



The role of Government and our Partners

Central Government has an important role to play in realising the potential of our heritage assets. By offering political leadership and pursuing policies which recognise their impact on the historic environment, the Government can make a significant positive contribution. As a funder, developer and owner of the nation's public buildings, public land, and other heritage assets, the Government can directly demonstrate good practice, and as a legislator it can seek to ensure that our system of heritage protection is effective, proportionate and fair.

But while central Government sets national policy, much of the system relies on local government. It is local government that has a crucial role in master planning, designing and maintaining local areas, buildings, parks, streetscapes and other public spaces. Through their local development frameworks, local authorities are responsible for producing a vision for their area which responds to local character and opportunities. The vast majority of planning applications and heritage consents are determined at a local level in accordance with the local development framework, and it is the local authorities and the National Parks and Broads Authorities who must ensure that the public benefits of our historic environment are fully realised through the decision-making process. It is here too that enforcement largely takes place.

But important as its role is, Government, whether central or local, cannot act alone. The full potential of the historic environment can only be realised if we work closely with our partners and the wider community throughout the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Central government funds English Heritage to be its expert adviser on the historic environment but English Heritage also provides information and advice to the public and supports local authorities in managing the heritage assets in their care through information, guidance, training and specific advice on planning applications relating to the most important listed buildings. Another significant resource for our heritage is embodied in the third sector heritage organisations which possess a wide range of highly specialised knowledge. Much of this expertise is offered on a voluntary basis through the heritage protection regime and other advisory roles and through skills training. The third sector can also play an active role in local place-making in other ways. For instance, building preservation trusts are often the catalyst for local regeneration projects that respond sensitively to community needs and can generate significant commercial investment.

Of course Government and its partners themselves own and open to the public a number of historic buildings ranging from major visitor attractions such as Stonehenge and the Tower of London to redundant churches. These are looked after by arms length bodies with particular expertise including English Heritage, Historic Royal Palaces and the Churches Conservation Trust. But a large proportion of the historic environment is actually in charitable or private ownership, and while there are some significant historic estates, many listed buildings and structures are modest in scale and owned by people of relatively limited means. It is important that Government continues to recognise the role that all owners play in caring for the nation's heritage.



Images:

Above. Bugsworth, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire
Photo: © The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust

Top. Kennet & Avon Canal
Photo: © The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust

Case Study Kennet & Avon Canal Restoration

The Kennet & Avon Canal forms a 140 km long waterway link between the River Thames at Reading and the city of Bristol. Opened in 1810, the canal was closed to through navigation in 1955. Over the next 30 years the canal was gradually restored by a partnership comprising British Waterways, the riparian local authorities, the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust and local businesses. Despite reopening in 1990, substantial work was still needed to secure the long term sustainability of the canal. The development and approval of a £25 million restoration project in 1996, supported mainly through the Heritage Lottery Fund with supplementary funding from existing partners, has helped to achieve this sustainability.

By 2005, the restored canal had generated an increase in visits of 22% compared with the 1995 baseline, with expenditure by these visitors increasing by 59% to £31 million per annum over the same period. The number of boats based on the canal grew by almost 40% to over 1,400. The restoration delivered an additional 385 recreation and tourism-related jobs in local economies along the canal, in addition to the 700 or so jobs that were safeguarded by the scheme. Between 1995 and 2005 around £400 million investment in waterside developments took place, particularly in the Reading area, creating around 2,700 jobs in canalside offices and retail developments. The restoration has also been welcomed by communities along the canal corridor. In interview surveys of local people, 91% said that they felt that the restored canal made their part of England special, with 55% visiting it more frequently since it was restored. Further information about the Kennet & Avon Canal and its restoration can be found on the websites of British Waterways (www.britishwaterways.co.uk/south-west/) and Kennet & Avon Canal Trust (www.katrust.org/).



Current and future context – Progress and Challenges

Images:

Top left. Willis Corroon Building, Ipswich, Suffolk
Photo: © English Heritage

Top right. Prehistoric standing stone and wind farm on St. Breock Down, Cornwall
Photo: © English Heritage

Bottom. Blencowe Hall, Penrith
Photo: James O. Davies
© English Heritage

Progress

The past decade has seen some excellent progress in the way Government and its partners value and manage the historic environment, and in public participation and support for heritage.

