

English Heritage Thematic Research Strategies

A Thematic Research Strategy for the urban historic environment

April 2010

SUMMARY

1. This draft Thematic Research Strategy for the Urban Historic Environment is primarily intended to serve English Heritage's needs by identifying research which underpins corporate objectives. English Heritage works in close partnership with many other agencies, and the draft strategy also seeks to express wider concerns and reflect views from the different communities engaged in the understanding, care and protection of the historic industrial environment.
2. Dissemination of the Strategy is intended to assist in the most effective use of resources by directing support to the most critical aspects of research. . It informs the development of the National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP) and contributes to English Heritage's development of a proactive and responsive research agenda that will complement and underpin the NHPP when it emerges. It is also designed to give guidance to our partners in the heritage sector about the sort of research that English Heritage would consider for support. The development of the Strategy, with both internal and external consultation, has helped shape perceptions about issues for inclusion in the NHPP without pre-judging the outcome of that Plan. It provides a framework for the study of the urban historic environment that will make a valuable contribution to the debate about the best way of protecting our historic towns.
3. It is one of a suite of strategies which will feed directly into the NHPP process outlining what we more need to know more about specific themes and subjects and will in due course need further revision to reflect the conclusions of the completed NHPP.
4. The document: sets out the need for a research strategy for the urban historic environment and relates this need to the threats that face that environment. Amongst other things it:
 - locates the strategy within the wider EH research agenda;
 - outlines criteria for prioritising research projects;
 - gives guidance on establishing research projects and;
 - identifies key research topics and projects for the present plan period and until the completion of the NHPP.
5. The Strategy is arranged in two main sections.

Part 1 outlines the place of research in English Heritage, places the Thematic Research Strategy for the Urban Historic Environment within this corporate framework and explains how the thematic strategies will be implemented and refreshed. **Appendices 1 & 2** provide the detail of the relevant corporate aims, objectives, research themes and programmes.

Part 2 presents the Thematic Research Strategy for the Urban Historic Environment itself. It explains the need for this specific strategy and the underlying principles that have led to the identification of threat-led priorities and criteria. The resultant priority research programmes focus on three main strands: the provision of better information for decision making, filling gaps in

knowledge and understanding, and addressing the need for research in the most urgent and vulnerable aspects of the urban historic environment. Together these strands, addressed through nine priority research programmes, will provide the evidence base for better protection of the resource. **Appendix 4** gives further detail of 28 preferred topics mapped across to corporate objectives, research themes and SHAPE sub-programmes.

The nine priority research programmes for the urban historic environment are:

Developer-funded research; supporting synthesis
Historic characterisation; completing national coverage
Survival of early form and fabric in historic towns; the hidden resource
The 20th century; understanding the recent past
Parks, open spaces, cemeteries; supporting decision making
Coastal towns and Historic ports; vulnerable urban environments
Providing the evidence base for regeneration and renewal
Suburbs; establishing values
Threatened or vulnerable building types

Finally, guidance is provided on establishing research projects consistent with MoRPHE and SHAPE guidelines.

English Heritage Thematic Research Strategies

A Thematic Research Strategy for the urban historic environment

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English Heritage Thematic Research Strategies

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PART ONE: ENGLISH HERITAGE AND RESEARCH

I Introduction

The value of the historic environment to our national life is acknowledged in many Government programmes and most recently has been set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the historic environment,¹ which states its importance to our cultural heritage and its contribution to key policies such as sustainable development. English Heritage exists to identify, protect and promote nationally significant aspects of England's historic environment. A broad spectrum of research activity underpins English Heritage's functions and activities, helping to provide new insights into the historic environment, establishing and explaining significance and heritage values, supporting local communities and partners in the heritage sector, and underpinning conservation and protection.

Part One of this Thematic Research Strategy explains:

- the role of research within English Heritage;
- the relationship of Thematic Research Strategies to corporate aims and objectives;
- the means of implementing the Thematic Research Strategies; and
- arrangements for ensuring that the Strategies reflect changing priorities.

Part Two then sets out the detailed English Heritage Thematic Research Strategy for the urban historic environment, identifying the threats and challenges that are faced, the need for research in formulating our response to these, and the specific criteria relevant to the subject that will underpin those responses. It also outlines the critical priorities for the plan period and provides brief guidance on the formulation of proposals for research. Appendices include the primary research topics to be addressed and their links to corporate objectives.

2 English Heritage research policy

English Heritage research activity is diverse, embracing socio-economic investigations, techniques for restoration, presentation of historic sites, and research into the historic environment ranging from landscapes to individual sites and objects. It falls into a number of categories of research described by the Frascati Definitions,

¹ Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010)

covering basic research, applied research and experimental development.² Research undertaken or supported by English Heritage is designed to complement research activity supported by other agencies such as the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Research carried out or supported by English Heritage is directed towards the achievement of the organisation's strategic aims and objectives, set out in the **Strategic Plan** for the period 2005-2010³ (see Appendix I). The strategy is built around the concept of the 'heritage cycle' (Fig 1).

