



IHBC RESEARCH NOTES

Market Intelligence: Local Authority Conservation Specialists Jobs Market 2022

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Executive Summary

- The Institute's continuous data from 1998 (25 years) now covers 2,144 posts.
- The year of 2022 was principally notable for a higher number of advertised full-time permanent jobs than those that are part-time and/or fixed term that had been more notable in recent years (the latter explicit in programmes such as High Street Action Zones).
- Recruitment levels remained approximately the same as 2021 having edged up slightly from 2020 but overall remained well below those in the first decade of the century.
- The average median salary for advertised posts in 2022 was £36,042 marking a rise of 8.7%, the largest year on year increase since 2001-2002 (the average annual increase in the last decade has been less than 4%). In November 2022, according to the Office of National Statistics, the average salary in the UK was £27,756 but for full-time employees this was £33,000.
- The Institute can derive satisfaction from the expectation that job applicants would be Full Members of IHBC (or working towards this) with over 73% of employers making this a requirement, the highest level since 2016 (71%).
- As has been noted for some years, development management advice, appeals and enforcement continued to dominate prioritised job functions with a low but only slightly expanding level of diversification of tasks, possibly reflecting continuing resource constraints.
- Increasing number of posts re-advertised within six months in England may reflect continuing difficulty in filling some posts.

- Recruitment for posts in North Branch continued to be low (two) but surprisingly and unusually, there were only five in the South East and generally at suppressed salary grades.

NB: although the IHBC is active across the United Kingdom, analysis in this Research Note relates only to information gleaned about England's Local Authorities. (see paragraph 1.4)

1. Background

1.1 This annual review aims to compliment the information gathered in the regular series of Local Authority Conservation Provision Studies undertaken by IHBC.

1.2 The Institute's cumulative data set relates to local authority conservation posts advertised commenced in 1998. This now comprises 2,144 posts over 25 years. [\[1\]](#)

1.3 Analysis of local government job vacancies in the calendar year 2022 for the Institute aims to help form a picture of the market in respect of workload requirements; qualifications; levels of remuneration etc.; specific fixed-term nationally supported project posts; regional variations and other trends.

1.4 Advertised posts are monitored weekly and although statistics are collected for Scotland and Wales (but not Northern Ireland) this Note relates only to England as the annual total of vacancies for the other two Home Countries are statistically insignificant and insufficiently numerous to delineate separate meaningful statistics.

1.5 Since 2015 data has also been collected where unsuccessful recruitment within six-months has required the local authority to re-advertise. In 2022 more than half of the re-advertisements took place within two months suggesting some urgency to appoint, but one authority waited 10 months.

2. Size of the market

2.1 Historically, advertised posts in England grew steadily in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s exceeded 120 per year (with a peak of 158 in 2003-4). A year-on-year fall ensued thereafter until by the depth of the Recession in 2011 and 2012 only 26 vacancies were advertised each year. Recruitment has generally not returned to those late 1990s levels, averaging only about a half to two-thirds of the pre-Recession numbers.

2.2 Advertising in 2022 was at about the same level as 2021 (and 2018) with most recruitment again taking place in the first quarter and with the market distortions of the 2020 pandemic now seemingly eradicated.

2.3 In 2022 there was also a consolidation of the general trend back towards the traditional pattern of employment, i.e., permanent posts (74%), much more commonplace in the late 1990s.

3. Part-time working v. fixed-term posts

3.1 A notable reduction was evident in the requirement for part-time working (4.7%) and fixed-term posts at 19% (down from 32.5% in 2021) [2] arose mainly from the conclusion of Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) projects, maternity cover and to carry out unspecific general duties rather than other time-limited initiatives, with tenure usually lasting between 12 and 18 months - but with some HAZ work extending up to 36 months.

4. General salary levels

4.1 Salaries are almost invariably expressed as a range. [3] Employers usually expect successful candidates to be appointed at the bottom of the quoted scale, progressing upward on the basis of qualifications and/or experience [4] but none of the vacancies in 2022 appear to have tied specific career progression milestones to salary increments.

4.2 The average starting salary in England in 2022 was £34,032 with the average finishing salary £38,055 giving a median salary level of £36,043. This was an 8.7% rise over 2021 and the largest annual rise since 2001-2. [5] By comparison, in November 2022, according to the Office of National Statistics the average salary in the UK was £27,756 but for full-time employees this was £33,000. [6]. It is noted that range of grades for salaries (and thus career progression) have become shorter.

