



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

Making Heritage Work

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Dear Sirs

ENGLISH HERITAGE NEW MODEL

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.

The IHBC welcomes the proposed New Model for English Heritage in principle. It seems to us that the interests of regulatory heritage functions and those of promoting exemplary heritage conservation are not closely aligned with those of heritage management. However, we have serious misgivings about the sketchiness of the Proposals in detail which appear to be an optimistic gloss on what the Government hopes will happen. We think it would have been more appropriate to have taken a dispassionate look at the contribution that heritage can and should make to the future of the Nation and realistic ways of providing resources for it commensurate with its undoubted importance to our cultural and economic future.

We have responded to the Consultation Questions in the Appendix at the end of this letter but would like to make a number of major points here. These form, in effect, our response to Question 17.

1. We believe that all parties to this debate will agree about the importance of England's heritage to its economy and culture. It forms a major part of our cultural identity, almost invariably provides high quality living environments (as evidenced by generally high property values in historic places) and contributes enormously to the economy through tourism. It is essential, therefore, that England's historic fabric is conserved in ways that retains its high tourism and cultural quality, not just in the short to medium term, but in the long term; and its cherished local environments as well as its tourism "icons". England's conservation should be treated as an investment priority

in the light of ample published evidence of its value to the economy. When compared to other parts of the economy, the proposed resource package, as a proportion of heritage's contribution to the economy is pitifully low.

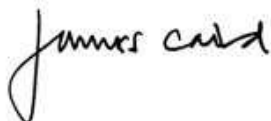
2. It therefore concerns us that a primary focus (as stated in the Preface) of the Proposals is “...*reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape without reducing protection for heritage.*” We do not agree that the proper protection of heritage constitutes “unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape”, especially as this issue was exhaustively examined in the Penfold Review. We very much regret that we have to repeatedly make the point to Government that complaints about bureaucracy frequently come from developers who have no empathy for the historic environment and who use accusations of bureaucracy as a lever to get consent for poorly assessed and ill-judged proposals. We would have preferred the focus of the Proposals to be expressed as the long-term conservation of England's heritage reducing bureaucracy where appropriate. As the government's own policy clearly states, heritage once lost is gone for good.

3. The Consultation is very short of meaningful detail. Alternative options are not spelt out. It is extremely disappointing that the consultation did not include at the very least the main arguments apparently made in the business case. Consequently a lot of contributions to the debate will be somewhat speculative. But valid concern should not be dismissed because the Consultation is itself speculative. The long-term future of England's heritage is not something that should be dealt with in this way but should be based on National (including Government) commitment and adequate resourcing.

4. We have serious concerns about the funding arrangements, which seem to be based more on the extent of funds available than an assessment of the requirements for the long-term conservation of architectural heritage in a Nation that relies on this for a substantial proportion of its income: that derived from tourism.

5. Bearing in mind the financial uncertainties we welcome the proposal to revisit the arrangements after 8 years in operation. However, proper empirical research to inform a national debate should be undertaken in the interim by Historic England, certainly before 2022. We regret that the Consultation is a missed opportunity to take a wider view of future heritage delivery, which is sustainable in the long term as proposed by the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies (on which the IHBC is an observer) to the Heritage Minister prior to the launch of the Consultation. In this respect England is well behind the reviews currently being conducted in Wales and Scotland. We think this should be added to HE's remit and measures of success, and should be contributed to by the Charity and other leading historic environment interests in England, thus putting England on an equal footing with Scotland and Wales. We would be happy to participate if asked.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Caird". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Caird
Consultant Consultations Co-ordinator

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION QUESTIONS BY THE IHBC

1. The consultation outlines the benefits of the new model for the National Heritage Collection. Do you: agree/disagree etc./don't know

Somewhat disagree.

2. If you either strongly or somewhat disagree with the proposed benefits why is this?

While we welcome the intended strategy to deal with the backlog of maintenance and repairs, we do not think the Proposals are going to be properly resourced given the figures quoted. We think the scope for increasing these in the ways stated (membership, sponsorship, donations, business opportunities, volunteering) are based on over-optimistic forecasts and as such create significant financial risks to the Charity. The overall financing of Heritage England will also be at risk from continuing downward pressure on public expenditure in the medium term. The limited timescale for the proposal seems to indicate that the Government is not convinced of its long-term survival either.