The six high level aims for the plan period are:

- Help people develop their understanding of the historic environment
- Get the historic environment on other people's agendas
- Enable and promote sustainable change to England's historic environment
- Help local communities to care for their historic environment
- Stimulate and harness enthusiasm for England's historic environment
- Make the most effective use of the assets in our care

A new Corporate Strategy is currently in preparation covering the period 2010-2015.

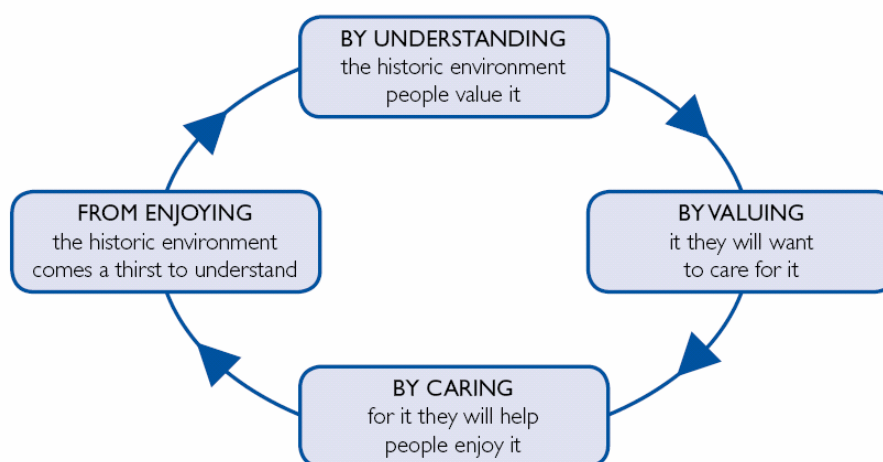


Figure 1 The Heritage Cycle diagram

English Heritage's current **Research Strategy**, *Discovering the past, Shaping the future*⁴, sets out high level priorities to be addressed by English Heritage in its research activity. These are to:

- Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment;

² see *SHAPE 2008: A Strategic Framework for Historic Environment Activities and Programmes in English Heritage*, p 96

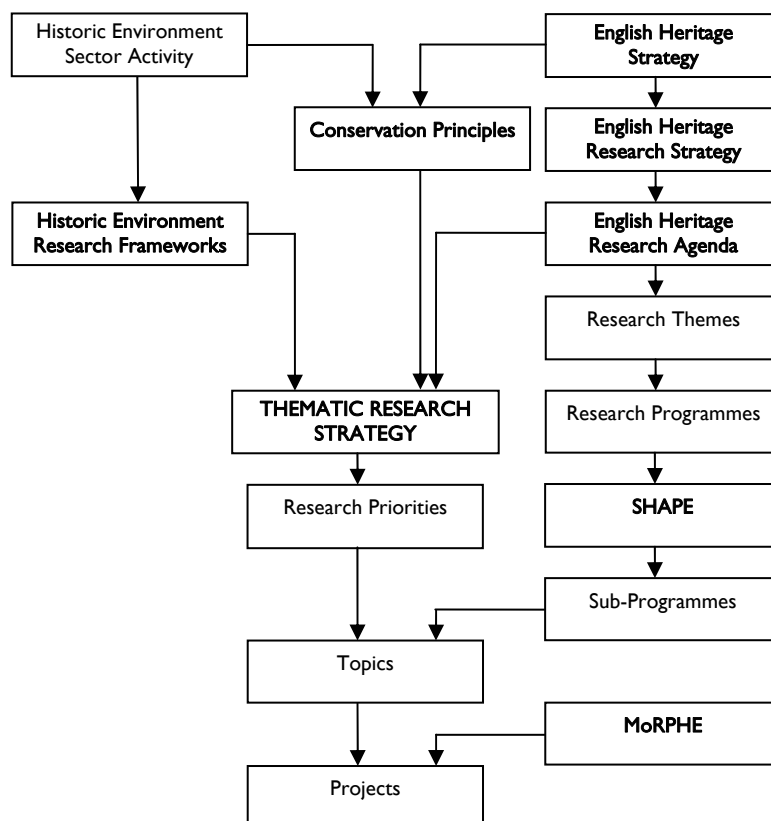
³ *English Heritage Strategic Plan 2005-2010: Making the Past Part of Our Future*

⁴ *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005-2010* (English Heritage 2005)

- Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic environment;
- Provide better advice to improve the care of the historic environment;
- Develop policies, guidelines and exemplars to promote better management of change in the historic environment;
- Stimulate access to, interest in and enjoyment of the historic environment.

The accompanying **Research Agenda**⁵ sets out seven *Themes* which support these priorities, each comprising a number of *Programmes* that define the types and scope of work required to enhance understanding of the historic environment (Appendix 2). The Themes and Programmes are underpinned in turn by more detailed *Sub-Programmes* which are outlined in English Heritage’s Strategic Framework, known as **SHAPE**⁶.

