

# State of the Art Statement: England

Kate Clark

Head, Historic Environment Management English Heritage

Note: in this paper 'conservation' means all the activities needed to manage the heritage (repair, access, interpretation, adaptive re-use, funding, maintenance etc) not simply repair. Historic environment means all aspects of the heritage (buildings, landscapes, buried remains etc whether urban or rural)

## 1. ORGANISATION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE UK

The organisation of cultural heritage in the UK is very complicated, with many different bodies and agencies responsible.

- **Government** – there are two major government bodies – the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions who have responsibility for heritage.

Each of the countries has separate **heritage agencies**. English Heritage (England), Historic Scotland (Scotland), CADW (Wales), and Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). There are also separate bodies for the Crown Dependencies (e.g. Jersey, Guernsey).

- **Local planning authorities** in each country are also responsible for heritage decision-making

There are many other organisations, including:

- **The National Trust** – which manages land and buildings and has an extensive membership and volunteer network
- The **Heritage Lottery Fund** who provide funding for major heritage projects
- **Professional organisations** – there are specialist professional organisations, such as the Institute of Field Archaeologists, the Institute for Historic Buildings Conservation, the UK Institute for Conservation as well as sections of other professional bodies (engineers, architects, surveyors)
- **Amenity Societies** – there are many voluntary societies with a special interest in conservation, such as the Victorian Society, the Georgian Society, the Ancient Monuments Society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Council for British Archaeology, the Twentieth Century Society and the Garden History Society.
- There are many special interest groups, such as the English Historic Towns Forum and the Civic Society.

There are many many bodies providing courses on aspects of the heritage.

- 21 bodies provide post-graduate courses in conservation, 8 bodies provide undergraduate courses and 10 bodies provide diploma courses. 25 bodies provide short courses.

## **2. Philosophy – Changing approaches to cultural heritage**

### **2.1 Power of Place**

In England a major review of cultural heritage has just taken place. The report is entitled 'Power of Place' and sets out a new agenda for the future of the cultural heritage in England. The key message is that the historic environment is an important asset which contributes to the quality of life. The document also reflects many other changes and issues in cultural heritage.

#### ***Historic Environment***

Traditional heritage has been seen as a series of discrete buildings, monuments or archaeological sites. Today we are becoming more interested in the concept of the historic environment. This includes the whole range of physical remains of the past – buildings, the spaces between them, landscapes, buried remains, coastlines, maritime sites etc. It is often difficult to separate the natural and historic environment – even in cities, where urban spaces may be ecological and historic, buildings may be both environment and structure.

#### ***Changing ideas of significance***

Traditional values for the heritage are being challenged. Most of the UK legislation and practice is based on ideas of national importance, and the values are largely architectural, aesthetic and archaeological. However, it is increasingly necessary to recognise plural values for the past. Thus sites may be locally important or regionally important. Sites may be important for community or spiritual reasons, because they are uncomfortable or part of memories. There are also conflicting values for sites. Different communities may value sites differently, as well.

#### ***Managing change, not stopping change***

There are about 406 sites in state care in England, but at least 13000 scheduled ancient monuments, nearly 500,000 listed buildings, and many other designated sites in private ownership. Most of those sites or buildings will be in some form of economic use.

The great emphasis now is on managing change rather than preventing it.

### **2.2 Trends in law and management**

#### ***Designation***

In England there are 3 main designations – listed buildings, scheduled monument and conservation areas (as well as the international World Heritage Sites). We are now interested in protecting a variety of other types of sites, such as battlefields, war memorials, designed landscapes, parks, gardens. Over the past few years we have greatly increased the range of sites protected, including a large number of industrial monuments, modern movement buildings, and buildings such as pubs and warehouses.

#### ***Regulation***

In England, there is separate legislation for listed buildings and conservation areas, as well as for ancient monuments. However, we make great use of the general planning system, and development control mechanisms to care for heritage assets. For example, for archaeology we are able to use the planning system to encourage protection of archaeological sites. The system of local plans can also be used to integrate heritage protection into other planning decisions.

#### ***Changing state/private sector roles***

In England state agencies are generally reducing the amount of work they undertake directly and increasing the amount of partnership. For example, repair work is done through grant-aid, not directly by the state. There are many architects,

archaeologists, conservators, planners and other heritage specialists in the private sector, who advise developers and businesses.

