

SOUTH EAST HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT FORUM

MINUTES

**Wednesday 26th May 2010, 10.30am, English Heritage
Office, Guildford**

Present: Lyndsay Riddell (English Heritage)
Andy Brown (English Heritage)
Judith Martin (Association of Preservation Trusts)
Lord Carnarvon (Historic Houses Association)
Jo Barnes (Natural England)
Nikki Smart (Government Office South East)
Duncan Coe (ALGAO)
Peter Mills (IHBC South East)
Tony Hurrell (Association of Gardens Trusts)
Wendy Parry (MLA)
Alison Davidson (IHBC South)

Apologies: Patrick Begg (National Trust)
Edward Dawson (CPRE)
Cath Rose (South East Partnership Board)
Stuart McLeod (Heritage Lottery Fund)
Edward Dawson (Campaign to Protect Rural England)
Richard Clarke (Protected Landscapes South East)
James Cooper (Historic Houses Association)

1. The Planning Policy Statement for the Historic Environment

Andy Brown gave a presentation to the group summarising the key elements of the new Planning Policy Statement 5 for the Historic Environment. A copy of the PowerPoint slides from this presentation is attached to these minutes.

During the course of the presentation clarification and discussion arose on some issues:

- The relative weight that local listing now carries was welcomed though some people felt confusion existed over whether being on the Historic Environment Record was the same as being locally listed.
- It was noted that the General Permitted Development Order encourages micro-generation on domestic dwellings and that Article 4 Directions may be required in conservation areas to control this. It was noted that the Prince's Regeneration Trust has recently published a book called 'The Green Guide for Historic Buildings' on improving the environmental performance of listed and historic buildings. It is available at <http://www.princes-regeneration.org/publications.php>

- It was stressed that the single most important point regarding the PPS and climate change is that you should not end up having to choose between the sustainability agenda and the heritage asset if you plan properly and in advance for any necessary changes. In addition you should always be able to make the case that keeping an asset in use reduces the consumption of building materials and energy and reduces waste.
- It was generally believed/hoped that even if regional planning as it currently exists is abolished, something at a higher level than the LPA will be required as infrastructure issues are cross-boundary.
- The making of Article 4 Directions has been simplified – there are no longer Article 4(1) and 4(2) and simply one Article 4 Direction. Further information is on CLG website.
- Given that the PPS is based almost entirely on assessing significance it should be recognised how difficult this is to do with the current list descriptions most areas still work with. English Heritage is hoping to undertake projects to revise list descriptions in the future and is seeking feedback on the improvements required for prioritising action on this.
- There was a general feeling that the PPS places more responsibility onto LPAs for decision making and there are concerns on how decisions can be defended as an assessment of significance is so subjective. Case law that comes forward in the next few months will do a lot to clarify this.
- The ‘neutral’ effect was discussed – policy HE9.5. Andy advised that he does not believe doing no harm is now acceptable as LPAs are encouraged to seek enhancement if replacing a structure. Those representatives of LPAs felt this would possibly lead to a higher number of appeal cases in the future – again it will start to be determined by forthcoming case law.

English Heritage training and guidance on the new PPS:

Regional team members are available to provide training on the PPS. EH advisers are attending COGs meetings and we are willing to visit individual LPAs to present to groups of planners, conservation officers and other staff or members as deemed necessary. **IHBC and ALGAO representatives are requested to pass on this message through their networks. Requests should be made via Lyndsay Hughes and we will do all we can to set these up.**

In addition, EH is aware that insufficient HELM training was made available in the region when the PPS was launched and at least one additional seminar has been organised for 20th July 2010. Initial information is on www.helm.org.uk with full details to follow. The event will primarily be for those on the waiting list with some additional space for new registrations.

2. Heritage Counts 2010

Lyndsay outlined briefly the structure of Heritage Counts 2010 in a brief paper, attached to these minutes. It was noted and agreed.

3. Historic Environment Strategy

Andy outlined the thinking behind the paper he circulated on working towards a regional Historic Environment Strategy - attached to these minutes. The following comments and points of discussion were noted:

- A review of SE HEF membership would be required if the proposal went ahead in order to ensure the strategy were truly representative.
- Meeting frequency and full commitment of all members would also be required if it were to succeed.