Thematic Research Strategies, one of which is presented here, provide more detailed analysis of key aspects of the historic environment within the framework established by the Strategic Plan, corporate Research Strategy and *Conservation Principles*.⁷ The relationships within this complex hierarchy are shown in diagrammatic form in Figure 2.



⁵ *English Heritage Research Agenda: An Introduction to English Heritage’s Research Themes and Programmes* (English Heritage, 2005)

⁶ *A Strategic Framework for Historic Environment Activities and Programmes in English Heritage* (English Heritage, 2008)

⁷ *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage, 2008)

Figure 2 *Diagram showing how the thematic research strategies are informed by other relevant documents (in bold); and how projects are generated in relation to the research topics identified in the strategies, the framework set out in SHAPE and the management principles outlined in MoRPHE*

3 **Thematic Research Strategies**

Individual Thematic Research Strategies have been developed to address key aspects of England's historic environment. They share the aim of supporting English Heritage's strategic goals and seek to address common issues such as the impact of major change, both natural and planned, on the historic environment. The subject areas are, however, very diverse in terms of chronological scope, academic discipline, relationship to conservation, management and protection, and the threats and opportunities affecting them.⁸ Research responses in each field will, therefore, differ, and the Thematic Research Strategies set out specific priorities for research designed to address the particular needs for each theme. Where interests overlap (for example, the shared concern for industrial remains in historic towns), this is indicated in the description of the priority research programmes within each document.

The Thematic Research Strategies are primarily intended to serve English Heritage by identifying research which furthers corporate goals but, since English Heritage shares its responsibilities with many other agencies, they seek also to express wider concerns and reflect views from the different communities engaged in the understanding and managing the historic environment. Publication of the Strategies is intended to assist in the most effective use of resources by directing support to the most critical aspects of research. The aim is to ensure that English Heritage research makes a difference to the protection, care and enjoyment of the historic environment, whether through new understanding, better support for partner organisations, better integration of historic environment information into the planning system, wider public engagement or more effective conservation and management.

The different nature of each Thematic Research Strategies means that the criteria used to identify priority research programmes will vary from strategy to strategy, with different weight given in different measures to considerations such as risk, vulnerability and significance, the level of existing knowledge, and the potential for enhancing access, understanding and appreciation. Common to all the strategies, however, is the need to address the most urgent and important issues affecting the historic environment in order to improve our collective ability to provide it with better care and protection.

4 **Implementing the Thematic Research Strategies**

⁸ Companion strategies to the present document are English Heritage Thematic Research Strategies for Prehistory, the Roman Period and the Historic Industrial Environment. In preparation are strategies for Freshwater Environments, Places of Worship, Characterisation and the Archaeology of the Contemporary Past

In its Research Strategy, English Heritage has set out generic criteria for the prioritisation of research.⁹ English Heritage will seek to implement the Thematic Research Strategies through supporting research programmes and projects that meet the specific priorities outlined in the strategies and the generic criteria for the prioritisation of research which are set out in the corporate Research Strategy. The means of support may include:

- using English Heritage staff resources;
- using English Heritage's grants programme for funding external projects;
- working with universities and academic funding bodies (AHRC, ESRC);
- working with government agencies, regional development agencies and local authorities;
- working with developers and owners;
- working with amenity groups and societies;
- working with the voluntary sector.

Whatever the approach, it is essential that the heritage sector has the ability to undertake research of a high quality. An underpinning objective is, therefore;

- *To enhance training and capacity building within projects such that they contribute to a legacy of expertise and skills which can be used for the benefit of the historic environment*

5 Refreshing the Thematic Research Strategies

The publication of this and companion Thematic Research Strategies is intended to encourage debate about priorities. The documents are statements rooted in their time, and it is envisaged that the drivers for research will evolve as circumstances change. Dialogue about research priorities is therefore essential to maintain relevance to current needs, and periodic refreshment of the strategies is an important part of their implementation. This will be informed by ongoing consultation and horizon-scanning to identify the changing needs of the sector, the development of collaborative approaches, and regular reports on progress. The Strategies therefore represent iterative documents under constant review and will be regularly updated on-line.

⁹ *Discovering the Past, Shaping the Future: Research Strategy 2005-2010* (English Heritage 2005), p.20

PART TWO

The English Heritage Thematic Research Strategy for the Urban Historic Environment

The urban historic environment provides the setting for the life of the nation. The vast majority of people live and work in towns and cities, and cultural activity is concentrated in urban settlements. Many towns have experienced continuous occupation for over a thousand years, and some for the greater part of two thousand years. The history of the nation is, therefore, represented in the archaeology and fabric of our towns. The concept of the 'historic town' has broadened in recent years, with a growing recognition that even the new towns and new suburbs of the late 20th century represent important episodes in national history. Urban space, however, never stands still: the process of long-term change has produced today's historic environment, and the pressure for change is today more intense than ever. The historic environment has the potential to contribute to the future success of our towns and cities, for it provides people with a sense of belonging to somewhere distinctive and special. It is an essential component of place making, for identity derives largely from history, and especially from its material evidence. Understanding of the historic environment is, therefore, crucial to our lives: it tells us what is important and why, it explains how our towns and cities have evolved, and it helps people to define, protect, care for and appreciate the special qualities of the places where they live. Understanding is based on sound research, and this research strategy is designed to address the need for better awareness of the interest and importance of the urban historic environment.

