



INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION

Tim Brennan
Local Government Policy Officer
English Heritage
23 Savile Row
London
W1S 2ET

Mrs Karen Holyoake
PGDipTP, PGDipArch, BA(Hons)Arch, IHBC
Consultations Secretary
Institute of Historic Building Conservation
Handel House
64 Campbell Street
Brierley Hill
West Midlands
DY5 3YD

Tel: 01902 555625
Mob: 07956 538398
E-mail: consultations@ihbc.org.uk

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Dear Sir

RICS Asset Management Guidelines

I refer to the above consultation document.

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation is the professional body for 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 draft document highlights the guiding principles of the 2003 publication 'Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets' and briefly puts the historic environment into context. However, the document does not provide adequate information or specific advice for those involved in making decisions about local authority owned historic buildings and other heritage assets.

The Institute would like to see more substance in the document, which should not be seen as a substitute for properly integrated consideration of heritage issues within the body of the RICS guidelines. Such concerns formed the basis of the Institutes original comments and remain so.

There needs to be reference to the potential need for Listed Building Consent, Planning Permission, Conservation Area Consent and Building Regulations. It is essential that those managing local authority assets recognise the need and importance in consulting Conservation and Planning Officers early in the process, ideally before tendering of works. This is to establish whether any permissions and/or consent are required and to ensure that methods of repair are suitable. These issues need to be made clear.

It is important to convey the role played by historic buildings and areas in delivering urban and economic regeneration. A clear sense of the value of the historic environment is essential. This document could be enriched by providing a greater overview of the importance of our historic environment by emphasising the local impact that heritage has on civic pride, image, emotional

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attachment, community spirit and cohesion. The document needs to adequately present the key principles involved in managing the historic environment.

A clear sense of direction is needed if English Heritage (EH) is to take Local Authority Buildings at Risk issues forward. This document provides such an opportunity. A strong lead is needed on this matter, which could be promoted if EH indicated that they would work with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and Government Regional Offices to focus on local authority performance on this issue.

Comments about specific section are as follows:

Key objectives in managing heritage assets: Championing quality

With regard to Champions, reference could be made to the importance of the Heritage Champion working closely with the Planning Portfolio Holder, but especially the Property Portfolio Holder and Corporate Property Officer (a statutory post).

Good asset management planning: Know what you own

There should be some reference to the need in many cases for a Conservation Management Plan, which could be cross-referenced to appropriate guidance. The publication by the Heritage Lottery Fund on Conservation Management Plans should be mentioned and would be a useful document to include as further information.

Managing heritage assets: The importance of maintenance

On the issue of maintenance, local authorities should be encouraged via ODPM policy and/or funding to adopt minimum inspection and maintenance standards for vacant historic properties. The benefits of maintaining historic properties in use should be recognised in terms of sustainability and preserving embodied energy. In addition, more specific advice is necessary regarding the maintenance of historic buildings, such as the benefit of quinquennial surveys.

Disposal of heritage assets

In referring to the disposal of heritage assets specific detailed reference should be made to the content of the Disposal Consent Regulations and greater encouragement to make use of the Regulations. No reference is made to local authorities working with Building Preservation Trusts. The valuable work of Building Preservation Trusts in bringing vacant historic buildings back into use needs to be acknowledged.

I trust these comments are helpful.

Yours faithfully

Karen Holyoake
Consultations Secretary