For many, heritage has become an increasingly popular leisure time activity. The Government's mass participation survey *Taking Part* has shown that around 70% of all adults make an active choice to visit historic places every year. Heritage Open Days attracts around 1 million visitors every September, making it England's biggest and most popular cultural event, and National Archaeology Week has become a two week festival of archaeology featuring over 600 activities. Membership of both English Heritage and the National Trust has never been higher at 687,000 and 3.6 million respectively, and the historic environment can also boast an exceptionally large and active voluntary sector. There are almost half a million historic environment volunteers giving over 58 million hours annually and over 850 civic societies and 300 Building Preservation Trusts.⁶

The public and private sectors alike have responded to this level of interest in our heritage. Since Government designated it as one of the lottery 'good causes' in 1994, the Heritage Lottery Fund has been able to support over 30,000 projects at a cost of £4.3 billion.⁷ Many of these have been led by community organisations across a wide range of heritage. Through its other agencies and bodies, Government has also made significant direct investment in the care and conservation of the nation's most important heritage assets, with local authorities taking the lead for those of local significance. As just one example, Defra has recognised the important link between landscapes and their associated historic rural features through its successful agri-environment schemes, including Environmental Stewardship, which is administered by Natural England and means that the rural historic environment benefits from the EU's Rural Development Programme. Since 2001 around £90 million from the RDPE has been invested in a wide range of rural conservation and refurbishment projects from protection of buried archaeological sites to the restoration of historic farm buildings. Furthermore, since 2002 the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund has provided around £30m for historic environment projects relevant to quarrying and marine dredging. This has included a significant contribution to archaeological research.

Charitable and private investment also continues to make an immense contribution, including support for heritage at risk. Heritage organisations benefitted from £225 million in private investment in 2008-9, which accounts for over half of all individual giving in the UK's cultural sector.⁸ And where Government through strategies like World Class Places has increasingly come to appreciate the importance of the historic environment to quality of place, many private investors and developers have drawn a similar conclusion. Most contemporary development takes place within a historic context, and rather than seeing this as a constraint on design creativity, a growing number of successful developments have made effective use of pre-existing and locally distinctive heritage assets to create more imaginative schemes and attract further investment. It was a creative private conversion of 349 19th century terraced houses in Salford for example that won the 2008 Housing Design Award, and a private, voluntary and public sector partnership that was responsible for the transformation of a disused

prison on the historic site of Oxford Castle into an award-winning, mixed-use scheme. As a major funder of archaeology, the commercial development sector has also contributed to important research into the often hidden remains of our rich past, and enhanced public education about it. Together, public and private investment has made an enormous contribution to an urban renaissance in our historic city centres. In cities like Bristol and Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle, imaginative investment has brought good urban design, great architecture and sensitive renovation together to breathe life back into our urban environments.

And more people are choosing to live in the heart of our older cities as a result. While neither Bristol nor Birmingham for example have seen any growth in their overall populations since 1991, their city centre populations have, in contrast, grown by 10% and 39%.⁹

⁶ Taking Part, DCMS, 2007

⁷ From Conservation to Communities, Heritage Lottery Fund, <http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/Fromconservationtocommunities.aspx>

⁸ Taking Part; Private Investment in Culture 2007/8, Arts and Business, 2009

⁹ World Class Places, p28



Image:

Above. Shoebury Garrison
Photo: © English Heritage

Case Study Shoebury

When Shoebury Garrison closed, it offered a major opportunity for regeneration in an area of deprivation as its assets included a significant number of listed buildings, a conservation area, a nature reserve and a magnificent coastal setting. However, many of its historic buildings and its sea defences had fallen into decay.

The barracks and buildings of Shoebury Garrison were developed from the 1850s and the site still played an important defensive role in both World Wars. The historic barracks were built in a horseshoe shape around a parade ground and are an excellent example of the efforts made to reform and improve barrack design during the 19th century.

Repair and re-use of the Garrison's historic buildings was a major element of a planning brief which, following public consultation was prepared jointly by the MoD and Southend Borough Council. The brief was the basis for the site's disposal in 2000 to Gladedale Homes and required a mixed development of housing, employment, leisure and community uses; a substantial public park, nature reserve and other open spaces; a heritage centre and cycle routes.

