

Foundation for
Jewish Heritage

Our Case for Support



Preserving the past, shaping the future



Sites of Jewish heritage are repositories of Jewish life, art and customs with many unique and beautifully constructed buildings displaying real architectural and artistic achievement.

For the Jewish people with traditions built on memory, such places give meaning to the Jewish present and future, strengthening awareness and identity. They are also testimony to the remarkable Jewish contribution to world civilization and with a powerful message for today in terms of democratic values, human dignity and respect.

However, it is a heritage that faces profound challenges as a result of the great upheavals experienced by the Jewish people in the 20th century - vast migrations and the tragedy of the Holocaust - which meant that many centuries-old historic sites became orphaned and, without a community of users, remain to this day in danger in many parts of the world.

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage is dedicated to working internationally on the preservation of Jewish heritage at risk.

We have involved a number of leading personalities as Trustees including Sir Simon Schama, Lord Daniel Finkelstein, Rt Hon Jim Murphy, Dame Helen Hyde and Simon Sebag Montefiore.

As Friends, we include Sir Anish Kapoor, Bernard-Henri Levy, Anne Applebaum, Daniel Libeskind, Edmund de Waal and Jimmy Wales. We also have 60+ members of an International Advisory Panel.

The Foundation views its role as essentially educational - using Jewish heritage sites to inform about the life and contribution of the Jewish community, building awareness, understanding and empathy, and combating ignorance, prejudice and antisemitism.

Our mantra 'preserving the past, shaping the future' reflects the driving idea that we want to have a profound impact on contemporary society.

**Visit our
website**



A message of support

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage is an astonishing organisation, uniquely dedicated to preserving Jewish built heritage in danger. It was a cause that I felt compelled to support and I have proudly been a Trustee since its launch nine years ago.

Jewish heritage is especially vulnerable because of the events that befell the Jewish people in the 20th century – mass migration, expulsions and the Holocaust.

The Foundation's focus is on the historic synagogues of Europe, and we conducted research to map the 3,347 historic synagogues that survived post 1945. Less than a quarter are today functioning synagogues; the majority are either used for other purposes in various states of repair, or are abandoned. Often, they are the last physical evidence of centuries of Jewish life.

Our mission is to preserve this legacy and turn the most significant synagogue sites in peril into profound places of education on the lost Jewish life. It is in many places now a forgotten story.

The Foundation is a small charity with a big mission. We urgently need funds to expand our work, and our impact. We are involved in a race against time to save Jewish history. I hope that you will join us and support this very special cause.

**Yours,
Sir Simon Schama CBE**



Highlights and Achievements

Since the launch of the Foundation, it has carried out the following work:

- ▶ mapping the historic synagogues of Europe, **creating an inventory of 3,300+ synagogue sites** - less than a quarter are today functioning synagogues
- ▶ advising and guiding priority synagogue preservation projects, which today include Merthyr Tydfil in Wales, Hija in Spain, Fagaras in Romania, Izmir in Turkey, Brighton in England, Hamburg in Germany, Orla in Poland and Korneuburg in Austria
- ▶ mapping the 368 Jewish heritage sites of Iraq and Syria, the oldest diaspora Jewish communities
- ▶ creating a network of Jewish heritage professionals across Europe called 'Moreshet', working with partners in Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland launched with European funding
- ▶ Launching American and Canadian Friends organisations
- ▶ addressing the preservation and promotion of 1,700 mainly orphaned Jewish cemeteries in seven countries in Eastern Europe – Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Moldova, Hungary, Georgia and Ukraine, as part of a European Union-funded project.
- ▶ securing recognition of the historic synagogues of Europe map by NATO to ensure these heritage sites will not be damaged in times of war
- ▶ convening an international conference on Jewish heritage in Krakow Poland as part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage
- ▶ producing a report on the current state of Jewish heritage in Europe for the Council of Europe subsequently passed by its General Assembly
- ▶ organising a high profile event presenting the Foundation's work to MPs in the Houses of Parliament.



Current Synagogue Preservation Projects

The Synagogues of Europe mapping initiative included rating each synagogue site according to its significance and condition. The Foundation was therefore able to identify a priority list of the most important sites most in danger. The following are examples of current projects that the Foundation is working on.