I The need for a research strategy

The four cardinal points on the English Heritage 'heritage cycle' – understanding, valuing, caring and enjoying – depend heavily on high quality research. Identification of significance and knowledge of values allow better decision making in protection, conservation and management, and the presentation of new research findings is a powerful way of drawing in a wide audience to a better appreciation of the historic environment. Perspectives on values change continually, and it is vital to present the historic environment through new thinking on what is important and why. English Heritage's lead role depends on its policies being up-to-date and based on the latest research findings.

Research is most urgently needed where change to the historic environment can be anticipated and where important elements can be recognised as vulnerable. Research should be directed to fill major gaps in the knowledge required to identify and protect significant elements of the fabric of our towns and cities. There is much to be discovered about the evolution and character of settlements from small market towns up to large regional centres and the national capital, and new views on what is significant will emerge to shape attitudes. Change is constant and inevitable, both through planning and through environmental, social, cultural and economic

developments. In all circumstances there is a need for good understanding of the nature and significance of the urban historic environment, taking account of the values that are attached to it by different constituencies. This is a key point in PPS5 and *Conservation Principles*.¹⁰ Research should be designed to inform protection and the management of change by demonstrating significance, to develop English Heritage policy on conservation, and to engage a wide audience in considering the interest and importance of the historic environment so that they can participate fully in this process. Among the range of likely outcomes are additions and changes to the coverage provided by designation as new light is thrown on significance; better integration of the historic environment into the planning process; and enhanced public enjoyment of and engagement with the urban historic environment.

2 Identifying priorities; threats and opportunities

The underlying principle at work in the identification of research priorities for the urban historic environment is the consideration of the vulnerability of different aspects of the resource in the face of anticipated change. This vulnerability may be expressed in different ways.

- Some towns or types of monument in towns are directly threatened by large-scale planned or natural change; for example, major regeneration projects, coastal erosion and flooding all pose significant threats to historic fabric
- Some towns or types of town are threatened by long-term decay and change in their function: many market towns fall into this category
- Some types of town or classes of building, for example, mass housing and schools, are subject to change from government programmes. As advisor to the government, English Heritage requires good knowledge to provide guidance on the protection and management of historic fabric in these programmes.
- Some towns or aspects of towns suffer from insufficient knowledge of the extent and importance of their historic fabric; poor information on early survival or the potential for archaeological discovery can lead to critical losses of evidence and missed opportunities

Proposals for research will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Is the resource at risk? If so, how vulnerable is it?
- Is the resource of high significance?
- Does existing information and knowledge provide a sufficient basis for protection and the effective management of change?
- How will the proposed research assist protection and deliver management and conservation benefits?

¹⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government, *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (2010); *Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment* (English Heritage 2008)

- Is there potential to widen appreciation of the significance of the resource?
- Will the proposed research help to build skills and capacity in the heritage sector?
- Does the proposal offer opportunities for the development of new approaches or methodologies which will enhance our appreciation of the urban historic environment?

Failure to qualify on these criteria will not automatically mean that proposals will not be considered for support, but assessment against these primary criteria introduces a means of identifying which areas of research qualify as immediate priorities.

The identification of research priorities for English Heritage has both a sector-wide context and internal drivers. English Heritage has supported the production of Regional Research Frameworks which have provided detailed assessments on a region-by-region basis of the priorities for future research¹¹. The strategy for urban research set out in the present document takes account of many of these priorities and indicates how English Heritage might address them through supporting new investigations. Imminent change to the Heritage Protection system has focused English Heritage attention on the priorities for designation and the need to take a more strategic approach to this activity, and these have been taken into account in the present strategy. In addition, internal consultation with professional groups and advisory panels on early drafts of this paper and on subject specific papers has tested the suggested priorities against perceptions within English Heritage of where the greatest needs lie.

3 Priority research programmes for the urban historic environment

The following research programmes have been identified as those which will most directly support English Heritage's strategic aim of protecting the historic environment in response to threat. It is anticipated that priorities will evolve as external circumstances change and as research findings fill the most significant gaps in knowledge. Continuing discussion, both internally within English Heritage and externally with the sector, will allow new programmes to be identified, especially where they can be seen to anticipate need (horizon scanning).

