schemes in terms of townscape improvement. The presumption here is that where there has been most improvement, we should see the greatest change in attitude. The second are those schemes which theme by theme show greatest change in attitude. We are not assuming a direct correlation, or one-to-one relationship between townscape change and attitudinal change, simply that the direction of change should be the same, in very general terms; if it is not, we are interested in why this might be.

As well as changes over the period of the study as a whole, we also want to know whether and how attitudes of local residents might have changed at different points in the research. That is, whether there is any link between changes in attitude and the on-the-ground application of the programme over time. We can also infer from this analysis something about the resilience or duration of changes in attitude – whether perceptions continue to improve, or improve and then decline.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data considers guided two key questions, which we return to in the discussion section towards the end of the paper:

- (1) Is there any general correspondence between the top performing schemes in terms of townscape and improvements in attitude to place?
- (2) Ignoring the overall top schemes in terms of townscape, which places have shown most change in attitudes for the themes identified, and is there any relationship between this and changes in townscape at the two points of the survey?

Analysis

The top four schemes, according to the townscape scoring approach, are the Rope Walks, Liverpool; Creswell; Merchant City, Glasgow and Newport. Each has improved by between 10 and 20% over the 11 years of the research. This improvement has been sustained, even after works were completed (see Table 3).

Analysis of impacts on attitude by case and by theme

Theme 1 – Appearance and upkeep

The first part of the analysis takes the survey questions most directly linked to the physical appearance of place (questions 19 and 24). These asked the respondents to reflect on how their location has changed in the previous five years, and how it compares with other places in terms of “cleanliness, upkeep and appearance”.

If we look at those top four cases where the townscape quality improved most over the entire research period, there is some evidence of an association between townscape improvement and improvement in perception of the appearance and maintenance of place (see Tables 3 and 4). In the case of three of the four top schemes, Creswell, Rope Walks in Liverpool and the Merchant City in Glasgow, we see a significant improvement in perception both with respect to the previous five years, and when respondents are asked to compare their location with other places.

Looking a little deeper, it is also evident that changes in attitude to the appearance of place actually reflects the pace and scale of change on the ground. To explain this, it is necessary to provide some context for the schemes we are referring to. The Creswell THI, whose townscape improved to 2006, and has remained at the same quality subsequently, involved the wholesale improvement of an early 20th Century mining village. The core of the project was a housing development, built around a large octagonal-shaped open space (see Figure 6), and included extensive landscaping treatment, and the restoration of the original fenestration and other details to the facades of the majority of the houses in the scheme. The majority of the work was completed by the survey point in 2006. An analysis of the responses to the two questions to do with appearance show clearly that there was a significant improvement in perception to 2006, and that this then either stayed the same or fell away slightly.

The Rope Walks scheme, in Liverpool, shows a somewhat similar pattern. This project involved the extensive restoration and conversion of a number of large former warehouse and other industrial premises, many of which had been vacant and semi-derelict

Question 18.							
In general I feel that over the last five years Wigtown has:	Mean Score out of 5	Improved a lot	Improved a little	Stayed the same	Become Worse	Become a lot worse	Don't Know
96 users, missing cases:2	3.70	23	37	22	12	2	2
		23.5%	37.8%	22.4%	12.2%	2%	2%

Figure 3. Typical Likert Scale question from the household questionnaire, with data added.

Table 3. Theme 1, changes in attitude to appearance, question 19.

Theme 1: Appearance	2000–2006	2000– 2006	2006–2011	2006– 2011	2000–2011	2000– 2011
Q19 Over last five years has appearance improved?	Townscape score% change	Q 19% change	Townscape score % change	Q 19% change	Townscape score% change	Q 19% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	−4	10.3	12.8	20.79	8.8
Creswell	12	23.6	5	−1.2	17	22.4
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	7.2	3	−1	13	6.2
Newport	2.49	3.6	9.22	−6.4	11.71	−2.8
Newry	2.4	4.2	8.32	−6.4	10.7	−2.2
Moneymore	8.1	−0.2	2.3	−11.2	10.4	−11.4
West Wemyss	9	17.8	0.7	−31.8	9.7	−14
Middlesbrough	2	9.8	6	−2.8	8	7
Colwyn Bay	1.08	22.8	5.55	−5.8	6.63	17
Burslem	6.81	0	−0.48	1.4	6.33	1.4
Pembroke Dock	5.7	7.4	0.6	−10.6	6.3	−3.2
Bloxwich	5	19	0.5	−2.8	5.5	16.2
Wigtown	4	0.6	0.2	−2.8	4.2	−2.2
Bodmin	8.5	−2.8	−4.5	−14.6	4.07	−17.4
Cleator Moor	−1.1	−3.2	4.55	−2	3.45	−5.2
N. Pagnell	3.4	26.4	−1.2	−3.6	2.2	22.8
Draperstown	2.32	−5.8	−0.5	−4.8	1.82	−10.6