Merthyr Tydfil, Wales

The Victorian Grade II listed synagogue in Merthyr Tydfil is the leading Jewish heritage site in Wales. It ceased functioning as an active synagogue in 1983 and has lain empty and unused since 2006, its condition deteriorating.

The Foundation undertook a Feasibility Study testing the vision of restoring the building and transforming it into a Welsh Jewish Cultural Centre that will present the 250+ year history, culture and traditions of the Welsh Jewish community.

We then proceeded to purchase the synagogue in 2019 and this is now a £5+ million project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Welsh Government.

12 consultants are working on various aspects of the current Development Phase. A very successful Open Day was held attracting 500 participants including the Merthyr Tydfil Council Leader and local Member of Parliament.



Izmir, Turkey

There are nine astonishing historic Sephardi synagogues in the centre of Izmir in Turkey. The Foundation has been supporting efforts to preserve the oldest – the Etz Hayim synagogue dating back to the 14th century, working collaboratively with the now small local Jewish community and the Israeli-based Kiriatiy Foundation.

The Foundation helped to organise a Feasibility Study to assess the potential of these synagogues, and secured funding for specific work in the Etz Hayim synagogue to expose and preserve its ancient wall murals. There is a proposal to create a Jewish Cultural Quarter in Izmir with a Jewish Museum at its heart, and the Foundation is participating in discussions with its partners on this.



Orla, Poland

The Foundation has been working on the striking 17th century baroque Orla synagogue in Poland with the owners, the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODZ).

The building has been unused since World War II which witnessed the destruction of the Jewish community. The concept being pursued is to turn the synagogue into a base for arts education, following on from a previous successful week-long Arts Festival that the Foundation had co-sponsored.

However, the current urgent requirement being addressed by FODZ is to stabilise the building given its poor condition.

Brighton, England

The Foundation has been commissioned to undertake a Feasibility Study to come up with options for the future use of the stunning Grade II* Middle Street synagogue in Brighton, England. The synagogue was built in 1875 and is considered one of the most important heritage sites in the city. Services ended in the building in 2004 and it has been largely unused ever since.

The Foundation successfully raised the funding required from three leading heritage bodies - National Lottery Heritage Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund and the Pilgrim Trust - to conduct the Study which is currently underway.



Korneuburg, Austria

The Foundation has been supporting a campaign led by Klaus Kohler, a former Brigadier General in the Austrian army, to save the medieval former synagogue in Korneuburg outside Vienna, one of the oldest synagogue buildings in Europe.

The vision is to transform the site into a cultural and educational centre focused on the former Jewish life in the town. The building is currently in private hands and the Municipality is negotiating its purchase, which is the crucial next step in the process. There are two fascinating and ultimately tragic Korneuburg Jewish narratives; the first dating from the medieval period that witnessed the synagogue's creation, and the second from the modern period until 1939. Both epochs will be covered in the planned new centre.

Hijar, Spain

There are very few synagogues that survived following the expulsion of the Jewish community from Spain in 1492. The medieval synagogue in Hijar is one of them, and it contains unique wall murals from that period. The vision of Hijar's Mayor is to turn the synagogue into a Sephardi Heritage Centre and the Foundation is supporting this effort.

The Foundation was tasked by the Municipality to prepare a Masterplan which provides a roadmap for the project's future development. The Foundation is now working with the Municipality to take the initiative forward.



Făgăraș, Romania

The Municipality of Făgăraș in the Transylvania region of Romania has taken ownership of the abandoned synagogue in the town built in the mid-19th century – and uniquely featuring a bell tower without a bell!

In collaboration with local organisations, the Municipality is considering how the synagogue site could be developed to serve the needs of the local community and surrounding area, while also being a memorial and place of education on the life and contribution of the former Jewish community. Local activists are working with the Municipality, and the Foundation is providing advice and guidance, including linking the project with other heritage organisations within Romania and beyond. There is a plan to develop a network of professionals in southern Transylvania working on Jewish heritage preservation, and this would lead to the creation of a Jewish heritage trail for the region in due course.



Hamburg, Germany

The Foundation is a supporter of the campaign to preserve and repurpose the former Tempel synagogue in Poolstrasse in Hamburg. It was built in the 1840s and served a community that was one of the leading centres of the Reform Movement in Germany.