Brief details are given below of priority research programmes. Fuller explanation will be provided in separate essays outlining the scope and purpose of each programme. It is anticipated that each programme may be addressed through a number of individual projects addressing different aspects of the subject. There is scope within each programme for projects which have as their primary aim the provision of new understanding, the identification and protection of nationally significant aspects of the urban historic environment, the application of new knowledge to conservation practice, the development of new ways of managing historic assets in our towns and cities, or the engagement of a wide audience in valuing, caring and enjoying our historic towns and cities. Many projects will embrace more than one of these objectives. Opportunities will also exist to harness research to the development of educational material related both to the National

¹¹ <http://www.algao.org.uk/Association/England/Regions/ResFwks.htm> See also Appendix 3

Curriculum and to wider learning activities. In many cases new research will contribute to greater understanding of context at different levels, from the local to the international and global, and will be a means of developing new networks for sharing experience. The priority programmes are set out in tabular form in Appendix 4, which indicates potential research projects and links these to strategic aims and the Corporate Research Strategy.

3.1 Developer-funded research

A significant amount of research in historic towns arises from the requirements of the planning process (as set out in PPG 15 and PPG 16) in relation to particular proposed developments. This work includes: desk-based assessments of buried archaeological remains, standing structures and the townscape; investigations undertaken to obtain information to inform a planning decision ('field evaluation'); and investigation and recording (whether of buried remains or standing structures) which are to be damaged or destroyed by development. Such work frequently includes careful analysis of historical mapping, and may involve the study of other primary documentary sources (although this is not especially common).

Given the level of effort which is devoted to these kinds of development-led work, two things are very important: first, that the work is well-focussed, so as to obtain the most worthwhile results possible for the effort expended; second, that the results are properly reported on and made publicly available (including deposition of the site archive in an appropriate repository). This helps to ensure that the public value of developer-funded research is appreciated.

To this end, development-led work should take full account of the principal research questions identified by the EH-supported Regional (and other) Research Frameworks in mind. This will be especially important in future, as PPS5 emphasises that such work should produce public benefit in the form of advances in understanding, rather than simply records of assets that will be destroyed.

Development-led work is, however, by definition concerned with particular sites or areas (i.e. ones which are subject to development proposals). To the priority programmes outlined below should therefore be added the provision of syntheses of past archaeological investigations in order to derive maximum benefit from the very large number of investigations that occur annually. Such syntheses should aim to provide new new insights into the evolution and character of the urban historic environment. These insights will then inform the better understanding of significance and the future conservation and management of historic towns (including the design of future development-led work and the protection of specific assets). Crucially they can also feed in to the work of local and regional museums, education programmes and popular publication reinforcing the public value of developer-led intervention.

3.2 Historic characterisation

Historic characterisation is an approach which has been developed by English Heritage, in conjunction with local authorities (both urban and rural) throughout England. It is a map-based (and GIS-based) method of obtaining an overview of the character of landscapes and of their historical development. The results provide an

evidence base which can inform the planning process at various levels (Government planning policy increasingly emphasises the need to acknowledge existing character as part of shaping places for the future). Characterisation studies can also provide a starting point for more detailed assessments of particular local areas, and a context for decisions about protection (including statutory designation) of individual structures or groups of structures.

English Heritage's national programme of urban characterisation and survey has three strands: a modified version of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) for major conurbations and metropolitan areas; characterisation-based Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) projects for smaller towns; and Urban Archaeological Databases (UADs) for a detailed archaeological record of selected major historic cities (27 out of 35 UADs have now been completed).

The full programme and priorities for completing this programme will be set out in the Characterisation strategy (in development). Other complementary approaches to assessing historic urban landscapes will be developed alongside characterisation and implemented through many of the projects contributing to the research priorities set out below (3.3-3.8). Characterisation work also has the potential to contribute to the priorities below (such as work on suburbs).

3.3 Survival of early form and fabric in historic towns

Historic towns often retain clear elements of their early plan form in the layout of streets, plots and open spaces. These aspects of a town's topography are, however, highly vulnerable to change and their erosion destroys irreplaceable evidence of urban foundation and development. The study of urban morphology is an important aspect of research and should be used to inform planning and development, particularly in regard to establishing local identity. 'Placemaking' will depend heavily on a recognition of the special characteristics of individual towns.

The remains of medieval and early post-medieval buildings are also crucial to the understanding of historic towns, but the extent of their survival is rarely evident due to later changes. Studies of early fabric can demonstrate different periods of development, the varied character of different types of town (for example, major ports, small market towns, etc), and the social and cultural conditions prevailing in towns. Despite this potential, the study of urban buildings of these periods lags behind that of rural buildings, and the knowledge gap is therefore wide. Some recent studies of individual towns have begun to develop this thinking, but national and regional syntheses are lacking. Survival of early fabric tends to be fragmentary and is extremely vulnerable to change in busy commercial centres. Nevertheless, fabric evidence from the medieval and early post-medieval periods represents a unique source and has a high value by virtue of its early date: it is important to minimise losses through lack of knowledge of survival. The potential for discovery is considerable and it is likely that a programme of research, involving exemplary studies of a number of towns, would significantly modify our view of urban life. New investigation should be undertaken on a thematic basis with the aim of producing town syntheses. The ultimate aim of a research programme is to produce a new view of the pattern of regional and national development of urban building in these periods, but this is a long-term objective. For the immediate future, individual

projects on specific towns, from small market towns to county towns, or groups of towns, will help to define the special character of places and identify priorities for protection at national and local levels.

