



IHBC SOUTHWEST BULLETIN WINTER 2024

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Editor**

1. Heritage News

South West IHBC Cob Training Day

Please note that our next conference will be on Cob and Earth in Buildings. This will be on March the 21st at Exeter, and tickets will be on sale soon. We will be offering a virtual option to attend and a discount for Members, Affiliates and Supporters of the IHBC. The venue is limited in size so if you wish to attend in person early booking is advised.

SW IHBC AGM Bridgwater Arts Centre 22nd November 2023

The following Appointments were agreed at the AGM for the next year.

Appointment of Chair and Branch Officers, including vacant posts:

Resignations have been received from Maureen Pearce, Chair and Devon County Representative; and Guy Bentham Hill, Wiltshire Representative. CBL thanked both Maureen and Guy for all their work over the years on behalf of the SW committee.

The following committee members agreed to stand and were re-elected unopposed: Treasurer – Greg Venn Secretary – Jill Himsworth Membership Secretary – Liz Smith Gibbons Historic England Representative – Stephen Guy Training and Events Officer – Jonathan Taylor Gloucestershire, Bristol and Bath Representative – Charlotte Bowles Lewis Dorset Representative – James Webb Somerset County Representative – Adrian Neilson Cornwall Representative – Samantha Barnes Bulletin Editor – Alex Marsh This was proposed by Tony Garratt and seconded by Ullin Jodah McStea.

Charlotte Bowles Lewis has offered to take on the role of Chair, with James Webb taking on the role of Vice-Chair. Gabriella Herrick has been acting Private Practice Representative since March 2023. Kim Miller has been acting Council Representative since September 2023. Belle Richer Hill has offered to take on the role of Devon County Representative, and Kate Hudson McAulay has offered to take on the role of Policy and Consultations officer.

This was proposed by Tony Garratt and seconded by Harvey Faulkner-Aston.

No nominations have been received for the Wiltshire Representative. This role is currently being undertaken by Liz Smith Gibbons, but this role is available should someone wish to take it on. Maureen Pearce will remain on the committee as immediate past chair.

Tony Garratt is now on the IHBC Central Equality Committee

2. High Street Task Force Report

The Value of Heritage: First Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Conservation, Places & People April 2023 Author: Conservation Places and People

This report argues that heritage has economic, environmental, and social value. Heritage assets can help communities to tackle climate change, are focal points for local identity and attract business and tourist interests. In doing so, the report offers recommendations to help communities make the most of their local heritage.

This report provides a series of recommendations to help maximise the benefits of local heritage. These include:

- harmonisation of the VAT rate between new construction and refurbishment
- tackling a presumption in planning against demolition of existing buildings
- funding of historic regeneration
- devolution to elected mayors and authorities over regeneration funds
- an amnesty from low- and zero carbon energy efficiency requirements for some of our most precious historic buildings.

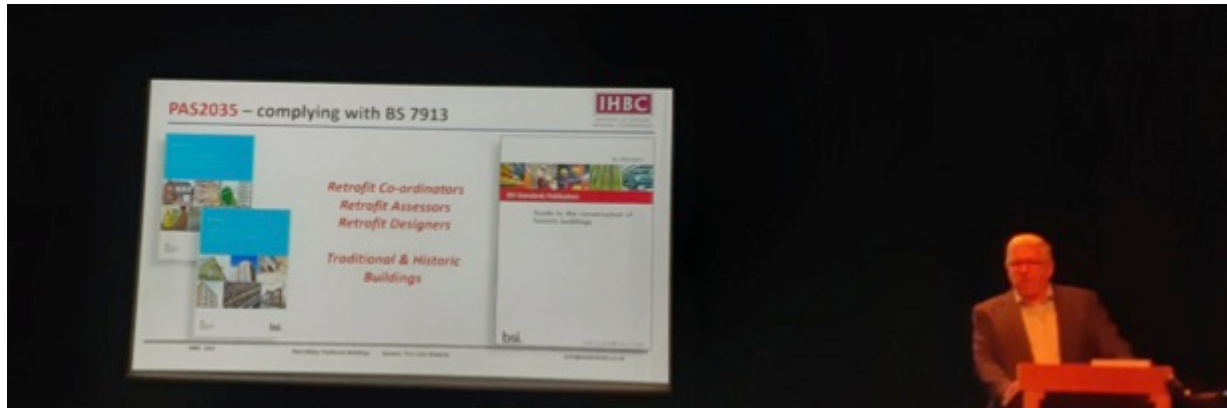
These are explained further in the document, but throughout it argues that heritage is not a barrier to regeneration and town centre improvement; rather, is instead a powerful driver for generating economic and social activity across the nation and is an important tool in achieving levelling up.

The document provides numerous examples of the economic and social benefits of maintaining and preserving heritage. An example of this was a study undertaken by the National Lottery Heritage Fund which calculated that for every pound spent in a heritage site, only 32p is spent on site maintenance, whilst the rest goes to local businesses. Alongside this, it offers evidence from the Historic Houses Association which suggests that their sites generate £1 billion in visitor spend and provide more than 34,600 jobs.