Note: Two sets of data are compared in Tables 2–9; (1) Townscape scores at two pints (2006 and 2001) and cumulatively (for 2000–2011); (2) Mean scores for each question presented as a percentage, again at the same two pints and cumulatively.

for decades (see Figure 1). Although the scheme had commenced well before the 2006 survey, it was not completed until the late 2000s – and many of the restored buildings were certainly not occupied until then. This seems to be reflected in the fact that for question 19 relating to change in the previous five years, attitudes were negative prior to 2006, but became much more positive by 2011.

If we look at the whole sample of 16 cases, this general relationship between the stages of investment and changes in perception seems to be confirmed – although it is not entirely black and white, and differences need to be understood in terms of the certain qualities (particularly of scale and visibility) of the investment. This is certainly true for question (19) relating to changes in appearance over time. In those cases that were either barely started or still underway (Rope Walks, Cleator Moor, Burslem), we see that attitudes have improved post 2006. For all the others – which had been completed by this point – attitudes actually fall back. An extreme example of this is West Wemyss (see Figure 2). This is a small coastal settlement on the Forth of Firth, which had a very modest THI begun in 1999, and completed in 2002. It involved the restoration of 12 houses forming part of a terrace on the main street of the village. The perception of residents improved significantly as a consequence of this work, as reflected in the findings for both questions 19 and 24, in 2006. However, by 2011 views had reversed, and were more negative than before the scheme had got underway. This is, in fact, true of 9 of the 16 schemes. Exactly why this would require further research, but our view is that – aside from one or two cases where it is conceivable that there has been a significant change in the make-up of the population (West Wemyss being one of these) – people have a

Table 4. Theme 1, changes in attitude to appearance, question 24.

Theme 1: Appearance	2000–2006	2000– 2006	2006–2011	2006– 2011	2000–2011	2000– 2011
Q24 appearance compared with other places	Townscape score% change	Q 24% change	Townscape score % change	Q 24% change	Townscape score% change	Q 24% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	5.2	10.3	7.2	20.79	12.4
Creswell	12	20	5	0	17	20
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	2.6	3	4.6	13	7.2
Newport	2.49	2	9.22	-2.4	11.71	-0.4
Newry	2.4	-0.2	8.32	3.2	10.7	3
Moneymore	8.1	-0.6	2.3	-3.8	10.4	-4.4
West Wemyss	9	9.4	0.7	-28.2	9.7	-18.8
Middlesbrough	2	-1.6	6	7.2	8	5.6
Colwyn Bay	1.08	7.6	5.55	-2.8	6.63	4.8
Burslem	6.81	3.2	-0.48	0	6.33	3.2
Pembroke Dock	5.7	-1	0.6	-3.4	6.3	-4.4
Bloxwich	5	10.2	0.5	1.8	5.5	12
Wigtown	4	6	0.2	4.6	4.2	10.6
Bodmin	8.5	-2.4	-4.5	-3	4.07	-5.4
Cleator Moor	-1.1	1.4	4.55	-2.6	3.45	-1.2
N. Pagnell	3.4	11.8	-1.2	7	2.2	18.8
Draperstown	2.32	-2	-0.5	-4	1.82	-6

tendency to forget how things were. If little has changed, or, as in several of the cases studied, there has been a failure to maintain what has been improved, then expectations are re-calibrated.

On the other hand, if we look at the findings from question 24 where respondents were asked to compare their place with other places in terms of appearance and maintenance, although we see the same trend (an improvement in attitude followed by decline), it is certainly not to the same degree. In 10 of the 16 cases, attitudes to place based on a comparison with other places have improved compared with the baseline position – and some significantly.

