



Historic England Call for Evidence on Current Understanding of Heritage Threats and Future Opportunities

Question and Response form Introductory questions

1. **Indicate if you are responding in a personal capacity or on behalf of a company or organisation. [Multiple choice: Personal, On behalf of organisation; Other]**

This response is being made by the Institute Of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC). 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.

2. **What is the name of the organisation and/or example you will be using as evidence? *If you have more than one case study please distinguish them by a numbering system.***

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

3. **What sector is your organisation in? [Multiple Choice: government body, local government, private, academic, NGO, other]**

Other - Professional body

4. **Do you or your organisation have, or are you aware of, any tools/ frameworks/ approaches to identify/ manage threats and opportunities in the historic environment?**

In preparing this evidence we have considered the types of risk which might be associated with both heritage organisations such as the IHBC and to heritage assets in particular historic buildings:

Risk to heritage organisations

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Risk management
- Financial impacts
- Strategic planning

Internal risk management in the IHBC

- IHBC has a strategic business plan reviewed on a five yearly basis
- IHBC has a risk register which is under regular review

The IHBC Annual School may serve as a COVID impact illustration. Our Annual School is the principle platform for training and ongoing professional development for historic environment conservation specialists. It is the IHBC's flagship national annual event, drawing delegates from IHBC membership, and opportunities for non-member conservation professionals and broad sector interests. Following cancellation of the physical 2020 School in Brighton the Virtual 2020 School was held. This gave access to a much larger number of delegates but much was also lost in the level of CPD opportunities and delegate experience. In 2021 a decision has been made by the Executive that the School will once again be held mainly online. New and innovative ideas are being added to the programme so as to ensure a delegate experience which will try to match that of the physical three day School which we had run prior to the onset of Covid 19.

- We have had to adapt and change the way in which we run the Institute during the pandemic and like other organisations all executive meetings and committee work have been done remotely.
- Without being able to engage with our members directly a range of virtual activities to include on line tutorials on specialist topics; and virtual meetings to engage with certain projects or skills have been created. We will continue to work to extend the range of opportunities which we will be providing for our members.

Risk to historic buildings and areas

- **Climate change**
 - **Potentially damaging retrofit measures and understanding of the impact** of inappropriate approach to retrofit.
 - **Damage by impacts of climate change** – i.e flood, rainwater, wind
- **Neglect and decay**
- **Inappropriate alteration**
- **Structural failure**
- **Fire**
- **Vandalism**
- **Neglect and decay**
- **Inappropriate alteration**
- **Structural failure**
- **Fire**
- **Vandalism**

Climate Change Resources

5. Thinking specifically about climate change, what resources are you aware of/do you use that support climate change risk assessment/adaptation/ mitigation?

In April 2020 the IHBC adopted a 'Position statement on Sustainability and Conservation of the historic built environment'

https://ihbconline.co.uk/toolbox/position_statement/sustainabilityconservation.html

The 'IHBC Position statement on Sustainability and Conservation of the historic built environment' starts by outlining the IHBC's belief that the 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. The statement then sets out 16 key points that underpin this belief. These draw attention to the fact that re-using historic buildings, reshaping historic areas to facilitate their long-term use sustains them of non-renewable resources. Although the desirability of reuse is emphasised on the grounds of conserving embodied energy and carbon the statement does not demand that all old buildings and areas have to be kept. It sets out the principle that judgments on retention should weigh architectural and historic significance against any wider benefits that might arise from replacement and redevelopment. The durability of most traditional buildings is noted, as is the fact that the longer they survive the greater the contribution made by their embodied energy. The importance of maintenance and repair is highlighted as a fundamental consideration in improving energy efficiency but the statement also draws attention to the opportunities for reusing historic materials and the contribution of traditional craftsmanship to sustainability.

The Statement refers to historic places alongside individual historic buildings, stressing that much can be learnt from historic towns, particularly from their mixing of uses, their scale, layout and density, the orientation and variety of their buildings and features, as well as the form of their townscapes in general. It similarly points out that much can be learned from historic adapted and designed landscapes and parks which invariably support biodiversity, usually contribute to flood alleviation and frequently form invaluable local resources that support mental as well as physical health and well-being. The statement acknowledges that historic buildings and places are not always perfect so there is often scope to improve their performance through appropriate repairs and adaptations if conceived with sensitivity and understanding. The Statement signals the historic buildings can usually be made more energy efficient provided each one is considered holistically, taking account of functional performance, historic fabric, architectural issues such as character and appearance and the need to optimise medium to long term performance.

The terminology used in the position statement refers to historic buildings and places and to traditional construction, which are broad terms that apply to both designated and non-designated heritage. The Statement considers that where a proposed adaptation to enhance sustainability would result in a degree of harm to architecture and historic value a balanced judgement should be taken both the relative significance of the building and its contribution to environmental quality need to be considered. It also signals that, as the most significant historic buildings form only a small proportion of the overall building stock, it may be registered justifiable to retain some of them in an older altered state.

The IHBC has also produced Guidance notes on

- Retrofitting of Traditional Buildings (https://ihbconline.co.uk/toolbox/guidance_notes/retrofit.html) and
- Climate Change and Older Buildings – Key Sources (https://ihbconline.co.uk/toolbox/guidance_notes/climateChange.html)

The IHBC has made an important contribution to the development of the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance STBA which is a collaboration of organisations acting as a forum for sustaining and improving traditional buildings.

IHBC has established a Green Panel made up of groups of interested IHBC members who debate specific issues and provide the Institute with an informed opinion on green matters on which the Institute is consulted, raise green issues proactively and share important developments. The Panel advises on and prepares responses to consultations on green matters relating to the historic environment including building technology, retrofit and placemaking sustainability. The IHBC's Technical Panel also now has greater focus on sustainability issues.

