



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

Making Heritage Work

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Dear Ms Banks

THEFT OFFENCES SENTENCING GUIDELINE CONSULTATION

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 Institute welcomes the inclusion of heritage theft in the document and the specific references to metal theft. Although there is evidence that metal theft is on the decline, we would like to point out that heritage structures, such as churches, are particularly vulnerable to this. Often they have large quantities of lead and other high quality and valuable materials. But their vulnerability to such theft can be worsened because they are often in secluded locations with low levels of passive surveillance. They also, because of their status as listed buildings, require high quality restoration after damage usually by bodies and communities with few resources for remediation.

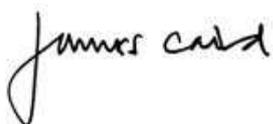
A further point of note is that once a heritage building has been the victim of metal theft it is harder, even impossible, for insurance cover to be obtained for the same element of structure. This means that a proper restoration using the correct heritage materials is less likely to be undertaken; which means in turn that this sort of theft can result in permanent detriment to the heritage structure.

Apart from the references, by way of example, to plaques on monuments, there are none, specifically, to the theft of fixtures and fittings of heritage structures and their curtilage structures. These can also be vulnerable to theft. Examples include internal architectural features, fixed *objets d'art* and public art. Again, these can have heritage significance and cultural far beyond their financial value.

Heritage is not defined in the Consultation and we would like to see a definition in the Guidelines include listed buildings and ancient monuments, as well as heritage and cultural objects, both in public collections and those in private hands.

We would therefore support the general approach that has been taken. However we would like to see the references to these points reinforced in the Guidelines with reference to the harm that heritage theft can cause. It is worthy of note that in the USA damage to cultural property creates an aggravating sentencing factor and we would be pleased if the wording of the Guidance could follow a similar direction. To achieve this the use of pre-sentencing Heritage Crime Impact Statements might be useful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Caird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

James Caird
Consultant Consultations Co-ordinator