



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

Contents

Future events

IHBC AGM 2026, online – 7th January 2026, 17:00

Christmas Get Together – 9th January 2026, The Sussex Arms, Tunbridge Wells, 19:00

Christmas Walk – 10th January 2026, meet at The Philanthropist Café, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 5TN, 10:30 for 11:00 start

2026 AGM, Concrete and Candyfloss: Seaside Structures of the 20th Century, De La Warr Pavilion – 13th March 2026

Recent events

Most Recent IHBC SE Branch Meeting, online – 12th November 2025

Striking the right Balance: Fire Protection in the Historic Environment, Tunbridge Wells – 19th September 2025, 9:30-15:30

Protecting our Heritage: Enforcement Policy and Practice, Maidstone – 14th November 2025

Heritage Skills in Conservation, House of Commons – 18th November 2025

IHBC London Branch Christmas Drinks, The Jack Horner, 234-236 Tottenham Court Road – 9th December, 18:00-21:00

Word from our chair

Season's greetings to all IHBC members.

Well I can't quite believe that I have been your Chair for five years now, the time has simply flown by. I still enjoy it as much as ever, though I find chairing our AGM's distinctly less terrifying than our first in Hastings! I feel very lucky to be the Chair, with such a vibrant supportive committee too.



The South East Branch has had another cracking year organising various events including Reigate on Stone, Fire protection in Tunbridge Wells and the latest on Enforcement in Maidstone, which was particularly very well attended by Local Authorities! We hope to team up with the London Branch to offer this one again as it was so popular.

Within the IHBC we continue the good work at the forefront of empowering the heritage sector as a force to be reckoned with in the 21st century, keeping our buildings and reusing them is key to climate adaptation for the future, so I am pleased that heritage and climate adaptation remain a key focus. *Context 185* included an article on successful solar generation in historic settings which has been a worry for some I know. It seems solar panels are now more accepted as long as they don't obliterate significance or principal elevations.

With regard solidifying our voice as well, great news that the Privy Council has approved the IHBC to proceed to the next stage of its Royal Charter application, a significant step towards finally achieving formal recognition of conservation as a distinct professional discipline.

I'd like to end by saying the usual thank you to my lovely Committee Members who do so much helping organise and attending events, and to all branch IHBC members keep on coming to events and get in touch if you want to become more involved or have something you'd like to be passed on to head office.

Hope to see you next year!

Heritage Skills in Conservation, An Independent Sector Survey

On the 18th of November this year, the IHBC launched its new 'Five Commitments to Help Heritage Skills in Conservation' in Westminster, as a response to the recently commissioned 'Heritage Skills in Conservation' survey. This research, which follows the previous IHBC-led report 'The Value of Heritage: First Report of the APPG on Conservation, Places and People' considers the gaps and skills shortages across the heritage sector.



Scan the QR code to access the report.



Linsey Farnsworth, MP for Amber Valley



Clara Arokiasamy, President ICOMOS-UK

As the report discusses, although the percentage of architects and surveyors accredited to work with historic buildings (2.2%) does fit proportionately to the number of listed buildings in the UK (2% of the building stock), this does not take account of the fact that a quarter of all buildings in Britain are constructed with traditional materials and techniques - the skills and knowledge available within the sector are therefore not adequate to deal with the number of traditionally constructed buildings.

The shortfall of conservation skills and knowledge is proving an issue not only in terms of supply and demand, but is leading to wasted investment through uninformed ventures, such as the Great British Insulation Scheme (2022-2025). Though this investment was well-meaning, due to the lack of knowledge in how to appropriately implement insulation, 98% of homes that had external wall insulation installed under this scheme have issues that will lead to mould and damp if not addressed. This is particularly an issue in traditionally constructed buildings with solid external walls, which rely on the natural evaporation (and other characteristics) of the wall to remain dry.



The Earl of Devon, Parliamentary sponsor for the IHBC's briefing

Courses and training must be readily available to in order to maintain both the skills and knowledge necessary to protect our historic environment, but also to aid in adapting traditionally constructed buildings to meet 21st century requirements without damaging their historic value. Otherwise, we risk not only harm to the value of heritage assets, but wasted investment through proposals such as the Great British Insulation Scheme.

The Parliamentary Briefing in November demonstrated the IHBC's commitment to protecting the value of our historic built environment by addressing the shortcomings highlighted in the recent report. The IHBC's 'Five Commitments to Help Heritage Skills in Conservation' are as follows:

1. **Advocate** – Present targeted parliamentary-level briefings across the UK and its Home Nations.
2. **Educate** – Enhance access to IHBC standards and services across all built and historic environment practices and operations.
3. **Investigate** – Investigate the complex challenges in heritage management processes and skills and respond accordingly.
4. **Celebrate** – Celebrate the achievements of heritage skills in conservation, helped by our CREATIVE Conservation Fund.
5. **Integrate** – Establish and host a new network, open and free, to support service leads delivering conservation-related learning, training and education.

The event allowed the IHBC to reiterate its concern with addressing the needs of the heritage sector, across a wide range of disciplines, with contributions from a number of speakers, including Rebecca Thompson, IHBC president; Jonathan Taylor, author of the research report; the Earl of Devon, parliamentary sponsor for the IHBC's briefing; and Linsey Farnsworth, MP for Amber Valley.