Outline planning permission was granted in 2002, and most of the historic buildings on the site have now undergone high quality refurbishment and been brought back into residential use. Sympathetic contemporary new housing by several architects, including Hawkins Brown, has also been built while the original openness of the parade ground and the Garrison's cricket pitch has been restored. The completed work has successfully created a mixed and highly distinctive neighbourhood, with the sensitive insertion of new development to complement the existing historic character of the site.

Challenges

Although much has been achieved in recent years, both in terms of public engagement with the historic environment and recognition of its significant contribution to quality of place, it would be true to say that challenges remain.

- **Loss and Decay of Heritage Assets.** The continuing prevalence of heritage at risk of decay or loss, whether in the form of buildings, monuments, sites or landscapes, is an ongoing cause of concern. We have had success in addressing this issue, with 48% of buildings on English Heritage's 1999 baseline buildings at risk register now secured for the future. However there is evidence to suggest that those which remain on the list are the most challenging to adapt for new use and will require substantial investment. Much hidden archaeology within landscapes and under the sea also remains at risk from intensive farming or fishing practices and from the effects of climate change.
- **Maximising the potential of the historic environment in new development.** The contribution of heritage to quality places is still challenged by some. In recent audits of new private sector housing, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) noted that too many new developments still missed opportunities to take advantage of existing heritage, with the result that they had a 'could be anywhere' quality about them.¹⁰ And while there is much evidence to show that working with locally distinctive heritage can create schemes that are popular and sell well, there are still some developments where the debate between maintaining existing buildings or creating new ones remains contentious.
- **Ensuring flexibility of the historic environment to meet new challenges.** New and emerging policy concerns also require fresh thinking. Housing pressure in the South East and demographic changes including an aging population will require built environments that are designed and managed to meet a variety of needs. There is an ongoing challenge in seeking to identify and care for our rich legacy of historic homes, schools, hospitals and other civic buildings in a manner which is compatible with contemporary living and the delivery of modern services. In seeking to meet this challenge it will be important to recognise the value of our heritage and try to identify sustainable, self-financing uses for it whilst acknowledging the community needs for a fit for purpose environment.
- **Training and skills.** Significant investment and partnership working supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Heritage Training Group, together with the relevant Sector Skills Councils is doing much to address shortages in some skills areas. However there is still much to be done to ensure a skilled workforce for the future of the historic environment, including encouraging diversity.
- **Climate Change.** Perhaps the biggest long-term challenge we face is that of climate change, with the Climate Change Committee suggesting that in order to meet our long term targets, we will need to virtually eliminate emissions from households and the Household Energy Management Strategy, published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change and Department for Communities and Local Government making it clear that the scale of the challenge will require action across the board. The historic environment can be part of the solution we seek, but too often it is still believed to be at the heart of the problem of energy consumption. The real relationship is a complex one, and more research is needed to explore how people operate within buildings, historic and otherwise, and to understand their actual energy performance. There is a need for more sophisticated tools for measuring energy use in traditional buildings and for assessing the true value of adaptive changes, and in some cases a need to create more suitable alternatives. At the same time we must consider how best to mitigate the impact of already occurring climate change on the historic environment. Often this will involve trying to find solutions that both mitigate and adapt to climate change that keep the integrity of the historic environment intact. There will be hard decisions to make in the future, for example in defining the point at which conservation is unfeasible in areas subject to coastal erosion, and in considering how best to ensure all homes and buildings across the UK play their part in cutting demand for energy and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Economic Downturn.** Current economic conditions offer both challenges and opportunities. A tight financial environment can affect the flow of funding and difficult conditions may mean that owners are less well placed to invest in the appropriate care and maintenance of their properties. But the need to restrict expenditure may also provide an incentive to consider adapting and improving what we have instead of assuming that a new build approach is the best option.

Our commitment

The Vision: That the value of the historic environment is recognised by all who have the power to shape it; that Government gives it proper recognition and that it is managed intelligently and in a way that fully realises its contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the nation.

As we have seen, progress has been made in achieving our vision, but challenges remain. This final chapter sets out the Government's strategy for building on past success in order to meet our shared goal.

As set out at the start of this statement, our analysis of the challenges and opportunities we face has led to six broad strategic aims that we have set ourselves for the future.

1. Strategic Leadership:

Ensure that relevant policy, guidance, and standards across Government emphasize our responsibility to manage England's heritage for present and future generations.

Committed and consistent leadership at all levels of Government is essential if we are to realise the full potential of the historic environment.