During 2019 IHBC signed up to two external initiatives; The Climate Heritage Network (CHN) and Heritage Declares. CHN is an international support network which is committed to aiding communities in tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. The network includes local, regional, national, arts, culture and heritage agencies as well as NGOs, universities, businesses and other organisations. Organisations that join the network endorse CHN Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Heritage Declares is a UK based grass roots group of non-affiliated heritage practitioners, who have come together to urge the sector to react more quickly to the climate and ecological emergency and to the push the environmental crisis to the top of the heritage agenda.

Training and Continuing Professional Development events focus on climate change impacts. For example in March 2021, John Edwards, IHBC Technical Panel Chair and Trustee, will introduce 'Building Survey for Retrofit'¹ to IHBC members in a free stand-alone IHBC CPD certified 1-hour session including:

- The overall approach including the survey as part of the retrofit process
- Competencies and equipment required
- How condition affects performance
- Examples of issues of particular importance and how to analyse them
- Determining the suitability of types and levels of retrofit including materials
- Making sure that heritage values are part of the process

Examples: Heritage at Risk and Evidence

6. What region is your example based in? If you have multiple case studies, please indicate which Region these are in here using your

¹ <https://newsblogsnew.ihbc.org/?p=29218>

numbering system from Question 2. [Multiple Choice: North West, North East & Yorkshire, Midlands, East of England, South East, South West, National, Outside of England. Also option for free text if you have multiple case studies]

UK Based organisation with this being an England specific case study

7. Does your example relate to social, environmental or economic concerns?

All in varying degrees

**8. What is the source of evidence for your example study?
Multiple Choice [Management Plan, Strategies, Online websites, Peer-reviewed publications; organisational reports; personal expertise; anecdotes;**

Other – research carried out by the IHBC

9. Briefly introduce the example(s) you are submitting for evidence. Does it involve a specific site or sites? If so please provide their names and indicate whether they are designated heritage assets. [If possible, please limit your answer to 500 words per case study.]

The threats to our historic environment are many but there are also threats to the management of those valuable assets. Lack of skilled and capable conservation staff especially in local authorities. The IHBC has analysed and compared Local Authority capacity in 2020 in England with that from 2006, 2009 and 2018. In 2020:

- 6% of Local Authorities (two tier and unitary excluding County Councils) do not have access to conservation advice in any form.²
- Since 2006 the conservation specialist advice available to Local Authorities in England has decreased by 35.22%
- Since 2009 the conservation specialist advice available to Local Authorities in England has decreased by 48.7%

10. Does or will your example have a management plan or strategy which addresses threat/risks? Please tick one or more of the options below.

- We do not have management plans/strategies that have a focused consideration of risk/threat

11. Are there wider social, economic and environmental threats and challenges relevant to your example? [Please limit your answer to 500 words if possible.]

² <https://newsblogsnew.ihbc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Local-Authority-Conservation-Staffing-Resources-in-England-2020-v261020.pdf>
<https://newsblogsnew.ihbc.org.uk/?p=28145>

With 6% of Local Authorities now having no access to conservation advice and many others having just part time access to advice the impact of inadequate advice capacity exposes the nation's heritage on an ongoing basis to the real risk of harm.

The loss of 48.7% of conservation provision across England since 2009 can only have had a devastating effect on local authorities and some may be no longer even have capacity to even carry out their statutory conservation duties. Where there is conservation provision available the reduced levels affecting most Local Authorities mean that Listed Building owners and developers are often no longer able to get detailed proactive and practical support and/or advice from the Local Authority to help them to maintain and protect the heritage for which they have responsibility. The risk to UK's heritage is substantially increased by lack of capacity and skills to care for it, manage it and ensure its future use.

With the restrictions placed upon their actions by the COVID crisis, Local Planning Authorities have been varied in their responses and their approach to dealing with Planning & Listed Building Consent applications. As part of their emergency processes some may have, where safe to do so, continued to make site visits when dealing with Planning Applications whilst we believe others have not made visits but it has not been possible to carry out internal site inspections. The risk to buildings during the pandemic has also been increased by lack of clear guidance by government bodies on appropriateness and safety for carrying out site visits to buildings.

This Institute believes there is an urgent need for clear guidance to be provided from Government on procedures and appropriate practices for carrying out site visits. In particular the focus of our concern is on the impact on Listed Building Consent applications which, unlike most Planning Applications, will predominantly require an internal inspection. This lack of clarity can slow down the decision-making process but can also lead to harm happening to buildings through inadvertence or lack of special knowledge where thorough inspections are not carried out.

Listed building consent should not be granted for internal works to listed buildings without appropriate on-site inspection by a suitably qualified person, in order to advise the local planning authority. Approval of alterations to historic interiors without detailed inspection is likely to impact negatively on our significant heritage. Government guidance is needed as a matter of urgency on how site visits can be made in a safe manner, with the necessary protocols for internal inspections.

12. Is your case study concerned with a climate change-related hazard or threat?

No, But climate change will only make the issues greater.

The Historic Environment and Forecasting

13. How important a role do you think the maintenance and repair of heritage assets have in mitigating the threats you have outlined above?

Appropriate long term maintenance and repair can help mitigate harm.

14. What are your priorities regarding historic environment threats in terms of future opportunities and challenges? Please feel free to comment more widely using your own experience and include examples if possible.

15. Please comment on any gaps in knowledge, services, or resources related to the historic environment and threat, including climate change.

16. Is there anything else you wish to comment on or any other information you would like to provide relating to the call for evidence? No.