There is not space in this paper to explore the implications of the data on this theme in much more depth, but as well as what we have noted so far, which largely confirms our hypothesis of an association between townscape improvement and changes in attitude, we should note one curious finding from the data. That is, there are several cases where the largest change in attitude is not matched by the scale of the investment, and most be explained by other factors. This is so in Newport Pagnell and Bloxwich, for instance. In both of these, the THI was largely concerned with cosmetic improvements, to shop fronts, and facade restoration.

Theme 2: Investment in public space

The second part of the analysis reviews the data from two questions in the survey which we take as a proxy of perceptions of investment in and care for quality of place: question 9 ‘I feel the council cares about <place>’ and question 10 ‘over the last five years I feel the council has invested in <place>’.

A. STREETScape: QUALITY & MAINTENANCE	
A1-Pedestrian Friendly	A8-Personal Safety: Traffic
A2-Cleanliness	A9-Planting: Public
A3-Coherence	A10-Vitality
A4-Edge Feature Quality	A11-Appropriate Resting Places
A5-Floorscape Quality	A12-Signage
A6-Legibility	A13-Street Furniture Quality
A7-Sense of Threat	A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness
>/70	
B. PRIVATE SPACE IN VIEW	C. HERITAGE IN VIEW
B15-Advertising, in keeping	C20-Conserved Elements Evident
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	C21-Historic Reference Seen
B17-Detailing Maintenance	C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference
B18-Facade Quality	C23-Quality of Conservation Work
B19-Planting : Private	C24-Quality of New Development
>/25	
>/30	

Figure 4. The scores for each view and for each place could then be aggregated together, and compared at the three different survey points in time.

Again we can ask whether there is any association or pattern in terms of the four most improved schemes, as measured by the townscape data, and the questions above. What emerges is an even more complex picture than for the first theme (see Tables 5 and 6). First there is little correlation between our assessment of townscape improvement, and the sense that local people have of investment or concern by the local authority. In the case of the Rope Walks, for instance, although there was some improvement in people’s sense of the council caring about the place post 2006, the data from the whole research period indicates a significant decline in this perception. However, there was a strong sense from 2006 that the council was investing in the Rope Walks. Newport also shows a decline with respect to both questions. On the other hand, the Merchant City and Creswell show a positive trend in line with our evaluation of the townscape change.

If we look at those places which show most improvement with respect to people’s attitudes for these two questions, we can begin to ask whether the THI is a key factor in explaining this. First of all, there seems to be a correspondence between the majority

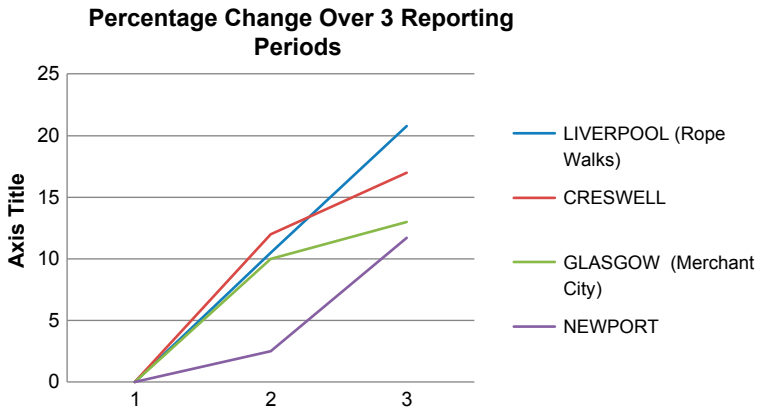


Figure 5. Four best performing cases in terms of cumulative townscape change, overall.



Figure 6. Creswell.

of cases where residents feel the council cares, and where they also feel it has invested. However, the question of the THI's role in influencing these changes in attitudes is complex and difficult to generalise. For example, in the case of Creswell – as in the theme of appearance – the evidence is unambiguous. The THI is the only factor that can account for residents' improved view of the council. This is for two reasons: one that the THI was the only investment programme and second because of the highly visible nature of the changes brought about under the scheme. But if we look at Bloxwich, whilst we see modest improvement in the townscape, a result of a combination of shop front improvements and some public realm works, the degree of change of attitude appears disproportionate to this one cause.