We are committed to raising the profile of our heritage. Government leadership on the historic environment must be stronger and more consistent at national, regional and local levels. Elected leaders and public sector decision makers do not always take the effect of their decision-making on the historic environment into account or appreciate its role in securing wider positive outcomes. Public sector performance regimes could do more to encourage investment in the historic environment.

To this end, we will encourage policy and decision makers at every level of Government to consider how the historic environment might assist them in meeting their aims and objectives, and to explore the benefits it can bring. We recognise the competing priorities that leaders face but we ask them to seek creative uses for their heritage assets and to take active steps to resolve any conflicts which arise between their responsibility to our heritage and other goals.

2. Protective Framework:

Ensure that all heritage assets are afforded an appropriate and effective level of protection, while allowing, where appropriate, for well managed and intelligent change.

The UK has one of the most effective heritage protection frameworks in the world, but there is a need to make it work more efficiently and transparently. Since the publication of "A Force for Our Future", the Government's 2001 statement on the historic environment, a consensus has grown that the protection and management of heritage assets can be carried out in a way that is clearer, simpler and more closely aligned with mainstream environmental management regimes such as planning.

In close partnership with English Heritage, the Government's process of Heritage Protection Reform (HPR) is modernising the way central and local government, English Heritage and other partners, most importantly owners, protect and conserve our historic environment. We have developed new ways of working together in order to manage heritage assets, and we are seeking to create greater clarity about what is seen as important and why, and more transparency in the decision-making process. Some elements of reform require primary legislation and we have prepared draft legislation which has been subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. Government remains committed to implementing the necessary legislation.

Our new draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) for the historic environment and its associated guidance, which will replace the current Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 15 and 16, will give greater clarity to all involved. We have published a Planning Circular to provide updated policy guidance on the level of protection and management required for World Heritage Sites. In addition the marine planning system introduced under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009) will clarify the Government's objectives for the future management of the marine environment, and direct decision-makers and users towards more efficient, and sustainable use of our marine resources, including the marine historic environment. The Marine Policy Statement will provide guidance to decision makers and we expect the Government's vision and key principles for the historic environment to be reflected in this document.

The Government is committed to implementing the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and wishes to embed ELC requirements further within UK policy and practice. A fundamental principle of the ELC is that an understanding of landscapes everywhere should help guide and frame spatial planning and land management

It is important that as we develop new policies, guidance and procedures they afford heritage assets an appropriate and effective level of protection.

3. Local Capacity:

Encourage structures, skills and systems at a local level which: promote an early understanding of heritage in the context of development; ensure that local decision makers have access to the expertise they need; and provide sufficiently skilled people to execute proposed changes sensitively and sympathetically.

Many of the decisions that affect the historic environment are made at a local level, and more could be done to ensure that local authorities have the structure, skills and systems in place to encourage an understanding of local heritage in the context of development and to make sure that local decision makers have the support they need. In particular, there is enormous advantage to all concerned in ensuring that changes affecting the historic environment are recognised and addressed early in the planning process. However in too many cases the impact on heritage assets is only considered at the last minute, when adjustments are more challenging and expensive to make. New planning policy will encourage early consideration of heritage, but local authorities need to implement structures which make this happen, the right systems and processes, and staff with appropriate skills who are fully integrated into the development management system.

Through *World Class Places* Government has said that we will work with English Heritage, CABE, the HCA and others to strengthen support for local authorities in place-making.

4. Public Involvement:

Promote opportunities to place people and communities at the centre of the designation and management of their local historic environment and to make use of heritage as a focus for learning and community identity at all levels.

Good stewardship of our heritage is a responsibility we all share. We all have a duty to hand on the cultural legacy we have inherited to future generations in good order and to ensure that it is better understood and valued.

In order to achieve this we want to provide the public with a much stronger sense of ownership in the historic environment. We believe this will help people to take an increased pride in their local area and will help us to achieve many other government aims in terms of strengthening local communities.

In order to make it easier for owners to understand the unique features of the heritage in their care English Heritage will update their databases of designated assets, making older entries more comprehensive and descriptive where appropriate and easier to use. This additional information will enable owners, advisors, and decision makers alike to manage the balance between protection and change. Supplementing and supporting this work will be the new Principles of Selection which will set out in detail the criteria we will use in making decisions regarding new designations, providing increased transparency for all involved.