- Duncan reported that West Berks had been creating a Historic Environment Action Plan locally via the West Berks HEF, which has been a very positive process thus far. Bucks and Isle of Wight have done similar exercises. Duncan therefore felt a regional strategy would be very useful in giving a nested approach at different geographical scales. He did report, however, that ALGAO SE responses were less positive in general, as there is a feeling of fatigue with strategies and doubts over the possibility of really pulling together the strategy to become something meaningful.
- Attendees also questioned what a regional strategy would actually deliver. Andy responded that the intention would be to give hooks for spatial plans and investment plans to link to the strategy and therefore be the means of delivery. The audience would be whatever the successor to the IRS is and the LDFs at local level – core strategies etc.
- How the strategy would be structured was also discussed – perhaps around themes, such as distinctiveness of sub-regional areas of the region, areas that can benefit from heritage-led regeneration etc. It was noted, however, that the SE is a very large and diverse region so a substantial evidence base would be required. At the same time the document needs to be tight and distinct to attract attention and be truly useful.
- Natural England was very positive about the idea of a regional strategy in order to help make funding decisions. MLA also endorsed the approach of a regional strategic overview that the entire sector endorses.
- Caution was expressed on creating a regional document at a time when regional structures are being suspended by the new government, although the general view was that some overarching regional structures (even if not known as regions) will need to exist to contextualise local work.
- AB expressed his desire for any strategy to cut across silos and to embrace the full spectrum of the historic environment, including museums, artefacts, landscapes etc.
- Concerns were expressed about regional documents that have not always embraced the full region. Many tend to focus on specific themes and areas and some places, generally regarded as ‘doing alright’, ‘wealthy’, AONBs and landscapes etc are not really included in such documents – these too need to be included so it is truly representative. Housing and development pressures faced might be one theme under which such areas could be better incorporated.
- A strategy directly aimed at inviting a consistency of approach to the historic environment in LDFs would be welcome.
- The life of the strategy would probably be around 5 years and it was felt it would have to be done soon in order to be proactive and relevant.
- By email, Richard Clarke and Stuart McLeod expressed welcome to the proposal in general. Cath Rose and Richard Clarke did express caution about the future of regional structures, funding and relevance of anything at the regional level given the new government’s localism agenda.

In summary, it was noted that the SE HEF is interested in and keen to work up this proposal further. At that stage it could then be consulted on more widely with the representative’s constituents to gain wider commitment to proceeding with the project. The more detailed proposal will need to firmly state the benefits to local authorities and other partners of participating in the project.

5. News and Updates

ALGAO – awaiting detailed plans on local government from the Coalition Government, including levels of cut LPAs will face. General feeling the teams in the

SE region are already reduced as far as conceivably possible before drops in service become evident.

AGT – hoping to work with LPAs on local listing projects and feed their research into HERs – PPS5 provides new hooks for this. Also reported that a new national database on historic parks and gardens (more than just those registered ones) now exists at www.parksandgardens.ac.uk

MLA – required to make 3% in year cuts by the new Government. Their major priority is to secure the future of ‘Renaissance’ after this financial year when it is currently due to end. Also working on the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area and plans for cultural provision there.

Natural England – have a capital budget freeze now in place, however the Higher Level Stewardship budget and Building Restoration Fund are not affected. Special Projects funding is likely to be the most affected and is officially ‘under review’. It was noted that across Europe there is a pull towards not including historic environment in HLS and Natural England is working to show the really demonstrable benefits it has been able to deliver in order to secure continuation of funding in the future.

HLF – Andy reported for Stuart that the proportion of funding to HLF from the lottery is to increase but that they too face tough times ahead in ensuring their administration costs to not exceed 5%.

National Trust – regional re-structuring is underway and a new South East region will be created that merges the existing Thames and Solent region with the existing SE region – it is effectively both London and SE government office regions. The NT is also centralising their expert teams to Swindon to act as a consultancy to local properties that wish to excel and develop their offer.

IHBC – a new corporate plan for the next 5 years is being produced currently.

English Heritage:

- EH website has been revamped – see www.english-heritage.org.uk and note the new sections for public and professional audiences. New south east regional pages at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/working-locally/south-east/>
- EH is very keen to offer support to new Champions – Lyndsay will be following up on this later in the summer but if you wish to get in touch to make requests of us for this please do so.
- A summary of activity by Heritage Skills Network was circulated and is attached to these minutes.
- The National Heritage Protection Plan is under pre-consultation in June – please see <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/designation/national-heritage-protection-plan/>
- EH too has to accommodate 3% in year cuts and this will be partly met by an immediate recruitment freeze on all posts outside of visitors operations.
- HELM lists all the current training available and new publications since our late meeting can be downloaded at <http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/category.19703>
- Forthcoming EH guidance includes ‘Transfer of Local Authority Heritage Assets’ (July 2010), ‘Constructive Conservation in Conservation Areas – Transforming Local Places’ (November 2010), ‘Stopping the Rot’ updated guidance (November 2010) and ‘Local Designation’ guidance (late 2010).
- Forthcoming events to note include: the IHBC School takes place in London this summer, Baroness Andrews will speak at this; Heritage Open Days are 9-12th September this year; National Heritage Champions Conference 15th November in London.

Date of next meeting: Lyndsay to advise ASAP on next formal meeting, likely to be late summer 2010, venue TBC (with option to host at Highclere if dates allow)