A further nuance is provided by the Rope Walks case. Here we can see that overall, over time, residents did not initially feel the council cared about the area, although this improved; at the same time, there was a strong sense that it had invested in it.

A further complexity is suggested by cases such as Draperstown, a small community in Northern Ireland, with a programme of shop front improvements combined with small-scale building restoration. The data here indicate that there was initially significant improvement in residents' sense that the local authority cared about the place, which fell away dramatically in the period before 2011.

Table 5. Theme 2, changes in perception of local council investment, question 9.

Theme 2:						
Investment in public realm	2000–2006	2000–2006	2006–2011	2006–2011	2000–2011	2000–2011
Q9I feel the council cares about	Townscape score% change	Q 9% change	Townscape score% change	Q 9% change	Townscape score % change	Q 9% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	-13.4	10.3	3.6	20.79	-9.8
Creswell	12	9	5	3.4	17	12.4
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	9.4	3	-1.2	13	8.2
Newport	2.49	-0.2	9.22	-1.4	11.71	-1.6
Newry	2.4	4.2	8.32	-4.2	10.7	0
Moneymore	8.1	0.8	2.3	-2.2	10.4	-1.4
West Wemyss	9	-7.8	0.7	3.6	9.7	-4.2
Middlesbrough	2	2	6	5.6	8	7.6
Colwyn Bay	1.08	4.6	5.55	7	6.63	11.6
Burslem	6.81	1.2	-0.48	0	6.33	1.2
Pembroke Dock	5.7	-6	0.6	5.2	6.3	-0.8
Bloxwich	5	13	0.5	4.2	5.5	17.2
Wigtown	4	14.6	0.2	-1.2	4.2	13.4
Bodmin	8.5	-0.4	-4.5	-4	4.07	-4.4
Cleator moor	-1.1	-0.4	4.55	7.4	3.45	7
N. Pagnell	3.4	7	1.2	4	2.2	11
Draperstown	2.32	24.8	-0.5	-14	1.82	10.8

Whatever the explanation for the complex array of changes seen in the cases as a whole, it is clear that with respect to both questions, the majority of schemes show sustained improvement over time which has to be explained in part – and in some cases exclusively – by the presence of the THI project.

Theme 3: Awareness of history

The third part of the analysis focuses on the evidence from the research of any link between the THI and changes in peoples’ belief that they are more knowledgeable about the history of their community (question 7). We are interested in this since, first, raising awareness of the heritage was one of the background aims of the programme as a whole and, second, as another proxy for measuring changes in attitude to place brought about by the THI. In addition, and linked to this, we wanted to know to what degree the THI registered in the minds of residents and something they directly associated with the change in their communities (question 30). Particularly in terms of this second issue, the data are unambiguous, as we shall see (see Tables 7 and 8).

In terms of changes in levels of awareness of the local history, it seems that the THI has had some marginal influence; or at least can be associated with a marginal increased awareness in 12 of the 16 cases. In the two cases where this change has been greatest – the Merchant City and Middlesbrough – this may be to do with the fact that both have experienced some degree of change in their demographic make-up. In the case of the THI area in Middlesbrough, there has been an upward drift in social class. This has also been true in the Merchant City, where, in addition, the THI scheme was part of a larger strategy to make local people more aware of the heritage through improved signage, as well as other mechanisms for disseminating information about the area’s culture and past.

Table 6. Theme 2, changes in perception of local council investment, question 10.

Theme 2: Investment in public realm	2000–2006	2000–2006	2006–2011	2006–2011	2000–2011	2000–2011
Q10 over the last five years the council has invested	Townscape score% change	Q 10% change	Townscape score% change	Q 10% change	Townscape score% change	Q 10% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	1.2	10.3	9.8	20.79	11
Creswell	12	15.6	5	2.6	17	18.2
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	15	3	-3.6	13	11.4
Newport	2.49	-2	9.22	-0.2	11.71	-2.2
Newry	2.4	7	8.32	-11	10.7	-4
Moneymore	8.1	-4.2	2.3	-5	10.4	-9.2
West Wemyss	9	7.8	0.7	-6.8	9.7	1
Middlesbrough	2	10.8	6	-1.6	8	9.2
Colwyn Bay	1.08	13.6	5.55	0.4	6.63	14
Burslem	6.81	-1.4	-0.48	-2	6.33	-3.4
Pembroke Dock	5.7	2	0.6	-3.2	6.3	-1.2
Bloxwich	5	18.2	0.5	-1.8	5.5	16.4
Wigtown	4	3.8	0.2	2.2	4.2	6
Bodmin	8.5	-3.8	-4.5	-12.6	4.07	-16.4
Cleator Moor	-1.1	-1.4	4.55	6	3.45	4.6
N. Pagnell	3.4	25.2	1.2	-2.2	2.2	23
Draperstown	2.32	3.6	-0.5	3	1.82	6.6