However, we welcome the separation of the organizations in principle, the firm commitment to investment in heritage and its interpretation, and the intention to review the position after 8 years. The Charity must have "the protection of heritage" as its primary objective. It must also be completely separate in Governance with an independent Chair, a minimal number of dual Commissioners of which the Chair of Historic England should not be one.

We support the detailed analysis of The Heritage Alliance on the detail of these issues and their recommendations R1 – R5.

3. Are there any further benefits that could be delivered by this model?

Without sight of the EH Business model, we are not in a position to make meaningful comments. But there are a number of precedents for charitable custodianship in the heritage sector. It is hoped that the approach of these would be examined by the new Charity.

4. Are there any other key opportunities for the charity to increase earned income in addition to those outlined in the consultation?

We don't know. The absence of a proper business case for the Charity does not permit comment on this but underlines the uncertainties of its future we have already mentioned.

5. If yes what are they?

The consultation fails to explain how many sites charge for admission and how many are freely accessible. It also fails to indicate where the bulk of the National Heritage Collection's income is derived. Although this can be deduced from a number of other sources it should have informed the consultation paper. EH is heavily reliant, for example, on Stonehenge, which generates 20% of its admission charges. It would be regrettable if EH's need to generate income to meet a future shortfall in expenditure were inadvertently damaging to these precious assets.

But the special architectural and historic interest of EH's sites should not be put at risk by inappropriate or damaging commercial activities. The assumed income streams for the new Charity do not appear to take any account of diminishing returns, although

there does seem to be some scope for increased television and film location fees if carefully managed.

6. What aspects of the current service provided to the public by English Heritage in relation to the National Heritage Collection is it important that the charity maintains?

Given that there is to be a review after 8 years, we think the Charity should be charged with all of EH's current property functions.

A National Collection must continue to act as the repository of important heritage assets donated to, bequeathed to or acquired by the Nation particularly if at risk and as a last resort. We therefore support the proposal that this should be the case and that "certain terms and conditions" do not amount to an opt-out clause. Otherwise one of two untenable situations will arise: either the Government (through Historic England) would no longer have the ability to acquire new heritage assets for the National Collection, as a last resort, or a duplicate property-owning arrangement will arise in the form of directly held property. This obligation on the part of the Charity implies additional funding but the uncertainty over resources in the Consultation does not make it clear what will happen in this respect.

While the income-generating potential of the National Collection is important, so too is its educational potential. Support for this must be explicitly required of the Charity.

7. What are the opportunities to further enhance the services that will be offered by the charity?

Information for visitors, academic research and general educational purposes is not as yet either complete or comprehensive. The Charity should be required to complete the task of creating a full on-line catalogue of its portfolio and extend the range of related material that is available.

8. Do you agree that the suggested charitable objectives are broadly the right ones?

For the most part, yes.

9. If no, what changes to them do you think should be made?

There would appear to be potential for conflict of interest for Charity between the interests of financially beneficial development and the proper long-term conservation of the National Collection.

As already mentioned we do not think the Charity should be able to reject property proposed for custodianship by Historic England, or be immune to its regulatory functions.

10. Are the proposed success criteria to measure the performance of the charity and to ensure that the benefits are realised the right ones?

No.

11. If not what else should be included in the success criteria?

The elimination of the maintenance backlog on all Category 1 and 2 items within 8 years.

12. We are interested in the views of respondents to the proposed future opportunities and priorities for Historic England. Are these the right priorities and opportunities? Is there anything missing?

