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## PRESS RELEASE

### **MPS BACK TARGETED VAT CUTS ON LISTED BUILDINGS AND PRESUMPTION AGAINST DEMOLITION**

Targeted cuts in the VAT rate on listed building refurbishments and a presumption against demolition of existing properties are amongst the recommendations of a cross party Parliament heritage group's first report.

'[The Value of Heritage](#)' report, launched last Thursday at the House of Commons, is the result of a year-long inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Conservation, Places and People.

The APPG, which is chaired by James Grundy MP (Conservative), is supported by the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

Evidence presented to the inquiry demonstrates the economic, environmental and social value that heritage delivers.

The inquiry found that businesses, particularly those in the creative sectors, are often drawn to the distinctive character of historic buildings and neighbourhoods. They are also attracted by the cheap rents and flexible floorspaces offered by heritage buildings, like historic factories and warehouses.

The new uses businesses have found for redundant, historic factories and offices has often spurred the regeneration of peripheral former commercial and industrial, inner-city areas, like in Liverpool's Baltic Triangle.

Supporting efforts to refurbish historic buildings would also provide a valuable fillip at a time of grave uncertainty in the construction industry, for the smaller firms that tend to focus on this kind of work, the report found.

The inquiry also heard that encouraging the reuse and retrofit of heritage will help to avoid the release of the embodied carbon tied up in the materials that make up existing buildings.

In addition, the APPG heard extensive evidence about how heritage can help to provide the glue which binds communities together and helps to foster stronger local identity.

The report's specific recommendations are:

**1. Exploit the UK's new freedoms over VAT post-Brexit to introduce targeted cuts in the rate for retrofit works in listed buildings, including improved insulation and installation of low carbon heating.** This would stimulate work in the repairs and maintenance sector of the construction industry, providing a valuable boost to this sector at a time when the wider economy is entering a recession. This move would also assist the UK's efforts to cut its carbon emissions from a particularly hard to remediate section of the building stock.

**2. Establish a presumption against demolition and redevelopment in order to encourage the reuse of historic buildings.** Evidence submitted to the inquiry shows that so called embodied emissions, resulting from demolition and construction, are often under-estimated when assessing the carbon footprint of buildings and often outweigh the lower operational emissions, such as from heating and lighting.

**3. Introduce an energy efficiency amnesty for upgrading some of the UK's most significant historic buildings to meet the net zero goal in 2050.** Some of our very oldest buildings will require extremely expensive works, which may result in unsympathetic changes, in order to comply with modern energy efficiency standards. Given the huge financial and logistical challenges that the UK faces achieving net zero by 2050, exempting the most significant and historic buildings from this wider requirement will avoid potentially damaging and expensive works to highly prized landmarks with little impact on broader decarbonisation ambitions.

**4. Continue welcome recent targeted funding for improvement to the historic environment.** Funding streams, like the latest round of the Levelling Up Fund confirmed in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement, should capitalise on heritage assets to create a stronger sense of place that bolsters local pride.

**5. Provide local and combined authorities with greater control over levelling up and regeneration funding.** Local authorities have a stronger understanding than distant Whitehall ever will of what is significant in terms of their areas' heritage so are best placed to make decisions about how funding is directed.

James Grundy, chair of the APPG on Conservation, Places and People, said: "As the proud MP for Leigh in the north-west of England, I see at first-hand how some of our most precious heritage is often on the edge of disappearing for good.

“This inaugural report by the APPG on Conservation, Places and People demonstrates the value that heritage delivers to the economy, environment, regeneration and society.

“It shows ways in which, rather than forming a barrier to economic growth, heritage can be a powerful tool for regenerating left behind areas.”

Responding to the publication of the ‘*The Value of Heritage*’ report, David McDonald, chair of the IHBC, said: “I am delighted to welcome this report of the APPG's first Inquiry into the Value of Heritage. Two of its recommendations stand out for me.

“First, establishing a presumption against demolition and redevelopment in order to encourage the re-use of historic buildings. Many of us have been saying this for a number of years, and it is such an obvious message in terms of climate change and sustainability. Second, harmonising the VAT rate between new construction and refurbishment. This would be a great incentive to building owners to improve the energy efficiency of their properties and could be a real stimulus to the economy in these difficult times.”

The Conservation, Places and People APPG has been established to champion efforts to use the conservation and regeneration of the historic environment to help deliver thriving and sustainable communities.

For any questions, please contact David Blackman at the Conservation, Places and People APPG's secretariat on email at [contact@appg.info](mailto:contact@appg.info) or by phone on 07748 165862/0208 245 7687.

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**All-Party Parliamentary Group on CONSERVATION, PLACES & PEOPLE**

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