On the other hand, we see in the Rope Walks an increase in awareness, followed by a significant decline. Without further evidence, it is difficult to be confident about why this is; but our sense is that it is again to do with a changing demographic, as well as the process of change. The scheme, and its heritage justification, was part of the consciousness of local people as it got underway, and as part of the larger regeneration of this section of Liverpool in the early 2000s. From 2006, there was an influx of new people buying up or renting the recently refurbished and converted buildings in the area who perhaps had little historic connection with this part of Liverpool. Our sense is that in the case of Creswell, the 8% change in respect of this question coincides with a significant change in the social class of the residents – local people moving in as owner occupiers for the first time. Again this is partly speculation, but the Heritage Lottery Fund, at the same time as funding the THI in the village, established a community and information centre which may have been instrumental in raising levels of awareness about the heritage.

The findings from question 30 are perhaps surprisingly consistent across most of the 16 schemes. It should be noted that this question did not use a Likert scale, but simply asked respondents to say whether they were aware of the THI or not.

What we see is that in most cases awareness of the THI grew between 2000 and 2006. This is not surprising since this is the period when most of the projects would have been highly visible. In some cases, such as Newry, Creswell and Moneymore, we suspect that this is also linked for various reasons to intense publicity for the programme in an attempt to get ‘buy-in’ from local property holders and other community stakeholders. In the case of Bodmin, Wigtown and Middlesbrough, there was actually a decline in awareness in this period. In the case of the first two, the statistics are likely to be explained by a margin of error and could be discounted. In the case of

Table 7. Theme 2, changes in awareness of heritage, question 7.

Theme 3: Awareness of the history	2000–2006	2000– 2006	2006–2011	2006– 2011	2000–2011	2000– 2011
Q7I know the history and significance of	Townscape score% change	Q 7% change	Townscape score % change	Q 7% change	Townscape score % change	Q 7% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	11.8	10.3	-20	20.79	-8.2
CRESWELL	12	-3.2	5	8	17	4.8
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	5.2	3	2	13	7.2
Newport	2.49	0.2	9.22	-2.6	11.71	-2.4
Newry	2.4	5.8	8.32	-2	10.7	3.8
Moneymore	8.1	-2.2	2.3	-2	10.4	-4.2
West Wemyss	9	-0.4	0.7	-1.8	9.7	-2.2
Middlesbrough	2	7.8	6	-0.8	8	7
Colwyn Bay	1.08	-7	5.55	6.6	6.63	-0.4
Burslem	6.81	0	-0.48	1.6	6.33	1.6
Pembroke Dock	5.7	4.2	0.6	-2	6.3	2.2
Bloxwich	5	2.8	0.5	0	5.5	2.8
Wigtown	4	-3.2	0.2	3.8	4.2	0.6
Bodmin	8.5	4.4	-4.5	0	4.07	4.4
Cleator Moor	-1.1	-2.2	4.55	6.2	3.45	4
N. Pagnell	3.4	3.6	1.2	3.2	2.2	6.8
Draperstown	2.32	4.8	-0.5	-2.8	1.82	2

Table 8. Theme 2, changes in awareness of heritage, question 30.

