



## INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION

Carol Moore  
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Local Government Quality & Performance  
5/A4, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
LONDON  
SW1E 5DU

Mr David J Chetwyn, MA, MA, MRTPI, IHBC  
Vice Chair  
Institute of Historic Building Conservation  
142 Richmond Street,  
Penkhull,  
Stoke-on-Trent,  
Staffordshire,  
ST4 7DU

Tel: 01782 413896  
Mob: 07974 099635  
E-mail: [vcpolicy@ihbc.org.uk](mailto:vcpolicy@ihbc.org.uk)

27 August 2004

Dear Madam

### **Best Value Performance Indicators 2005/2006**

I refer to the above consultation document.

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation is the professional body representing conservation specialists and practitioners in the public and private sectors in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It has around fourteen hundred members divided between fourteen branches. 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.

The Institute strongly supports the introduction of the draft BVPIs (X23, X24, X25). They are the first indicators to propose to measure aspects of the historic environment and should form a basis for the proper management of heritage assets within a local authority's area. They are extremely timely in the light of the recent report by the ODP: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee - ***The Role of Historic Buildings in Urban Regeneration***. This recognises the key role played by the built heritage in local economies and the delivery of regeneration.

The Institute wrote the draft research brief for historic environment BV indicators in 2002 and participated in the subsequent work that led to these draft indicators being formulated (along with exemplary models of balanced comprehensive local authority historic environment services). The steering group for this work involved not only this Institute but also representatives from your Department, DCMS, the Audit Commission, English Heritage (who funded the work), the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, the Local Government Association and the Planning Officers Society.

The IHBC is aware that your Department has a BVPI Sounding Board but is not aware if any of those represented on it have specific historic environment, town planning or regeneration expertise in relation to the three draft indicators X23, X24, X25.

The Institute would like to make the following comments on specific BVPIs:

**BV (X23) – Percentage of local authority heritage assets which have been reviewed within the last 5 years as a proportion of all local authority heritage assets**

The IHBC supports BV (X23). It is essential that local authorities provide an exemplar of good practice in the management of their own assets and this performance measure will help to achieve this. The definition is comprehensive and importantly includes all statutory designations. The five year period for reviews should be considered a maximum.

**BV (X24) – Percentage of conservation areas which have been subject to a character appraisal, or its review, within the last 5 years, as a proportion of the total number of conservation areas in the local authority area**

The IHBC supports BV (X24). Character appraisals are a useful tool in helping to manage change in historic areas. They are especially important for conservation areas in and around which there is development pressure or area regeneration proposals. Such appraisals can provide positive guidance and a greater degree of certainty. They are important in terms of producing Local Development Frameworks and Local Development Documents, sometimes forming the basis of Area Action Plans and helping in the delivery of sustainable regeneration.

The definition is reasonable, though the relevance of the 1997 date is unclear.

The Institute is aware from its joint research in 2002-3 in conjunction with English Heritage and DCMS that only 25% of conservation areas have appraisals. This was identified as a specific policy “building block” which needs encouragement to be completed.

If the Indicator is introduced, updated good practice guidance from within the sector would be invaluable to coincide (e.g. revision of the English Heritage 1996 guidance on appraisals).

**BV (X25) – Percentage increase since the previous financial year of the number of historic environment records benchmark measures in place**

The IHBC supports BV (X25). Accurate and regularly updated historic environment records provide important information to those involved in development, regeneration, cultural development, education, and a range of other activities. The definition usefully points to published guidance on best practice.

The tiers of local government at which this performance indicator might operate (in partnership where appropriate) could be made more explicit.

Those authorities which are not holders of historic environment records should be required to show that there are protocols in place for both receipt of information from, and provision of updating information to, the HER covering their area.

**Future Development of BVPIs**

The above BVPIs are a move in the right direction. The IHBC is concerned that past BVPIs have tended to concentrate on speed of administration rather than, and sometimes at the expense of, quality of outcomes. The proposed BVPIs would help to shift the emphasis onto more qualitative matters and emphasise the need for a sound information base from which to make informed decisions. This is essential to encourage more sustainable practice and higher value regeneration.

For the future, BVPIs should continue this trend, concentrating on quality of service and outcomes. They should also positively encourage pro-active initiatives, such as providing information and advice to developers and promoting the reuse and regeneration of historic building assets. The Institute would therefore suggest the following BVPIs for 2006/7:

***The production and regular (five yearly) review/survey of a Buildings at Risk, including a positive strategy and action plan to deal with buildings identified as being At Risk.***

## INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION

Regular Buildings at Risk surveys are an essential tool in prioritising sites for action, including funding bids, project development, marketing, urgent works action, establishing area regeneration schemes (such as Townscape Heritage Initiatives and Heritage Economic Regeneration Areas) and the management of a local authority's own assets. They help to promote a more pro-active approach to securing the reuse of vacant and neglected buildings, which can result in a range of social and economic benefits and more sustainable regeneration.

The Institute is aware that some local authorities have partnership arrangements for such reviews, (for example on a county-wide basis – some with joint registers) and several good practice models for such co-operation already exist.

### ***The employment of staff with specialist expertise in historic environment and building conservation.***

To provide a fully rounded advisory and decision-making service, dealing with the quality of the built environment, it is essential to employ staff with expertise in building design (architecture), urban design (townscape), landscape and civic design (landscape architecture) and historic environments (conservation). Specialist skills in conservation include practical building techniques, funding streams, heritage-led regeneration, conservation philosophy, design principles, technology, building analysis, architectural history, law and policy, etc. Employing specialist staff is essential for making fast, well-informed decisions and ensuring quality outcomes on the ground.

This would build on the Local Authority Conservation Provision Study (2003) undertaken by Oxford Brookes University on behalf of the IHBC and English Heritage and supported by DCMS and your Department.

### ***The production of an annual Review of Historic Environment Service work***

Historic Environment work involves much activity not measurable in terms of formally monitored applications. An annual review/ survey of Historic Environment work would enable the scope of work to be brought to the attention of, and be reviewed by, Council members, and would provide the basis for developing pro-active strategies. The review could include a wide range of work types including development briefs, running historic environment grant schemes, bidding, project formulation and management, etc.

The Institute would be pleased to enter into further dialogue to develop these into BVPIs.

Yours faithfully

Dave Chetwyn  
Vice Chair