The Foundation proposed that a Feasibility Study be undertaken to explore the building's options, in consultation with local stakeholders.

The local Municipality purchased the site from the current owner, and has now funded this Study which is currently underway.

Venice, Italy

As a result of the support of Graham Edwards and Georgie Black, the Foundation secured funding to carry out urgently needed works at the sumptuous Spanish synagogue in Venice, which is one of the leading synagogues in the former ghetto area of the city.

Furnishings inside the synagogue had suffered significant deterioration, and the Foundation enabled urgent repairs to be carried out on door panels, furniture and an archive room.



Copyright: Jewish Community of Venice

Sandys Row, England

Sandys Row synagogue is the oldest surviving Ashkenazi synagogue in London. The historic Grade II listed Georgian building was acquired and adapted by a group of immigrant Dutch Jews in the mid-19th century.

The East End was to become the centre of the largest Jewish community in the UK with at one time over 50 synagogues. Jews progressively moved out of the East End and today Sandys Row is one of only two functioning synagogues that remain; a legacy of a once vibrant Jewish life that has become largely forgotten in the area.

While Sandys Row's membership has declined, the synagogue remains buoyant, benefiting from being close to the City of London, hosting a busy weekday lunchtime service for local workers.

The synagogue also receives increasing numbers of visitors including many school groups wanting to learn about the East End and its various immigrant communities.

We plan to launch a Feasibility Study to test the idea of Sandys Row synagogue incorporating a heritage centre, which would present the legacy of London's Jewish East End.



Moreshet

The Foundation is a founder of 'Moreshet', a network of professionals from across Europe working on Jewish heritage preservation which was initiated with funding from the European Union.