Theme 3: Awareness of the history	2000–2006	2000– 2006	2006–2011	2006– 2011	2000–2011	2000– 2011
Q30 are you aware of the THI	Townscape score% change	Q 30% change	Townscape score % change	Q 30% change	Townscape score% change	Q 30% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	5.4	10.3	-20	20.79	-14.6
Creswell	12	26.6	5	-45.8	17	-19.2
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	3.8	3	-10.6	13	-6.8
Newport	2.49	11.6	9.22	-33.4	11.71	-21.8
Newry	2.4	20.2	8.32	-31.6	10.7	-11.4
Moneymore	8.1	22	2.3	-53.2	10.4	-31.2
West Wemyss	9	1.6	0.7	-55.8	9.7	-54.2
Middlesbrough	2	-23.8	6	0.6	8	-23.2
Colwyn Bay	1.08	2.8	5.55	-16	6.63	-13.2
Burslem	6.81	0	-0.48	-12.8	6.33	-12.8
Pembroke Dock	5.7	11	0.6	-7.6	6.3	3.4
Bloxwich	5	11	0.5	-21.6	5.5	-10.6
Wigtown	4	-3.2	0.2	-33.6	4.2	-36.8
Bodmin	8.5	-4.6	-4.5	-24.6	4.07	-29.2
Cleator Moor	-1.1	2.2	4.55	-24.6	3.45	-22.4
N. Pagnell	3.4	7.4	1.2	-18.8	2.2	-11.4
Draperstown	2.32	8.2	-0.5	-22.8	1.82	-14.6

Middlesbrough, the decline from 40% who claimed to be aware of the project, to 11% in 2006 may be accounted for by the fact that after initial publicity to local households, little actually happened on the ground until the mid-2000s, and so it faded from consciousness.

By 2011, except in Pembroke Dock, levels of awareness of the programme had dropped significantly; even in places where its effects were otherwise very visible, such as West Wemyss, Creswell and Moneymore. So although awareness of the heritage or history may have increased, this is not, it seems, linked in people's minds with the THI as a heritage based initiative.

There appears to be no link between the improvements in townscape – as reflected in the best four performing schemes – and changes in awareness of the heritage more generally, or of the THI programme specifically, with the possible exception of the Merchant City, where decline in awareness of the THI seems to be less marked than that in the other schemes.

Theme 4: General quality of life

Besides being interested in the question of evidence of links any association between the THI (expressed through townscape change specifically) and changes in attitude to place in terms of its physical qualities and its heritage; we have also been interested in how it might be linked to people's more general sense of quality of life and of their location – town, village or neighbourhood. In order to get at this, we now look at the findings from the first question in the survey – which asks how they rate their community *as a place to live*, and question 18, which asks how they feel the place has changed over the preceding five years (see Tables 9 and 10 and Figure 3).

Again the analysis starts by considering the findings from these two questions in relation to the most improved four schemes with respect to townscape. What we find is that in terms of the first question, there seems to be some association between townscape improvement and people's general sense of the quality of where they live. In three of the top four schemes, there is a clear pattern of similarity between the direction and degree of change overall and within the phases of the research. For example, in the Rope Walks we see a 10% improvement in townscape from 2000 to 2006, and the same from 2006 to 2011; at the same time, we see a 9% improvement in the mean score for people's sense of quality of place at each of the two points. In both Creswell and the Merchant City, we see a similar correspondence in trends. However, there are one or two other schemes which register significant improvements in attitude under this question, but which do not show the same improvement in townscape quality. This simply indicates that townscape improvement cannot be used to explain improvement in sense of quality of place in these cases. Our understanding from the rest of the research we have carried out leads us to the conclusion that whilst not the only factor, townscape change helps to explain change in attitude to place where it is present. But, because none of the cases we have examined have performed equally badly in terms of townscape as our top cases, it is not possible to confirm this view by asking whether declining townscape quality is associated with declining sense of quality of place.

Finally, with regard to this question, it is evident that despite the economic recession, there has not been a general tendency for people to feel that where they live has got worse since 2006; even in locations, such as Middlesbrough, where this might have been expected.

Table 9. Theme 2, changes perception of place, question 1.