4.3 Two caveats usually regarding potential distortions to national salary averages continue to apply. These are:

- a) at the bottom, 'career grade' posts (including interns and trainees) with untypically low starting salaries usually recruiting non-graduate or newly graduated staff, or uncommon high-end salaries (typically senior management positions) mainly within London councils;
- b) regional variations - where higher salaries have been paid in London, and the South-East throughout the period of this data set - and lower ones, usually in the West Midlands and South West. In 2022, for the first time, this was no longer true in the South-East where the average was notably well-below the historical trend and other regions and;
- c) sampling sizes - where larger sampled tend to reduce regional anomalies overall.

Further comment is made about this in Section 9.

5. Qualifications and expertise

5.1 Stated educational requirements varied significantly in 2022 as set out in Table 1. Recruiters did not always explicitly refer to Full Membership of the IHBC or that applicants should be working purposefully towards this, nor whether such membership was essential or merely desirable; nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that in 2022 almost three-quarters of applicants (72.6%) were expected to be either Full Members of IHBC (or rather less commonly, working towards full membership)

5.2 This suggests as in the past strong awareness of the Institute’s brand related to a recognised set of competences and professional status either via degree status or by qualification. This high percentage had last been noted only in 2016 having fallen back subsequently closer to 60%.

5.3 There also appears to be a specific shift by recruiters to a more overt requirement for heritage-based educational recognition as an adjunct to IHBC membership.

5.4 A sole requirement of RTPI or RIBA membership for posts was hardly evident in 2022 (1.19%) and membership of other allied institutions, in particular the RICS or CIfA were not overtly cited as a qualifying requirement.

Table 1. Educational Requirements (where IHBC uncategorised membership was also a consideration)				
	2022		2021	
Degree only	16	19.04%	19	23.17%
Degree + Post Graduate Qualification + IHBC	16	19.04%	13	15.85%
Degree + Post Graduate Qualification + RTPI	1	1.19%	-	-
Degree + IHBC as the principal standard (with or without RTPI/RIBA as an alternative)	29	34.52%	23	28.05%
Degree + RTPI membership only	1	1.19%	1	1.22%
Degree + RIBA membership only	1	1.19%	-	-
Qualification	2	2.38%	4	4.88%
Qualification + IHBC (or RTPI)	14	16.66%	5	6.09%
Post Graduate Qualification + IHBC	1	1.19%	5	6.09%
Post Graduate Qualification	2	2.38%	2	2.44%
Other: HNC 6-7 etc. only	1	1.19%	8	9.75%
	84	100%	82*	100%
Note: one post in 2021 did not specify any qualification requirements				

6. Roles & responsibilities

6.1 Workload priorities set out in job descriptions always need to be evaluated with caution and the percentage allocations of time to individual tasks is only rarely indicated (5% of posts in 2022, nor are these priorities necessarily adhered to in practice once the post holder is appointed).

6.2 The priorities set out in the job advertisement do not always tally with those in the formal job specification – which is inevitably more wide ranging [7] and may express the overall long-term management objectives for the service rather than just immediate short-term priorities. It is not possible to capture all the functions of job specifications but priorities and some trends are usually discernible.

6.3 The need for 'enthusiasm' and 'self-motivation' (suggesting 'you're on your own') continue to be frequently cited in job adverts and this remains especially true for junior, less well remunerated posts.

6.4 It was noted that local authorities were not always diligent in reviewing roles and responsibilities. One authority in the West Midlands required the post-holder to process Conservation Area Consent applications notwithstanding that CAC had been abolished on 1st October 2013; while another in the East Midlands - in a most unfortunate on-line job description substitution - stated apart from self-motivation that the important requirement for the job was: '*familiarity with the use of brushes, mops, pails, cleaning chemicals and disinfectants...*' which rather poses the question of whether this would engender much confidence in that local authority among prospective applicants.

6.5 Nevertheless, the recruitment process is sometimes seen as the opportunity to update a job description and permit specific priorities to be refocused. In practice however, short-term, time-limited, high priority tasks such as development management advice invariably take priority over large-scale, long-term resource hungry workload such as conservation area designation, appraisal and review; planning policy input; compliance and enforcement; heritage-at-risk issues or local listing unless any of these are the clearly stated and principal foci of the post. Further comment about the government supported local listing initiative is made in Section 8 below.

6.6 In deconstructing the workload requirements of permanent posts in 2022, development management advice or the processing of applications for listed building consent continued to dominate workflows as the highest priority in 50% of job descriptions (and greater still if as the second ranking priority). In almost every instance this task was also tied to involvement with planning appeals and associated enforcement action.