Also the developer of a site which contains a heritage asset (e.g. listed building, scheduled monument) is expected to respect that asset and to conserve it as part of the development. If parts of the asset may be lost, they are expected to fund the cost of archaeological excavation, for example.

### ***Shared responsibilities***

A major trend is that responsibility for the conservation of historic environment is extending beyond traditional heritage agencies. Thus organisations such as the Countryside Agency, English Nature, the agricultural sector, and regeneration agencies are beginning to recognise that their work will affect the historic environment, and thus they have responsibilities there. At the same time, funding is coming from new sources – the Heritage Lottery Fund is a major new source of support for the heritage. However, agri-environmental schemes and regeneration funding is also being used to support the historic environment.

## **3. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY**

In England, as anywhere else, there are still critics who see the care of the historic environment as being a brake on prosperity, something which prevents progress and is backward looking. However, in recent years we have begun to collect information about the value of the historic environment to the economy.

### **3.1 FMD**

Unfortunately it has taken the recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease to demonstrate, very conclusively, the importance of the historic environment to the economy. Rural businesses depend very heavily on tourism and leisure in the countryside, much of which in turn depends upon historic places (such as towns and villages), visitor attractions etc. The latest figure suggests that the outbreak has cost the economy at least 5bn, not through profits in farming but through the impact on businesses many of which are based on tourism.

### **3.2 Regeneration - The Heritage Dividend**

English Heritage and the HLF support the conservation of buildings and historic areas through Conservation Area Partnership, and more recently Townscape Heritage Initiatives and Historic Environment Regeneration Schemes. This has enabled us to see the benefits of conservation in regenerating run down city centres and towns.

English Heritage recently commissioned some research which has demonstrated the economic value of such work. The Heritage dividend showed that for every £10,000 of English Heritage investment, we generated £48,000 match funding from private and public sector sources, which together delivered 177 square metres of improved floorspace, 1 new job, 1 safeguarded job and one improved home.

We have been working hard to influence the urban regeneration bodies to ensure that regeneration and conservation are part of the same process.

### **3.3 Valuing our environment – the National Trust work**

The National Trust have recently undertaken research in the north east and in the south west to look at the value of their work in conserving landscapes and sites. Again, the figures show that their work is of huge benefit in creating jobs (over 15,500 are linked to the work of the NT), spending money locally, and attracting tourists who create a £4.6 bn annual tourism industry in the south west.

### **3.4 Property Market**

We have also undertaken research into the performance of historic buildings, and found that they perform as well as or better than non-historic buildings in the property market. There is no doubt that well-conserved public realm contributes to the values of properties in town centres.

### **3.5 The construction industry**

The construction industry in the UK is worth £56 billion pounds per annum. Over half of that work is on the maintenance and repair of existing buildings. Many of these may not be historic, but it demonstrates how important the care of existing buildings is to the national economy.

## **4. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **4.1 Mori Poll**

As part of the work associated with Power of Place, MORI were commissioned to undertake a survey of public attitudes to the historic environment. The results were surprising.

98% of people think that schoolchildren should have an opportunity to find out about the heritage

88% think that it is important for boosting jobs and the economy

87% think that it is right that there should be public funding to preserve it

85% think it is important in regenerating towns

77% disagree that we preserve too much

95% of 16-24 year olds think that the best of post war buildings should be preserved

Of course there is no room for complacency. Many groups felt that the heritage was nothing to do with them, and that it was elitist. This was particularly strong amongst groups with Asian or Caribbean ancestry.

### **4.2 Popularisation of Heritage**

Recent television programmes – such as Time Team, Meet the Ancestors, House Detectives have generated a huge degree of popular interest in archaeology and in the heritage, especially amongst younger people.

### **4.3 Education**

In England there is a strong tradition of heritage education, through the work of the Council for British Archaeology, the Young Archaeologists Club, and now through the education services of English Heritage. The HLF is also funding many new educational initiatives.

This work has widened the role of heritage in education – it is now used to teach mathematics, geography and citizenship. There are training programmes for teachers and a huge range of heritage educational resources which encourage schools not just to visit monuments, but to look at heritage around them.

### **4.4 Voluntary sector and participation**

England has a particularly strong voluntary sector – from the National Amenity Societies who comment on statutory applications, through the many civic societies, the voluntary groups in the National Trust and the very many local societies.