Theme 4: Quality of place	2000–2006	2000– 2006	2006–2011	2006– 2011	2000–2011	2000– 2011
Q1 as a place to live	Townscape score % change	Q 1% change	Townscape score % change	Q 1% change	Townscape score % change	Q 1% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	9.4	10.3	8.6	20.79	18
Creswell	12	10.8	5	6.6	17	17.4
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	10.6	3	0.8	13	11.4
Newport	2.49	-1	9.22	-3.6	11.71	-4.6
Newry	2.4	-1.6	8.32	3.6	10.7	2
Moneymore	8.1	-7.6	2.3	1.6	10.4	-6
West Wemyss	9	7.1	0.7	0	9.7	7.1
Middlesbrough	2	2.4	6	2.6	8	5
Colwyn Bay	1.08	17.4	5.55	-1.8	6.63	15.6
Burslem	6.81	4.4	-0.48	5.6	6.33	10
Pembroke Dock	5.7	2	0.6	-1	6.3	1
Bloxwich	5	5.4	0.5	4.4	5.5	9.8
Wigtown	4	7.4	0.2	-0.4	4.2	7
Bodmin	8.5	4.6	-4.5	-2	4.07	2.6
Cleator Moor	-1.1	-3	4.55	3.4	3.45	0.4
N. Pagnell	3.4	8.6	1.2	12.2	2.2	20.8
Draperstown	2.32	-1	-0.5	-3.6	1.82	-4.6

When we look at question 18 – which is concerned with people’s perceptions of trends in terms of quality of place – the evidence is more complex (see Figure 3). First, there is no clear association between the top four performing schemes and people’s sense of how places have improved over the previous period, except in the case of Creswell. In general terms, what we see is a sense of improvement looking backwards from 2006 – with one or two minor exceptions. Extrapolating from the mean scores for this question, we can infer a great deal of optimism (confirmed by the findings to other questions in the survey) in places such as Colwyn Bay, Newport Pagnell, West Wemyss and Bloxwich. Again we can reasonably confidently link these to the fact that the THI was about the only game in town in some cases (West Wemyss and Creswell), and must be seen as at least an important factor in explaining this positive view of the past. But what we also see is that from 2006 – looking back from the perspective of 2011 – in 12 of the 16 cases, things are seen to have got worse. In only one of those cases – Bodmin – has the appearance declined. In the case of the Rope Walks, there has actually been an improvement since 2006, bucking the trend revealed elsewhere; and perhaps reflecting the scale of physical and commercial regeneration in this part of Liverpool, combined with the change in the characteristics of those living in the area at this time. Our view is that these negative trends are likely to be the result of a more general condition of economic decline which has had consequences in terms of job prospects, incomes and other factors profoundly influencing people’s sense of how and where they have lived has changed.

Table 10. Theme 2, changes perception of place, question 18.

Theme 4: Quality of place	2000–2006	2000–2006	2006–2011	2006–2011	2000–2011	2000–2011
Q18 in general over the last five years	Townscape score% change	Q 18% change	Townscape score % change	Q 18% change	Townscape score% change	Q 18% change
Liverpool (Rope Walks)	10.49	-2.8	10.3	6.6	20.79	3.8
Creswell	12	27	5	0.6	17	27.6
Glasgow (Merchant City)	10	5	3	-6.2	13	-1.2
Newport	2.49	-0.4	9.22	-12.4	11.71	-12.8
Newry	2.4	1.4	8.32	-8.4	10.7	-7
Moneymore	8.1	0.6	2.3	-15.2	10.4	-14.6
West Wemyss	9	25.6	0.7	-36.4	9.7	-10.8
Middlesbrough	2	-3.2	6	2.4	8	-0.8
Colwyn Bay	1.08	30.6	5.55	-10.4	6.63	20.2
Burslem	6.81	3.6	-0.48	0.8	6.33	4.4
Pembroke Dock	5.7	0.4	0.6	-2.4	6.3	-2
Bloxwich	5	19.4	0.5	-3	5.5	16.4
Wigtown	4	2.6	0.2	-11.6	4.2	-9
Bodmin	8.5	-2.8	-4.5	-14.6	4.07	-17.4
Cleator Moor	-1.1	0	4.55	2	3.45	2
N. Pagnell	3.4	30.4	1.2	-7.2	2.2	23.2
Draperstown	2.32	-2.8	-0.5	-8	1.82	-10.8

Discussion

What emerges from the foregoing analysis is the challenge in generalising any clear link between improvement in the appearance of places, as a measure of investment in the heritage, and changes in attitude to place. In terms of our general question – is there an association for the best performing in terms of townscape, and a general improvement in attitude, we can probably say a qualified yes – at least for three of the four cases (see Figure 5). It is also clear that the top four cases are those where the most radical intervention – repairs, restoration, public realm works and large-scale in-fill – have occurred. We also seem to see a general trend in so far as changes in attitude can be mapped across time with phases of development: when investment is evident on the ground, and schemes have been recently completed, we see the most improvement; when schemes have been completed for some time, attitudes fall away.