6.7 Although only three posts (3.5%) made conservation area, designation, appraisal or review a top priority, forty-one posts (49%) made this a secondary or tertiary priority and this may reflect the

inadequacy of many past designations and/or the infrequency of periodic statutory review and documentation. Past annual reviews have observed that only a low percentage of conservation areas in England have any form of appraisal and/or management plan [\[8\]](#) and an even fewer meet the current Historic England best practice standards. [\[9\]](#)

6.8 Also notable in 2022 was an increased recognition of buildings-at-risk issues. While only two local authorities made this a top priority (one in the North West its only priority) the task appeared as a tertiary or lower priority in a further 32% of job descriptions up from just over 13% in 2021 but is a function that requires consistent and sustained resourcing over an extended period.

6.9 While a varied range of other tasks were very little priority appeared to be given to providing general external advice or to public engagement; policy input to local plans, neighbourhood plans and writing SPG; and, considering the number of posts with design in the title, little priority to design advice or production of design briefs. [\[10\]](#)

6.10 Any contraction of the scope of heritage workload (often because of resource constraints) suggests a withdrawal from holistic best practice (and established delivery models of excellence) [\[11\]](#) or the proper exercise of statutory functions. The effective and appropriate management of the local historic environment would thus be reduced and would not be what the Institute would consider a well-balanced service.

6.11 Overall, while a minor rebalancing from **reactive** short-term tasks (particularly development management) were discerned in 2022, some job specifications to a more **proactive** workload: e.g., conservation area review; buildings-at-risk; local listing, are not yet highly enough prioritised to constitute a recognisable and continuing medium-term trend and it is concerning that few vacancies identify as any priority advice to individual historic building owners, occupiers and the general public.

6.12 As has been noted in the past, an annual snapshot does not necessarily imply that other important workload activities are not already taking place or that a wide range of other tasks are never carried out (i.e., those generally regarded as necessary for a balanced conservation service). It does however constantly bring in to question the level of a council's commitment to and resourcing of a full and balanced heritage service in relation to the quantum of the heritage assets needing to be properly managed. [\[12\]](#)

6.13 Full job descriptions accompanying vacancies often include multifarious miscellaneous heritage management tasks required of the new post-holder but they may not necessarily represent the actual priorities as seen by the authority's officer management team or elected councillors.

7. Heritage Action Zones

7.1 In 2020 almost 40% (27 in total) of all the advertised posts were fixed-term HAZ Officer vacancies. This fell to 8.4% (7 in total) in 2021 and 6% (5 in total) in 2022 with a duration varying from 12 months in one instance; 18 months in two; and the remaining two appointments being 24 and 36 months each. In 2022 salary ranges were generally higher than those quoted for permanent appointments within the relevant IHBC Branch.

7.2 Only one Townscape Heritage initiative Project Officer post, in the East Midlands, was advertised in 2022 and overall, these fixed-term appointments appeared to have run their course.

8. Local listing

8.1 Following the 2019 ministerial announcement about proposed greater protection for undesignated heritage assets, IHBC monitored specifically-targeted job vacancies relating to local listing from the start of 2000. The pilots were identified in the IHBC's 2021 annual report.

8.2 Initially, government funding supported 10 pilot areas, increasing to 22 in February 2021. No reports on the conclusions of this initiative had been published by the time this Research Note appeared, and no obvious new impetus is evident.

8.3 It remains a matter of conjecture whether survey outcomes will be collated and/or disseminated; whether any uniform baseline standard for selection will be adopted and/or whether any new legislative provisions will be made in due course.

8.4 With regard to local listing more generally, as a workload priority it was noted in 2022 that two local planning authorities (apparently originally identified as pilots - one in East Anglia and one in the South) advertised for posts treating this as a top priority (and may thus have been later pilot starters) but one of these then readvertised the post only to place local listing as its lowest priority!

8.5 Of the seven posts (8.3%) among the 2022 advertisers identifying local listing work, at least two were for authorities known to already have local lists to a good practice standard (suggesting periodic reviews were intended) and thus the priority over the year for this task appeared to remain low.

9. Regional variations

9.1 Interpretation of variations in salaries and comparisons to previous years require some caution. The turnover of posts in some Branches has been reasonably consistent e.g., East Anglia and the South West but other have been consistently low, particularly in the North as shown in Table 2 but allowance must where there have been fixed-term initiatives. [\[13\]](#)

Table 2 Vacancies per English Branch Five-year sample 2018-22					
Branch	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
East Anglia	12	13	12	5	16
East Midlands	8	8	5	10	14
London	17	12	7	9	9
North	2	4	3	4	5
North West	5	10	7	2	7
South	10	9	4	8	1
South East	5	8	7	9	12
South West	11	9	9	5	10
West Midlands	6	5	8	6	6
Yorkshire	8	4	7	1	8
Total	84	83	69*	59	88
Note: In 2020 no posts were advertised in April because of Covid					

9.2 The overall salary variation figures for IHBC Branches in 2022 are set out in Table 3, but as noted above when the total job vacancies within any one IHBC Branch area are quite small this data is not always a reliable guide.

