



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·  
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

*Making Heritage Work*

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Dear Dr Elders

## **CHURCH OF ENGLAND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD (CHER)**

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) 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.

Thank you for inviting us to participate in this consultation. Our response is as follows.

We welcome the proposal to instigate CHER and hope that it will be a benefit to the Church of England and to a wider professional, academic and public audience. However, we do wonder whether it should be called a "HER" as this term already has a specific meaning in relation to geographically held, integrated and dynamic data bases which are capable of continuous adaptation and addition.

### **1) Whether the web portal for the HER should be the Heritage Gateway.**

We think that it should. The whole point of HERs is to make heritage information available and this indicates making use of established entry points.

### **2) Whether the HER should use HBSMR, or would a bespoke system be better**

We would like to see a gradual narrowing of the gaps between HER systems. HBSMR requires the use of Exegesis software which is not universally used and may give rise to compatibility problems as and when geographic integration is contemplated. What is important, therefore, is that the datasets are held in a form that can be widely accessed and emigrated to, or accessed by new systems in the future. We are not sure if the data can be held so as to allow access by HBSMR and other platforms is possible. If it is not, careful consideration needs to be given to the optimum long-term solution.

### **3) What you would hope to see the HER contain and/or provide access to**

Each record should be as comprehensive as possible and include details of all works and other interventions and "grey" material. This and links to outside sites and information could be kept separately from the mainstream material to reflect its secondary status. The CHER must be capable of easy adaptation, with additions, amplifications and refinements being easy to enter as well as software enhancements in the future.

We are not convinced with the conclusion at paragraph 5.4 that there needs to be a paper version available as we think that this is incompatible with the idea of a dynamic on-line facility. We think that there is very little potential demand for this in any case, because PCCs, heritage practitioners and academics invariably have access to a computer, and the objective should be to provide print-outs of requested pages (at a charge, presumably) which are clearly marked as the state of the record on the date of issue. Perhaps this could be best done at Diocesan level.

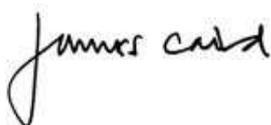
### **4) How best the CofE HER could function/relate with/to LA HERs**

Most counties have HERs and the church information could be added to form a comprehensive record for that area. To avoid duplication (or worse, conflict) of material this should be done by link but should be capable of relative seamlessness whatever back-office system is in use. Material already held by existing HERs could be a useful starting point for the new Records. There should also be facility for access by GIS enquiry, or extension to allow this in the future. This indicates the inclusion of geographic data, to industry norms, in the initial datasets.

As there are a number of systems in use, not all of which use HBSMR, we think that the designers of the CHER should have discussions with a range of HER Authorities ensuring that they are making adequate provision for links to all the systems in use. We would wish to see avoided a situation in which the CHER was a "best fit" with some HER systems and not compatible with others. The CHER should also be capable of being searched for information at a national level.

We hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely



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