Rebecca Thompson, IHBC President



Lydia Porter, IHBC Chief Organiser of all things important

Jo Saady Nominated as IHBC Treasurer Trustee

At the end of October, our IHBC South East Branch Chair, Jo Saady, was nominated for election as Treasurer Trustee of the IHBC. Having long been a member of the IHBC, and since 2020 having served as Chair of the South East Branch, this is an exciting next step in her journey within the institute.

Jo's experience in managing her architectural practice, Ecotecture Ecological Design, as well as numerous additional experiences in financial management, have provided her with the organisational skills, integrity and eye for detail that are required for this role.

She is greatly looking forward to aiding in safeguarding the future of the IHBC, ensuring that it continues to financially thrive, whilst continuing its core purpose – conserving the past, enriching the present, and building a sustainable future.

Save the Date – Christmas Get Together, 10th January 2026

Next month, on the 10th of January 2026, our Christmas get together will provide the opportunity for a group tour around the historic town of Tunbridge Wells, led by Richard Morrice. We will meet at [The Philanthropist](#) in the Pantiles at 10:30, for an 11:00 start, and end with a pub lunch.

We look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible – please let us know if you plan on attending by emailing ihbc.levay@gmail.com.

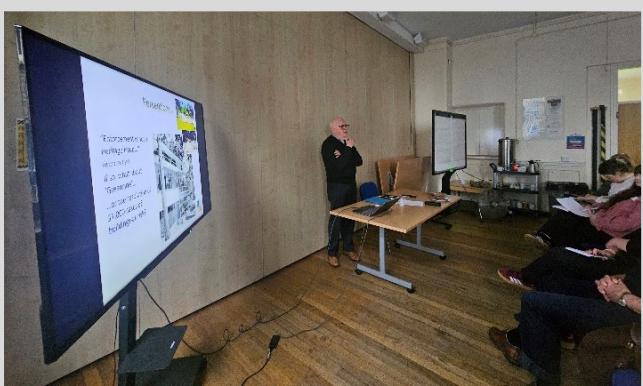
Protecting our Heritage: Enforcement Policy and Practice

Our most recent CPD event took place on the 14th of November, on the subject of enforcement action in the heritage environment. We were pleased that by holding the event at Maidstone Community Centre, we were able to reach members further east than at many of our previous events, and support the centre, which provides a base for local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups. We'd also like to extend many thanks to Tad Taberer from Maidstone Community Centre, who helped with IT issues on the day!



After an introduction from IHBC South East Branch chair Jo Saady, the day was led by Bob Kindred MBE, who has worked professionally across the heritage sector since 1979, holding roles such as external advisor to the government's Best Practical Guidance on Listed Building Prosecutions and maintenance of the IHBC National Database of Listed Building Prosecutions. Bob led two sessions throughout the day, covering topics such as past policy and the National Planning Policy Framework, interaction with enforcement officers and various case examples demonstrating different aspects of success and failure within enforcement, with a Q&A session following these presentations.

An optional tour of the Maidstone Museum – which holds collections of fine art, natural history and human history – was offered in the afternoon, in addition to various opportunities for networking throughout the course of the day, including a get-together at the nearby Druid's Arms to finish.



Presentation by Bob Kindred MBE



Striking the Right Balance: Fire Protection in the Historic Environment

Back in mid-September, the IHBC South East Branch held a CPD event in Tunbridge Wells, on the topic of fire protection and regulation in historic buildings. This consisted a full day of talks, networking and additional opportunities.

The presentations throughout the day were led by Steve Emery, a director of Heritage Fire Consultancy. As well as working for 15 years with English Heritage and Historic England, Steve has worked in operational firefighting and for 12 years as fire safety officer for the City of Bath, and he brought all of the knowledge he has gained throughout his impressive career to our CPD event.

The day kicked off with an introduction and overview from our South East Branch Chair, Jo Saady, followed by three sessions on Heritage Fire Consultancy led by Steve Emery, providing an overview of various topics, including understanding the spread & growth of fire, historic fire testing & solutions and weaknesses in heritage buildings in relation to fire spread.

Following these presentations, a buffet lunch, and opportunities for networking, was the opportunity for a tour of the Church of King Charles the Martyr. The Anglican church sits in the centre of Tunbridge Wells and offers a rich history – it was the first permanent building in the town, and the original chapel, built in 1676, was later enlarged and even reversed in orientation. Attendees of the tour were led by Richard Morrice, architectural historian and IHBC South East Branch committee member.

Feedback suggests that the day was a great success, covering topics of varying subjects and levels of technicality, offering something for everyone. The opportunity for questions at the end of the day, and inclusion of case studies and examples in the day's presentations was also especially helpful in bringing the topics discussed into reality.



Save the Date – Concrete and Candyfloss: Seaside Structures of the 20th Century, 13th March 2026

The IHBC SE branch will hold their 2026 AGM at De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, with a focus on conservation and repair of maritime heritage, on the 13th of March 2026.

The event will consist of a number of in-depth presentations, with speakers, amongst others, from Saltdean Lido and the 20th Century Society, following their recently published book, 20th Century Seaside Architecture: Pools, Piers and Pleasure around Britain's Coast. As always, opportunities for networking and discussion will be provided throughout the day.

Further details and booking information will be circulated closer to the event – we look forward to seeing you there!