## **5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **5.1 Not just an energy problem!**

Sustainable development is now a fact of life. We are – or should be – concerned about the impact that modern life makes on natural resources – energy, air quality, water, ecology, the countryside.

Increasingly the historic environment is also seen to be part of this process. Like air quality or biodiversity, the historic environment can contribute to the quality of life. Historic places are nice places to live; they have memories and are important to us. They generate jobs and economic benefits, they are aesthetically pleasing and comfortable. Old buildings also conserve resources – many are well built and perform well in energy conservation terms.

### **5.2 Adopting the approaches of the environmental sector**

The conservation of the historic environment and the natural environment are moving more closely together. We now talk about environments, not individual places. We recognise that we must work with development not against it. We try to manage change, not to stop it.

### **5.3 Threats to the historic environment**

Like the natural world, we are also becoming much more aware of the threats to the environment. We have realised that it is important to understand what is happening to the historic environment if we are to manage it properly. We need to know whether we are losing sites and if so why. We need to know what factors most damage the historic environment. The historic environment is a long way behind the natural environment in this field, but we are beginning to gather data. In England we have several initiatives:

#### ***MARS***

The monuments at Risk Survey studied ancient monuments and what was happening to them. It showed that 1 monument per day had been lost since the war.

#### ***BARS***

We have recently undertaken a Buildings at Risk Survey to look at ways in which we can target resources to the most vulnerable buildings

#### ***SHE***

We are beginning to explore the need for a State of the Historic Environment report. This will develop indicators for the historic environment which will help us to monitor what is happening in a more strategic fashion.

## **6. CONSERVATION PLANS**

One way in which many of the trends set out above are being incorporated into practice is through the use of conservation planning.

In Canada, US, Australia and UK increasing use is being made of Conservation Plans and the conservation planning process. This is a powerful tool for understanding the significance of sites, and using that as a basis for management.

The approach has many advantages

- Ensures a holistic approach to the historic environment
- integrates different types of heritage
- puts significance at the centre of the process
- recognises different types of cultural significance

- can be used to reconcile conflict
- depends upon understanding
- is a powerful and flexible tool for managing sites.
- Can be used to manage change
- Helpful when working with the private sector
- Encourages participation

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides a rapid overview of many complex issues. The important messages are that in managing the historic environment, we are moving in the following directions

- towards holistic integrated heritage management, not separate boxes
- towards proactive, positive management, not negative management
- towards seeing the historic environment as part of the wider environmental issue, whether in towns or in the countryside
- beginning to encourage other sectors – agriculture, planning regeneration, to see the historic environment as part of their responsibility

Our ultimate aim must be to see the care for the historic environment – the cultural heritage of us all – as a central responsibility in Europe, not a minor interest.

### ***Further Reading***

Available from English Heritage:

*Power of Place – the future of the historic environment*

*The Heritage Dividend – Measuring the results of English Heritage Regeneration*

Available from the National Trust

*Valuing Our Environment*

### ***Useful Websites***

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

[www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk)

[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

[www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk)

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

[www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com)

[www.european-heritage.net](http://www.european-heritage.net)

### **TABLE SHOWING BROAD TRENDS IN CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**

This table summarises some trends. The new concepts are added to the older concepts. They do not replace them.

	FROM	TO
<b>Definition of Heritage</b>	Monuments	Landscapes
	Buildings	Urban Areas
	Sites	Historic Environment/Cultural heritage
<b>Role of Heritage in Society</b>	National Unity	Respect for cultural diversity
	Generate revenue from visitors	Wider Economic benefits Social Benefits
<b>Decisions</b>	State	Region/locality
	Authoritarian	Democratisation Participation
<b>Professionals</b>	Experts	Facilitators
	Single discipline (e.g. buildings, archaeology)	Multi-skilled professionals
	Historical knowledge	Management Skills
<b>Significance</b>	Old	Industrial heritage Post-war buildings
	Aesthetic	Commemorative value
	National importance	Local Distinctiveness
	Mono-cultural	Values of different cultures
	Narrow range of values	Wide range of values
<b>Interpretation</b>	Expert led	Community led
<b>Responsibilities</b>	State led	Communities The Market/Private sector
	Heritage sector	Environmental sector
<b>Management Practices</b>	Designation	Characterisation
	Separate conservation	Integrated conservation
	Site based	More strategic
	Technical research	Philosophical research