

## Arts and Humanities Research Council project for Hereford

The Arts and Humanities Research Council, (AHRC) have given funding to a research project covering 4 places including Hereford. Although it is not a project directly involving new primary research from the Victoria County History (VCH), one of the lead researchers is Professor Catherine Clarke who is Director of the VCH (among other roles). Hereford was chosen because it is an active VCH County with good local networks and knowledge and one of the reasons that the Herefordshire VCH agreed to assist the project is to raise the VCH profile in Herefordshire as well as showing that we are interested in the whole county and when funds permit, we wish to start research elsewhere in the County rather than just the area around Ledbury.

The *Towns and Cultural Economies of Recovery* initiative is a 9-month research scoping project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, led by researchers from the University of Southampton and the University of London. It aims to better understand how the creative, cultural and heritage sectors are involved in the broader and changing economies of towns - in the context of ongoing change to their landscapes, and post-COVID-19. The starting point for the project is the government's [100 Towns list](#) (which includes Hereford, despite its identity as a cathedral city) which have been selected to benefit from a Towns Fund for renewal and development.

Core project partners include Historic England and [NESTA's](#) Policy and Evidence Centre for the Creative Industries. The project is also working with researchers and professionals in the Social Sciences based at the Centre for Towns Think Tank. We have four case studies, through which we will explore these issues in depth, and intend to include as many voices from the communities as possible. The case studies are: Hereford, Bournemouth, Darlington and Southend.

We anticipate that the scoping project will identify new research agendas and opportunities, including:

- The role of the cultural, creative and heritage sectors in economies of regeneration and recovery
- Place-making in material, virtual and blended contexts
- The specific cultural needs, identities and differentiated characters of British towns and regions
- New approaches to sustainability, regeneration and growth

The research team would like to hear from people who are willing and interested in helping particularly those who have knowledge of Hereford. Whilst this project won't fund new research into Hereford, we hope that it will raise the profile of the VCH and has the potential to create or enhance links with business, cultural and local government leaders. At a national level, the project is really important in showing the relevance and potential application of VCH knowledge and networks, as well as local history more broadly. Your commitment to the project might include:

- writing a short blog for the project website (in consultation with the project team)
- attending an online creative workshop in July at which these issues will be discussed with representatives from Hereford's cultural, education, business and local government sectors
- creating a short introductory 'history of Hereford' presentation
- being part of a collective Hereford 'brain bank' – this might involve helping the researchers make links with arts, culture and heritage organisations of all sizes
- providing contacts for the Project team to follow up

Please see [www.AndTowns.co.uk](http://www.AndTowns.co.uk) and our Twitter [@AndTowns](#) for more information. If you are interested in finding out more about the project please initially contact Jonathan Comber at [Jonathan.Comber@easynet.co.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Comber@easynet.co.uk) who is acting as the link between the researchers and locals in Herefordshire who wish to assist. Please advise your areas of interest and expertise so that the research team can contact you when they have a query.

Incidentally, if you do look at the website, it is not a mistake that Hereford is described as a town. The project team are using the definitions used by <https://www.centrefortowns.org/our-towns> which limits cities to the 12 biggest (by population) in Great Britain.