We support many of the proposals:

- ◆ The proposal that there will be no change to the Commission's duties.
- ◆ The shared proposal that Historic England shall have a "broad vision" in the way it carries out its functions and the objective to "champion and celebrate all of England's historic environment and the many people who look after it".
- ◆ The continuation of support for "constructive conservation" but the refusal to support damaging, destructive and inappropriate proposals must be as clearly stated as positive conservation in order to maintain acceptable national standards.
- ◆ The proposed review of the "landscape of heritage services" and the proposal (implied) that a revised NHPP will be the vehicle for this. We would hope that a new NHPP would contain clearer national policy than is evident at present together with clear pointers to good conservation practice.
- ◆ We are glad to see acknowledgement of the cuts amongst local authority conservation services from figures collected by the IHBC. However we are concerned that to review the "landscape for heritage services" could lead to a more arms length approach to advice from Historic England than is currently provided. We would not want to see any reduction in the level of advice offered to LPAs.
- ◆ As a parallel exercise, the review should consider radical structural change in the long-term, to inform a post-2022 debate.
- ◆ The proposal to retain a programme of grants for heritage rescue. We note that EH has only recently embarked on a programme – expressly encouraged by government - to define the extent of Grade 2 buildings-at-risk and therefore the quantification of the problem and the measures need to address it remain, as yet undefined.

However, we do have misgivings on some points, whether expressly made or omissions:

- ◆ We are far from clear what responsiveness to owners and developers will mean in practice. While we support this in principle, we would not wish to see this taken to the extent that would cause a blurring between this objective and the HE's regulatory functions. With historic environment service levels in local authorities being at the low ebb acknowledged in the Consultation, we would not wish to see a relationship with owners and developers that creates divisions between HE and LPAs for whom HE must remain a primary and independent advisor.
- ◆ While we agree with the broad objective of "reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape without reducing protection for heritage" (please note our earlier remarks about the Penfold Review in our covering letter), we think the national regulatory body should have heritage protection in all its currently understood forms, (or as defined by the NHPP) as its primary function. It should be remembered that complaints about bureaucracy and "red tape" has usually been a response to actual or proposed damage or losses of irreplaceable heritage by

unscrupulous and unimaginative owners and developers who have no respect for heritage.

- ◆ We support the proposal that HE will be funded “largely” through Grant-in-Aid, and that increasing resources will be a measure of success. However, we have misgivings about the use of the word “largely” for its vagueness in that HE should not be put in a position in which it has to resort to charging for advice as an income stream. This is especially important for local authorities with limited conservation resources. We also have misgivings about the adequacy of what is proposed in the current climate of downward pressures on public expenditure generally and particularly reduced services at local authority level. We would have preferred to have seen a more rigorous assessment of the requirements and hope that this will follow in the further review promised of HE and the proposed revision of the NHPP.
- ◆ There should be a complete separation of the resources and liabilities of the the two new bodies.

13. Are the proposed success criteria to measure the performance of Historic England the right ones?

We largely support these. We are uncertain of what might be constituted in “customer satisfaction surveys” and draw attention to the Commons Select Committee’s criticism of such surveys in 2010. We ascribe to the view that dissatisfaction with the service is likely to be confused with the nature of the advice given and whether or not the person surveyed agreed with it. However we would expect customers to include local authorities and others concerned with the conservation of the historic environment and HE’s statutory contribution to this. Even so, customer feedback should be only one of a more balanced palette of criteria.

“Upfront work with developers” is also largely unexplained. We would not wish to see HE undertaking direct action on the ground that might conflict with the responsibilities and plans of local planning authorities which have a statutory duty to provide cohesion in the way historic environment services are carried on at local level; or, for that matter, with their own statutory duties. We would expect this to be rephrased as “working jointly with local authorities on pre-application discussions”.

14. If not what else should be included in the success criteria?

We think the following should be specifically referred to:

- ◆ Academic research.
- ◆ Maintenance of heritage archives.
- ◆ Academic publishing.

15. Should the National Heritage Protection Plan form the basis of the business plan for Historic England?

We support this in principle but would like to see more clarity about the requirements for NHPP:

- ◆ There needs to be a sector-wide National Heritage Protection Plan which the whole range of heritage organisations can sign up to and use as a foundation for their own plans and programmes.
- ◆ Historic England, as statutory guardian of the sector, needs to use this as the starting point for its own business plan which should have a different name.
- ◆ It is vital that these two requirements are distinguished and delivered in parallel.

16. If no – why not?

See our response to Q15.

17. Are there any further points you would like to add in relation to the consultation?

Please see our covering letter, above.

IHBC
07/02/14