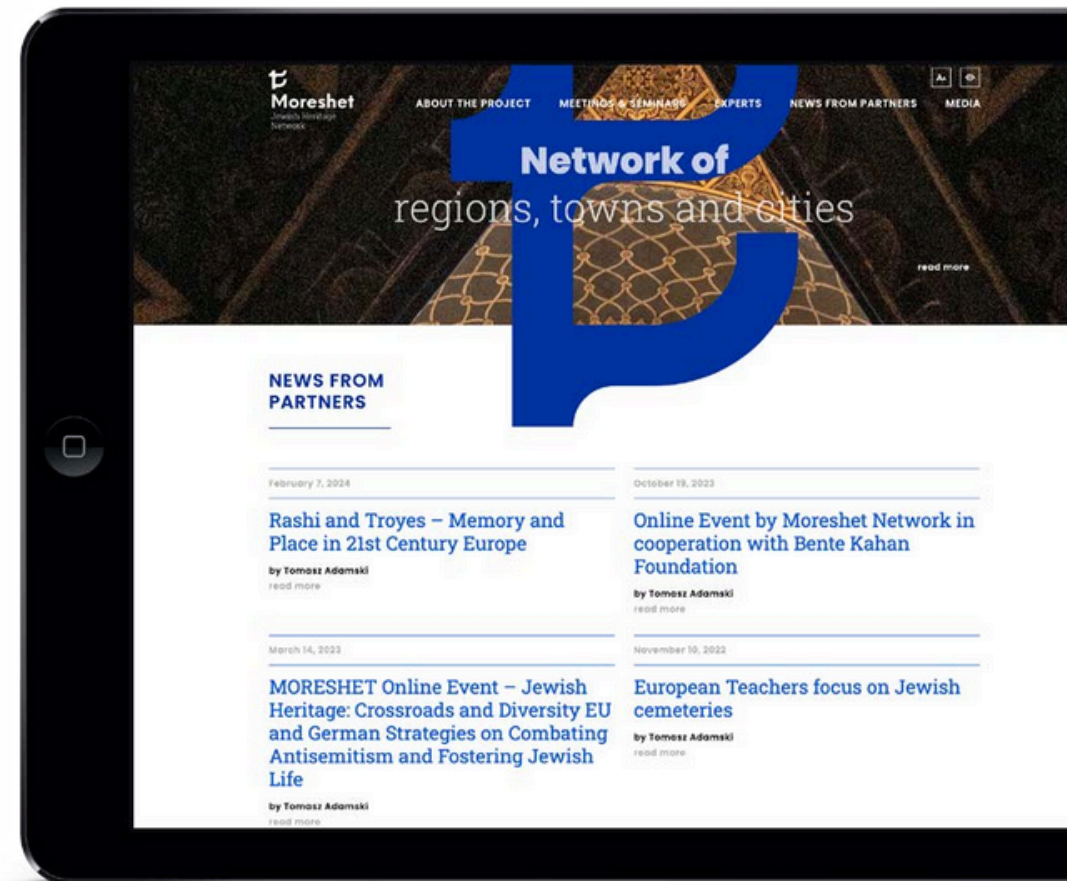
Moreshet

Embracing public bodies, local municipalities and heritage organisations, Moreshet supports professional development while also providing a forum for the sharing of ideas, best practice and the challenges of working in the sector.

The project is run by a consortium of partners from Poland, Spain, Italy and Germany which meets regularly to maintain and develop the programme.

It is currently a series of online webinars on various themes of interest to the Jewish heritage sector, and that includes presentations on the progress of specific heritage preservation projects throughout Europe.

[Visit
project
website](#)



Jewish Cemeteries in Europe

There are hundreds of abandoned Jewish cemeteries all across Europe, many of which are in a parlous condition.

Jewish Cemeteries in Europe

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage joined consortium partners ESJF and Centropa to work on a special project funded by the European Union to preserve and promote 1,700 Jewish cemeteries in seven countries in Eastern Europe – Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Moldova, Hungary, Georgia and Ukraine.

The Foundation organised with Centropa several teacher training events with Euroclio – the European history and citizenship educators association, as well as a conference for professionals from East European teacher training institutes.

A central idea was how Jewish cemeteries can serve as ‘outdoor classrooms’; important spaces for presenting the life of lost and often forgotten Jewish communities. In addition, the Foundation held webinars for the tourism industry promoting Jewish cemeteries as visitor destinations.

The Foundation also produced three ground-breaking research reports, displayed on this page.

- Jewish cemeteries as places of education
- Jewish cemeteries as visitor destinations
- Jewish cemeteries as locations for innovative cultural programming



Advocacy

The Foundation routinely meets with a range of European Union, governmental, heritage and civil society organisations to promote the cause of Jewish heritage preservation, and to mobilise support.

Advocacy

Working collaboratively is a key value for the Foundation, and this is reflected in all our assignments.

Our advocacy work includes taking up specific causes:

- The Foundation proposed to the EU the creation of an Awards Scheme to recognise volunteer Jewish heritage champions from across Europe and this is now being developed by the EU itself.
- We have been supporting London's Grade I listed Bevis Marks synagogue, the oldest functioning synagogue in the UK, in its campaign to stop an encroaching planning application, and this led to the creation of a conservation area around the building.
- Our work led to the formal recognition of the medieval Jewish community of King's Lynn on England's east coast with the placing of a plaque on a street that was once 'Jews Lane'.



How You Can Support Us

We are a charity, and we welcome discussions about how we can work together. There are a variety of ways you can show your support for our mission.

How You Can Support Us

Fundraising

As a charity, we rely on philanthropic giving to keep going - we actively fundraise from trusts, foundations and we have received donations from generous individuals who support and encourage the work we do.

There are two main ways that donations are used in the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, for:

- our day-to-day work, funding our general operations preserving Jewish heritage in danger
- specific Jewish heritage projects which are of importance to the donor



Volunteering

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage offers various volunteering opportunities - from helping us with our marketing and communications to participating in projects.

Sharing knowledge and expertise

We are involved in a number of Jewish heritage restoration projects in the UK and in Europe. We regularly participate in heritage conferences speaking about the work we do, and we collaborate with universities on research projects.

If you have knowledge and expertise in Jewish heritage, culture, heritage restoration, the running of charities or fundraising and would like to assist us, we are keen to hear from you.

If you would like to discuss getting involved with the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, please email: michaelmail@foundationforjewishheritage.com

Our People

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In Conclusion

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage is a unique organisation, involved in a race against time to preserve the most important Jewish heritage sites in danger, and to transform these sites into profound places of education on the Jewish experience.

We are saving history to make an impact today.





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e: michaelmail@foundationforjewishheritage.com

t: 07968 529609

www.foundationforjewishheritage.com

UK Charity Registration Number 1162111