3.4 The 20th century (shared in part with Thematic Research Strategies for Places of Worship, the Historic Industrial Environment, and the Archaeology of the Contemporary Past)

At the other end of the time spectrum, the monuments and urban landscapes of the 20th century call for a wide-ranging research programme. Towns expanded and renewed themselves more dramatically in this period than in any other, and new towns were created under the influence of modern ideas on town planning. Much of this fabric is highly vulnerable, both from small-scale incremental change and from planned redevelopment. Part of the risk stems from the lack of appreciation of what is significant in this vast resource. Some landscapes and buildings, for example, have only recently become eligible for designation under the 30-year rule, but without a proper understanding of the ideas which they represent they may simply be seen as failed planning experiments. Lack of awareness of significance can, therefore, hinder good decision making in the planning of change. Conservation outcomes may be radically different in this field to those applicable elsewhere, for national designation of assets will be highly selective, but there is scope for identifying local values and encouraging a new appreciation of these townscapes. New research should cover a broad range of topics, including the impact on the urban historic environment of the growth of suburbs, the implementation of new ideas on town planning, the creation of new towns, the means of housing an expanding urban population, and the development of new building types to meet contemporary needs, e.g. buildings, structures and landscapes associated with the car. The outcomes of research projects should include support for designation programmes through the provision of new understanding of the significance of 20th-century buildings and landscapes, and better awareness, and therefore potentially better care and management, of this neglected aspect of the urban historic environment.

3.5 Parks, open spaces, cemeteries (shared in part with Thematic Research Strategy for Places of Worship)

Open spaces in towns and cities are often overlooked in the consideration of the historic environment, although they are as much part of the urban fabric as the buildings which surround them. In some cases (urban commons, for instance) they are of ancient foundation or reveal early topographical features; in others they are an important response to changing environments. They are highly relevant to a number of current government debates: the impact of open spaces on controlling climate change is increasingly acknowledged, parks have a great deal to contribute to the 'green' agenda and to biodiversity, and government health initiatives place an emphasis on the benefits of exercise and fresh air in accessible, free locations. Maintenance of open spaces is, however, sometimes neglected or under-funded, making these places highly vulnerable: 96 registered parks and gardens (6% of the national total) are considered to be 'at risk', and it is likely that a higher proportion of unregistered sites are even more vulnerable because less recognised.¹² Decisions

¹² <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.19077>

about priorities are often taken on the basis of inadequate knowledge both of the important role which historic open spaces play in people's lives and of their significance within the overall historic fabric of towns and cities. There is considerable scope for research which contributes to conservation and maintenance, engages the public, informs the debates on climate change and biodiversity, demonstrates the contribution which open spaces make to the health of society, and provides an overall context in which strategic decision making, based on understanding of the significance of the resource and the local values placed upon it, can take place. Research projects might be undertaken in partnership with local authorities to provide an overview for the strategic management of their estate. There is also scope for wider assessment to provide a regional or national overview of different aspects of the subject.

3.6 Coastal towns and Historic ports (shared in part with the Thematic Research Strategies for the Historic Industrial Environment and Freshwater Archaeology)

Coastal towns are under serious threat from environmental and economic change and are the subject of major government schemes of renewal. Much research has been undertaken on seaside resort towns, where pressures are particularly acute, and more work will be required to inform decision making in such settlements. Ports form a second category of coastal town, and they are among the most complex and important types of urban historic settlements. In many cases, trade has been conducted on more or less the same site for a thousand years, giving great time depth to coastal and river waterfronts, and ports have developed their own strong characteristics as a result of their specialised economy and infrastructure. The historic port environment is, however, highly sensitive to change, for waterfront sites are subject to continual pressure for redevelopment. In working commercial ports, economic drivers demand the construction of modern port facilities, and these have an impact not only on the historic character of the environment but also through the replacement and removal of redundant port infrastructure, itself often of historic significance. Changes of use pose a similar threat as conversion from, for example, commercial to residential use (of warehouses, port offices and so on) can lead to a loss of the historic character which makes these environments so attractive. Research can address a number of issues to provide better appreciation and a better basis for management. It can explore the character of medieval ports through their surviving buildings to investigate the extent to which port towns are distinctive in this period. It can explain how ports (both general and specialised – mineral ports, military ports, fishing ports) develop in the post-medieval and modern periods and demonstrate the importance of surviving technological and architectural features. It can respond to specific threats to the most vulnerable aspects of port environments to improve the protection and conservation of port features. The needs of port managers in running a commercial operation in a historic port should also be considered by exploring how better information can be provided and by developing a method of securing a historic environment component in port development programmes. Ports and harbours, dating both from the medieval period (such as King's Lynn) and later periods (for example, Liverpool and Hartlepool), are both highly vulnerable and, in many cases, of national significance, and research can provide a better basis for protection of this increasingly fragile resource.