9.3 Overall, the median salary in England for 2022 was £36,042 marking a summary rise of 8.7% increase on 2021 (the largest annual increase since 2001-2) but clearly not applying across all Branches and also a reflection of where posts with lower seniority were prevalent as noted above in the South East. By contrast the high figure for London resulted from a preponderance of senior heritage management posts and these were distorting factors.

Table 3. Variations in Median Salaries by Branch 2022			
Region	Sample	Median (£)	Variation (%)
East Anglia	12	36,904	+ 2.39%
East Midlands	8	32,816	- 8.95%
London	17	44,269	+ 22.83%
North	2	34,212	- 5.07%
North West	5	32,786	- 9.03%
South	10	36,989	+ 2.62%
South East	5	29,499	- 18.15%
South West	11	33,632	- 6.68%
West Midlands	6	29,932	- 16.95%
Yorkshire	8	32,815	- 8.85%
Total (& Average)	84	(36,042)	

9.4 In past years median salary scales in London and the South East had been consistently higher than in other regions, reflecting higher living and travelling costs (as might reasonably be expected). Conversely in most years, one or more Branch area has generally been lower than the national average (particularly the South West and West Midlands).

9.5 In 2022 the notable variations are much higher increases in London posts and (unusually) much lower ones in the South East. While East Anglia and the South were marginally higher than the national average, salaries in the West Midlands and Yorkshire followed a long tradition of being lower.

10. Concluding Note

10.1 The jobs market for permanent local authority conservation specialists continued to recover in 2022 after the deleterious impact of Covid in 2020 on advertised vacancies and the high-proportion of fixed-term HAZ posts to permanent posts that no longer dominate recruitment.

10.2 Overall, the stabilisation of numbers of permanent jobs (notwithstanding variations between Branches) represents a welcome return to stable establishments after years where there appeared to be a move to more fixed-term posts and indicates a gradual rebuilding of capacity from the low points of 2011 and 2012 notwithstanding the economic outlook.

10.3 The Institute intends to web-publish a further market intelligence report on the local authority conservation specialist jobs market 2023 in early 2024.

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Endnotes

1. Between 1998 and c.2009, information concerning local authority vacancies was drawn principally from the weekly pages of *Planning* magazine. Thereafter the decline in planning related posts, the switch to the (typically) fortnightly publication of *Planning* coupled with the development of the IHBC's web-based jobs pages saw the advertising of conservation posts move almost exclusively from the former to the latter. Advertising now rarely appears elsewhere and thus the data in this Note is not drawn from sources beyond IHBC and is considered to be near definitive.

2. A small number of fixed term and temporary posts accounting for the remainder.

3. Occasionally only a fixed starting or finishing salary is stated. Ranges are usually also given even where appointments are part-time (pro-rata) or fixed-term.

4. Salary progression has generally been on the basis of an annual increment within the overall scales with the individual spinal-point progressions within the quoted range usually being short.

5. To compensate for the effect of unusually low or unusually high ends of salary ranges a comparative analysis is also made by subtracting the three highest and three lowest starting and finishing salaries during the year from the overall sample. This nevertheless generates very similar figures to the overall averages above i.e., generates a typical raw data starting salary in 2022 of £34,192, a finishing salary £38,273, and a median of £36,232.

6. Officer for National Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2022>

7. Usually with a catch-all requirement to encompass 'such other duties as may be required from time to time' or similar phraseology

8. Estimated to be about 25%

9. Estimated to be about 10%

10. This may become increasingly important if forthcoming legislation brings forward design codes and initiatives to establish beauty and/or local distinctiveness as development management criteria

11. For example see IHBC Guidance Note: Annual Conservation Management Statements – Best Practice GN2014/2 - accessible at:

https://ihbc.org.uk/toolbox/guidance_notes/consManag.html

12. See IHBC Guidance Note GN2014/3 Oct 2014 Planning Authority duties in the provision of appropriate specialist advice in England, accessible at: https://ihbconline.co.uk/toolbox/guidance_notes/index.html

13. For example, in 2020 there were Heritage Action Zone posts in every Branch area but in the East Midlands four out of the five of these were HAZ posts.