Although the resource focuses on the benefits of heritage, it also provides barriers that exist in the use of the historic environment. These barriers focus on taxation, online shopping, business rates, regeneration plans and notions that conservation and regeneration are separate ideas. Finally, the document provides solutions and ideas which it recommends should be followed by national and local authorities to remove barriers and to make the most of historic sites for local communities.

3. Report on SW IHBC Retrofit Seminar Bridgwater Arts Centre 22nd November 2023.

The South West Branch Retrofit Seminar was a well-attended and all round excellent day at Bridgwater Arts Centre.



Professor John Edwards presented a thorough case for understanding the basics of significance, construction, and the need for maintenance and repair as underpinning elements when considering the complexity of retrofitting traditional buildings in a 'Holistic' approach.

His approach he reminded us is found in the IHBC guidance on Retrofitting of Traditional Buildings the latest version being March 2022 that he authored. This provides the background to the approach presented on the day and includes valuable links to the latest guidance.

The IHBC Guidance states under **General Approach advises:**

The approach is as generally outlined in BS 7913: 2013: Guide to the conservation of historic buildings. This means that individuals must be sufficiently competent in what they do.

It is essential that those involved understand that retrofitting is not the first thing to think of when considering how to make a building more energy efficient and therefore this guidance covers more than just retrofit.

First of all try and get the original building fabric to perform as the best it can with appropriate maintenance and repair as well as providing it with appropriate use.

After which, it is essential to start with the easy things first and then work up to those things which are more difficult and costly. The overall approach is described in the article *Energy efficiency of traditional buildings* published in 2016.

The approach is then broken down into stages up to the design stage.

Here the stages are described in the form of guidance and are also taken up to the implementation, post occupancy evaluation and auditing which is part of a quality management process.

Stages

Assess significance (as detailed in BS 7913: 2013) – this can later be used to inform decision making using the retrofit guidance wheel concluding with a list of works and retrofit measures and the importance of undertaking the Heritage Impact Assessment HIA detailed in BS7913 using significance values from this first stage.

Undertake a condition survey that will include assessing the construction and especially focuses on any issues with moisture.

A building pathological approach shall be taken involving the collection of environmental data (e.g. Relative Humidity, Temperature, Absolute Humidity) and searches for the cause of problems. Include issues concerning the healthy occupancy of the building.

Assess the use of the building and noting the number of occupants. Assess the moisture produced from the activities noted and compare to the normal sensible activities and the moisture produced from them.

Undertake an energy efficiency assessment and production and an energy performance certificate (EPC).

Assess activities required that will make improvements to energy efficiency and healthy occupancy and conclude with a list of recommendations (e.g. repairs, use issues).

List the works recommended from the EPC This must first of all involve checking the accuracy of the EPC and determining whether the recommendations are feasible and sensible.

Consider the recommendations from the EPC involving the use of the free to access online STBA retrofit guidance wheel and conclude with a list of works and retrofit measures.

With these conclusions, carry out a cost benefit analysis with the concluded recommendations. This process shall be holistic but also consider information on both payback and realistic life expectancy of the measures and works.

The HIA will measure the impact of the proposals and develop means of mitigation. This process should include considering alternatives and detailing why they were rejected. If a Conservation Plan is in place, follow the Conservation Policies and supplement with HIA as necessary.

If the concluded works and measures from HIA are altered then the HIA shall be repeated until a satisfactory outcome can be achieved.

Undertake a specification non-compliance risk assessment and determine means of mitigating risks as described in BS 7913.

The Design response and measures should incorporate a risk management assessment. This shall include the establishment of quality management processes agreed between all parties (e.g., contractors, designers, clerk of works) and incorporate inspection and test plans (ITP's). A useful article is *Managing Risks in Building Conservation Projects*.

Following the implementation of works post occupancy evaluation is necessary to assess the benefits and shall include an assessment of the building against the information and data recorded during initial condition survey.

An Audit of the scheme against specification and design compliance with should be an independent process and shall include analysis of the records, can be undertaken throughout the project and on completion.

Qualifications and Competencies

Professor John Edwards provides training through Environment Study Centre. This is awarded at Level 3 as an Award in the Energy, Efficiency and Retrofit of Traditional Buildings. The training considers technical issues and heritage values (significance) as well as Heritage Impact Assessments HIA.

PAS 2035 requires designers to be members of a conservation competency scheme, this requirement should be observed outside PAS 2035. This means that designers of retrofit work shall be a member of a conservation competency scheme and where the building is protected the category of membership shall be at the highest level. As an alternative to membership the Level 3 Award can substitute where the building does not have special protection (listing) is an alternative.