3.7 Providing the evidence base for regeneration and renewal (shared in part with the Thematic Research Strategy for the Historic Industrial Environment)

Regeneration and renewal can be managed on a national, regional and local scale. Competition is ruthless and works in a cycle of revitalisation and stagnation: every town and city is seeking to secure its future by refreshing what it has to offer to its citizens and to its region, and inevitably there are winners and losers. Both comprehensive development and slow decline make the historic environment vulnerable. Large-scale planned regeneration can obliterate whole quarters of towns and cities, and even where much of the historic fabric is scheduled for retention the question of the integration of old and new poses great problems. Stagnation, on the other hand, leads to decay and neglect of historic fabric, sometimes to the point where the resource – and consequently historic character - can be lost. In a competitive environment, authenticity and distinctiveness are valuable commodities, once lost never to be recovered. It is vital that renewal schemes are based on a sound understanding of the significance of the historic environment: as with ports (3.6 above), the provision of a historic environment component to the evidence base is essential to inform effective sustainable planning, identifying opportunities and constraints and helping to provide an historic context for the planning of change. In towns where the issue is the need for revitalisation outside the context of large-scale development proposals, the potential of the historic environment as an asset rather than as a liability needs to be highlighted. In a subject area characterised by immense variety, in terms of both economic drivers and type of town, English Heritage can address the issues only through exemplary work and through advocacy: research should be promoted as one of the essential starting points for successful renewal, both in major cities and in market towns.

3.8 Suburbs

Suburban environments have suffered until recently from comparative neglect, architectural and urban historians focusing mainly on the historic core of cities and towns. Suburbs are, however, an important part of the urban historic environment; spatially they are the dominant element in city landscapes, many have a history stretching back well over 150 years (some for many centuries), and they tell the story of the (mainly) residential life of millions of urban dwellers. They are, however, under huge pressure, principally from the need to provide new housing without using greenfield land on the periphery of towns: infill to achieve higher densities is the approved means of reaching government housing targets. The consequence for historic suburbs is replacement of suburban villas by apartment blocks; construction of new housing in the grounds of older houses; the subdivision of older large houses; the loss of green open space, particularly gardens; and piecemeal change to planned suburban landscapes. While some 19th-century houses may be listed and while some suburbs have conservation area status, most of these environments lack any statutory protection. This is always likely to be the case, but there is potential for exploring the significance and range of values attached to suburbs by both experts and residents. Suburban development of the 20th century is perhaps less well understood, because less studied, than that of earlier periods, but it demonstrates social changes of considerable importance and is closely associated with the development of the modern planning system. The opportunity exists to engage with

the government programme of Placemaking by drawing in community values and the involvement of the community with the management and protection of its own environment. Better protection of historic suburbs may be conferred by designation of individual assets recognised as being of national significance, by identification of areas of special interest, and by changing attitudes and perceptions, on the part of both decision makers and property owners. Research can also help in the development of strategic approaches to conservation by local authorities, explore city-wide suburban development and change over time and, through exemplary publications, highlight the historic importance of suburban environments.

3.9 Threatened or vulnerable building types (shared in part with the Thematic Research Strategies for Places of Worship and the Historic Industrial Environment)

Most of the priority research programmes listed above take the town or city, or parts of these, as the focus of study: they are about how towns develop and about towns as places and entities. Inevitably, however, the primary drivers for research – vulnerability and need for more informed protection – also affect categories of building found within towns, some exclusively urban, others found also outside towns. The priority programmes for research into the urban historic environment should have scope for both anticipating threat to specific classes of building and responding to a threat once it has taken a clear form. Where gaps in knowledge prevent confident decision making on historic assets (for example, in assessing categories of buildings for designation), research should be directed at determining the significance of the threatened resource. Current priorities in this category are public and institutional buildings (especially those in local authority ownership); schools; and twentieth-century housing. Research in this programme will be linked closely to the implementation of Heritage Protection Reform.

4 Establishing research projects

The publication of this strategy for research into the urban historic environment is intended to indicate to the heritage sector those areas which are currently of primary concern to English Heritage. Approaches relating to collaboration in those areas are welcomed from the sector. Informal discussion as a preliminary can often help to develop cogent proposals for research: the primary points of contact are:

Colum Giles, Head of Urban Research Policy (Tel: 01904 601907; email colum.giles@english-heritage.org.uk)

Roger M Thomas, Head of Urban Archaeology (Tel: 07730 978 270; email rogerm.thomas@english-heritage.org.uk)

Guidance on developing a research proposal compatible with current guidelines (MoRPHE and SHAPE) is provided on the English Heritage website: www.english-heritage.org.uk/heep. Decisions on funding will be based upon the criteria set out in this document (Part One, Section 3) and upon the importance of the proposal relative to other demands on English Heritage resources.