In terms of our second general question, thinking about the four key themes, the picture is more complex and nuanced. For instance, in terms of the theme of appearance, we can reasonably confidently say that for the majority of schemes showing most townscape improvement we also see most positive changes in attitude. However, townscape improvement cannot be the only factor explaining improvement in attitude, given that a number of schemes where townscape has not improved significantly also show significant improvements in attitudes to appearance. In terms of our second theme – investment – there is no clear association between townscape change and people's sense that investment has occurred. Likewise in terms of awareness of the history: individual cases show some association, but there is no clear pattern. However, there is a clear trend in terms of awareness of the THI programme – in virtually all cases, awareness rises as projects are underway, and collapses once they are completed. Finally, with respect to

quality of life, there is weak association between peoples' attitudes to their community as a place to live and townscape improvement; however, when asked to look back, it seems that attitudes have become more negative. This sense of pessimism is confirmed by responses to other questions in the survey relating to such issues as job prospects and income. What we suspect is that attitudes to place – in very general terms – are conditioned or qualified by larger contextual conditions, such as the state of the economy, than by particular programmes of physical regeneration, including those linked to the heritage. There is nothing surprising in this, although the research does suggest that in times of relative prosperity and economic certainty, investment in the heritage has a measurable positive influence on public attitudes.

Conclusions

This paper has attempted to fill a gap in the research literature that deals with the specific issue of how investment in the heritage, at the townscape scale, may influence public attitudes to place – specifically the attitudes of those people living with the heritage district on a day-to-day basis. This is not an easy task since as Graham says, “heritage has multiple uses and interpretations which immensely complicate any assessment of its role. Dissonance is intrinsic and because it reflects on a people’s sense of themselves, not something to be taken lightly ...” (2002, p. 1006).

What we hope to have demonstrated is that despite the enormous challenge in understanding this relationship, we have at least demonstrated a causal link – albeit a complex one – between heritage investment and improved perception of place. In addition, we have shown that improvements in the townscape brought about by heritage investment, have a degree of resilience (i.e. they continue, to a large degree) even for years after the completion of a project; changes in attitude are more vulnerable to the influence of other factors. Of course, we will never know whether without the economic recession, people’s sense of the quality of their local environment would have remained positive; but it is clear from our research that a decline in perception has been coincident with the economic decline in most of the schemes examined.

The research has also filled a gap in the literature in the sense that it has, by and large, focused on ordinary townscapes, and to that degree addressed an implied concern expressed at the beginning of this paper by Pendlebury and Townshend (1997) and by the same authors in 1999 when they observed that “An impediment to greater sensitivity to the wishes and values of non-professionals is that our knowledge base of how non-professionals engage with historic areas, or concepts of conserving these, is still at an extremely basic level” (Townshend & Pendlebury, 1999, p. 329). However, it also shows that the contention that “historic townscapes are important to the everyday lives of ordinary people” (Pendlebury & Townshend, 1997, p. 20) needs to be heavily qualified. Such environments emerge as an influence on attitude, but are not necessarily seen as important in themselves.

The early part of this paper suggested that in the 1990s when the THI was conceived as a programme of heritage-led regeneration, regeneration theory – and to a degree practice – was focused on the idea of the creative city; and saw heritage as part of the cultural fabric or material that could attract investment. Perhaps only four of the cases we have reviewed – the Rope Walks, the Merchant City, Wigtown (Scotland’s officially designated booktown) and Burslem (as the centre of the potteries heritage) – meet the criteria as “creative” locations, with culture industries as an important part of their economic *raison d’être*. The remaining 13 do not fit comfortably into this category.

What the research has shown is that – certainly until the recession – even without culture as an economic foundation, ordinary townscapes could be improved and attitudes to them as places to live, made more positive, through investment in the heritage. Post 2008, it is very difficult to assess whether the absence of culture has helped or hindered the economic and social sustainability of historic built environments.

Notes

1. Question numbers are those used in the original questionnaire.
2. See p. 3, The theoretical context.

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