I would also highlight The Architect Journal has since 2019 been running a Retrofit First campaign with three demands:

Tax

Cut VAT rate on refurbishment, repair and maintenance from 20 per cent to 5 per cent or below

Policy

Promote the reuse of existing building stock and reclaimed construction material by introducing new clauses into planning guidance and the building regs

Procurement

Stimulate the circular economy and support a whole-life carbon approach in construction by insisting that all publicly funded projects look to retrofit solutions first

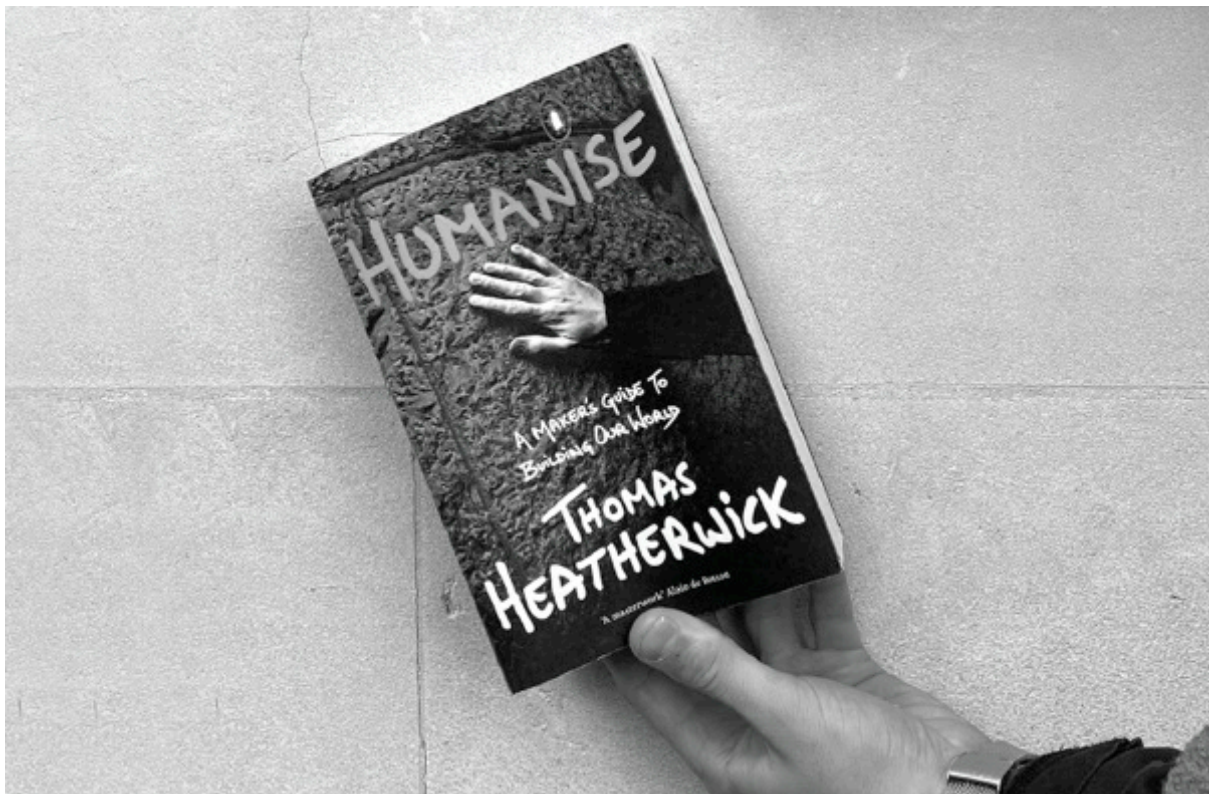
A poster is available online:



4. Books

Humanise - A Maker's Guide to Building Our World

A Book that has not gone down well in all architectural quarters as one can imagine. However it's always good to read different views and opinions. There is also a recent BBC radio series by Thomas Heatherwick where the Author presents his case that is developed in this book.



Thomas Heatherwick believes ...Our world is losing its humanity. Where too many developers care more about their shareholders than society ...too many politicians care more about power than the people who vote for them ..and too many cities feel soulless and depressing, with buildings designed for business, not for us.

He presents an alternative based on changing the world around us we can improve health, restore happiness and save the planet by bringing back human emotion and experience at the heart of the design process.

The book contains stories and images in an illustrated book that seeks to inspire us to make a more human centred world.

Bulletin Editors Comment

This is the quarterly Bulletin for the IHBC SW Branch. It looks to highlight relevant news and best practice in the South West and things of interest from elsewhere.

I would welcome contributions from members in the South West as the best way to make this Bulletin relevant and worthwhile. I look forward to receive contributions on any topic, be it buildings, people or anything else members feel might be relevant and of interest. Please attach relevant photographs with contribution as these help make the Bulletin of visual interest and saves a lot of words!

Please note that Bulletin is made up from a variety of Contributor's and the Editor holds no responsibility for the viewpoints expressed or information provided.