At the same time we are working with English Heritage to review how best to focus its resources to increase public engagement with heritage protection through a more strategic approach to its research and designation activities.

5. Direct Ownership:

Ensure all heritage assets in public ownership meet appropriate standards of care and use while allowing, where appropriate, for well managed and intelligent change.

Government has a strong track record in looking after its own estate. The Government Historic Estates Unit (GHEU) at English Heritage is an invaluable source of advice and an important external check on the state of conservation and care, but as owners of a significant portfolio of heritage assets Government needs to send a clear message even in the current economic climate that our heritage remains a priority and that wise investment and early intervention will save costs over the longer term.

By adopting the GHEU's recently re-issued "Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate", Government should seek to set an example for other owners in meeting appropriate standards of care and use for its heritage assets.

In some cases this may require a careful balancing of priorities. We understand the need to ensure that our estate is fit for the purposes required of it, and recognise that well managed and intelligent change may be required. If a site cannot be adapted to fit its original or a new Government purpose, we will follow Government guidance on the disposal of heritage assets.

6. Sustainable Future:

Seek to promote the role of the historic environment within the Government's response to climate change and as part of its sustainable development agenda.

The Climate Change Act 2008 established the independent Committee on Climate Change and introduced legally binding carbon budgets. The Act commits the UK Government to achieving an 80% reduction on 1990 greenhouse gas emission levels by 2050. An interim target of a 34% cut by 2020 has also been agreed. The Act additionally provides a statutory framework to adapt to the impacts of climate change by introducing the requirement for a UK Climate Change Risk Assessment and statutory national programme for England. It set up the Adaptation Sub-Committee to the Committee on Climate Change and introduced an Adaptation reporting power, enabling Government to require public authorities to report on adaptation.

In setting the strategic framework for action, it is the role of Government to strike a balance between acknowledging our responsibility to the unique and finite resource that our heritage represents and the need to adapt to the changing world around us. Climate change presents its own challenges for the historic environment, both in terms of reducing carbon emissions and in adapting to changes in climate that are already taking place.

In both of these areas the Government intends to lead by example: each Government Department is required to produce an adaptation strategy and a plan for staying within the allocated 'Carbon Budget' for its estate and any share it has in the budgets for certain economic sectors. These include transport; homes and communities; business and the workplace; power and heavy industry; farming and land use; waste; and public sector estates and operations. Government will work with English Heritage and others in producing these plans.

Many managers of heritage assets are already informing our efforts and supporting environmental sustainability through their own research, by making appropriate adaptive changes and by encouraging the promotion of less carbon intensive forms of transport to specific sites, amongst other initiatives. Government, working with English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other partners will work to further understand the existing evidence base, promote approaches to emission reduction that are sensitive to the historic environment and develop adaptation responses which seek to ensure that the historic environment can adapt effectively.

Ultimately there is no doubt that climate change will be a key driver of future change, but the overall quality, diversity and distinctiveness of our historic environment needs to be recognised as it evolves and responds to new pressures.



Image:

Above. The Avon Wildlife Trust
Photo: © Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

Case Study

Folly Farm, Stowey, Somerset- Refurbishment and New Build Environmental Impact

The Avon Wildlife Trust has transformed an 18th century Somerset farm into a residential education centre in a way that makes it a leading example of sustainable development and conservation.

HLF awarded a grant of £2.5m to repair and convert the derelict farmhouse, barn and dairy buildings for visitor facilities as well as to restore the historic landscape. The finished centre offers a range of classroom and conference facilities.

In the repair and conversion of the existing farm buildings, reducing operational energy use has been balanced with a need to protect their historic interest. The thermal performance of the existing buildings has been improved by using sheepswool insulation in the roof spaces and under the flagstone floors. Low energy lighting and only essential electrical equipment has been installed. Heating is provided by a biomass boiler fired by wood pellets and solar hot water panels.

As a conservation project, many of the building materials which have been used – such as lime mortars – have naturally low embodied energy. The Trust has also sought to buy as locally as possible. The centre's two new "eco-buildings" – designed not to need conventional heating systems or artificial lighting during the day – have been constructed with commercially produced rammed earth blocks and sedum roofs. Naturally bound bio-paints were used for internal and external decorating. These paints allow buildings to breathe and were chosen as an experimental alternative to lime wash and commercial trade paints.

Image:

Top. PV panels at Dunster

Photo: © The National Trust

(Alan Watson)

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