



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·  
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

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**Dear Paul**

**Consultation on Historic England Guidance Document BIM for Heritage: Developing a Historic Building Information Model**

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation is the professional body of the United Kingdom representing conservation specialists and historic environment practitioners in the public and private sectors. The Institute exists to establish the highest standards of conservation practice, to support the effective protection and enhancement of the historic environment, and to promote heritage-led regeneration and access to the historic environment for all.

We are very pleased to have the chance to comment on the consultation document. The Institute's comments are as follows:

We have yet to be convinced that BIM is a useful tool in the context of making design adaptations and specification of repairs. BIM is a tool, not an end in itself, understanding is. There is no indication that use of BIM has led to better understanding, judgement or decision-making.

The aims of the BIM for Heritage Guidance is very laudable. Historic England is trying to be proactive in producing this document. Whilst the document is a clear guide it assumes some principles of operation and use of BIM which we can not endorse. The document explains clearly how the information types are organized within the model to create an information hub for the particular historic asset, which can be queried intelligently and used for further investigation and research, conservation and management. Best practice advice is set out for all of the project team to follow pre-agreed procedures. The importance of

training and development is advised. The document is clear about how commissioning of BIM works.

The importance of roles and responsibilities is explained and the need to set project milestones in terms of information delivery in alignment with the project programme. Overall this document provides access to all the necessary sources, which clarify issues which might arise in the course of a project where it is appropriate to use BIM.

Having said the guidance itself may be generally fit for its intended purpose, in current circumstances the IHBC does not support the proposal that it be a requirement that government procured projects should be carried out using BIM. Very few conservation practitioners have access to BIM and very few would accept that this is actually necessary.

A major issue is one of resources. The costs of producing these models is very high. If cost-savings are the driver of the governmental commitment to BIM this premise has not been substantiated. If there is a commitment to producing these models within the public estate then there has to be a fund to back up that commitment. The document does not address comparison between the benefits, the cost and the disadvantages or the fact that BIM is more suitable for some projects than others.

The use of BIM as an accepted practice must be balanced against increased costs, increased time for pre- construction phase of projects, lack of advantages over conventional existing established processes including orthogonal projection, lack of conservation professionals with BIM expertise. We fail to see its application for complex matters pertaining to historic buildings. It is best suited to modern build with repeated modular elements. We are concerned that BIM has no compatibility with its earlier versions. If working with others the entire team would have to have the latest programme upgrade which is prohibitive cost-wise.

The requirements of compliance are very onerous especially for small practices, not to mention the cost implications for clients of small practices. This document seems to lean in favour of assisting big companies and in doing so may be promoting the demise of the small practice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'FN', is positioned above the typed name.

Fiona Newton  
IHBC Operations Director