



Environmental Audit Committee
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Dear Sir

Greening the post-Covid Recovery - Call for evidence

Introduction to the Institute of Historic Building Conservation

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.

The IHBC has developed its own [IHBC Position Statement on Sustainability and Conservation of the Historic Built Environment](#) which demonstrates that IHBC believes conservation of the historic built environment is an essential component of the response to the threat posed by climate change and long-term planning for sustainable development, and sets out sixteen key points that underpin this belief. The IHBC has produced its own guidance on the [Retrofitting of Traditional Buildings](#). The IHBC contributed to the earlier [Environmental Audit Committee Call for evidence Energy Efficiency of Existing Homes](#) and the response to that will be relevant to this Inquiry.

1. How can any fiscal and economic stimulus packages be aligned with the UK's ambitions on net-zero, biodiversity, the circular economy, and Sustainable Development Goals?

Use the opportunity of Brexit to change the VAT regime to encourage repair, re-use, recycling and the circular economy. Ensure that all policies and interventions meet cross-cutting aims. Use all available opportunities to promote awareness, skills, training and capacity building. Focus on the re-use of existing buildings and their components rather than greenfield sites.

Ensure that all stimulus packages (including the Green Homes Grants, which require revision), are tied to Net Zero targets, promote training to support capacity building, and include realistic timescales.

2. How should the policy response to the current crisis differ from the response to the global financial crash in 2008?

Use the aftermath of Covid as an opportunity for radical change focused on wellbeing. Introduce a Wellbeing of Future Generations Act as in Wales, ensuring that all policies and interventions meet cross-cutting aims. Use the opportunity of very low interest rates to invest, with an intergenerational equity approach, in infrastructure and environmental projects, with training and jobs for the long-term and linked to Net Zero targets, rather than bailing out the banks. Promote the repair and re-use of historic buildings for wellbeing.

3. In what areas should interventions be targeted to deliver both economic and environmental benefits in the short and long term?

Ensure that all interventions relating to the built environment are tied to medium and long-term environmental, climate change, and wellbeing targets; amend the 25-year Environment Plan to fully recognise the importance of the built environment and culture to Wellbeing. Promote awareness through formal and informal education at all levels.

4. How could the Autumn budget be used to shift taxation from economically beneficial things, such as jobs and incomes; to environmental harms, such as pollution and waste?

Measures of particular interest to IHBC would include

- Changes to the VAT regime to promote repairs, re-use, and product longevity.
- Requirement for Whole Life Assessments. High carbon industries should be required to assess the Whole life costs of what they produce to ensure that long term environmental impact is not worsened.
- Penalise single-use materials unless special justifications apply.

6. How can the economic recovery stimulus be used to deliver green jobs at a time of potentially high unemployment?

Invest in training and capacity building to meet 2030 and 2050 Climate Change targets. Develop and roll out the training needed, and at the scale needed, to deliver repairs and retrofit (where appropriate) of traditional buildings to PAS 2035 and PAS 2038 (forthcoming) standards. Set timescales which are realistic (unlike the Green Homes Grants) in terms of providing skills and capacity at the scale needed. Revise grant scheme deadlines to avoid rushed work in inclement weather. Treat the Green Homes Grants as a pilot, subject to critical review in all aspects (jobs created, skills achieved, appropriateness and quality of interventions, etc).

8. In the run up to Conferences of the Parties to UN conventions on climate change and biodiversity next year, how can the UK use its influence, as both host of COP26 and when holding the Presidency of the G7 in 2021, to influence the nature of economic rescue packages around the world?

Join up UK Government Policy as has been done in Wales, to ensure that economic rescue and tackling the environmental crisis go hand in hand. Use the opportunity of the delayed COP to carry out a cross-cutting critical review of the UK's work so far, learn lessons, and introduce a clear long-term plan to 2050.

Yours sincerely,

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