Appendix I: English Heritage aims and objectives 2005-2010¹³

1. HELP PEOPLE DEVELOP THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment
1B Enhance public understanding and appreciation of the historic environment and its conservation through education and training
1C Make sure our professional expertise and knowledge is more accessible to others who need it
1D Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment
2. GET THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ON OTHER PEOPLE'S AGENDAS
2A Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic environment
2B Lead campaigns and national debates to influence policies which affect the historic environment
2C Engage with key stakeholders on issues affecting, or affected by, the historic environment
2D Identify and cultivate new public and private sector partnerships and sources of funding and support for the historic environment
2E Develop cross-Government recognition of the value of the historic environment
3. ENABLE AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE CHANGE TO ENGLAND'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
3A Promote better legislation, policies, guidance and good practice to improve the system of protection
3B Ensure that the condition of the most significant parts of the historic environment is recorded and monitored to enable their better protection
3C Provide better and more accessible advice to help people appreciate the benefits of maintaining and caring for historic places
4. HELP LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO CARE FOR THEIR HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
4A Help local authority members and officers develop their skills, knowledge, advice and capacity to make the most of the historic environment
4B Develop and disseminate policies, principles, guidelines, standards and exemplars to promote better management of change in the historic environment
4C Provide support and guidance to other organisations engaged in the care, study, and promotion of the historic environment
4D Use our role in the planning process to develop appreciation of the historic environment and its relevance to the sustainability, planning and design of new development
4E Ensure that our grants to third parties are used in the most effective way to regenerate, protect and enhance the historic environment
5. STIMULATE AND HARNESS ENTHUSIASM FOR ENGLAND'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
5A Increase public awareness of the historic environment
5B Broaden access to the historic environment and engagement with diverse communities
5C Stimulate access, interest and enjoyment through the sites and collections in our care
6. MAKE THE MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF THE ASSETS IN OUR CARE
6A Use our financial resources efficiently and maximise the commercial benefits we gain from our assets
6B Invest in the development of our staff
6C Invest in the development of our operating systems
6D Maintain and conserve our properties, collections and archives to a standard consistent with their importance
6E Increase the income generated by our properties to meet the cost of opening them to the public
6F Develop the English Heritage brand as a symbol of authoritative advice, responsible custodianship, first class service and the leading source of knowledge and understanding of England's historic environment
6G Implement the recommendations of the National Monuments Record Review, <i>Unlocking Heritage Information</i>

¹³ English Heritage Strategic Plan 2005-2010: *Making the Past Part of our Future*

Appendix 2: English Heritage Research Themes and Programmes

A: Discovering, studying and defining historic assets and their significance

A1: What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment

A2: Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments

A3: Unlocking the riches: Realising the potential of the research dividend

B: Studying and establishing the socio-economic and other values and needs of the historic environment and those concerned with it

B1: Valuing the historic environment: Quantifying the economic and social value of historic assets

B2: Gauging the mood: Establishing perceptions and attitudes to the historic environment

B3: Understanding the needs: Delivering 'sector intelligence'

C: Engaging and developing diverse audiences

C1: Opening doors: Understanding public participation in the historic environment

C2: Making friends: Building understanding and appreciation through education and outreach

D: Studying and assessing the risks to historic assets and devising responses

D1: Heritage at risk: Quantifying and analysing the condition of the historic environment

D2: Measuring threat: Studying the reasons for risk and devising responses

D3: Keeping it safe: Protection and conservation

D4: Rescue! Threat-led last resort analysis

E: Studying historic assets and improving their presentation and interpretation

E1: Presenting the past: Research to inform the presentation to the public of historic places

F: Studying and developing information management

F1: Navigating the resource: Developing standards for Historic Environment Records

F2: Wired! Studying and developing information management

G: Studying and devising ways of making English Heritage and the sector more effective

G1: Sharpening the tools: Developing new techniques of analysis and understanding

G2: Defining the questions: Devising research strategies, frameworks and agenda

G3: Impact and effectiveness: Measuring outcomes and effectiveness of English Heritage and the 'sector'

Appendix 3: Current Research Frameworks for the urban historic environment

1 English Regional Research Frameworks

(* incomplete; ** currently under revision/review)

- *The Archaeology of South-West England: resource assessment and research agenda* (Somerset County Council, 2008)
- *Bedfordshire Archaeology - Research and Archaeology: resource assessment, research agenda and strategy* (Bedfordshire Archaeological Council, 2007 [aligned with Eastern Counties RRF])
- *The Undiscovered Country: the earlier prehistory of the West Midlands* (Oxbow Books, 2007) [*resource assessment only; seminar papers at <http://www.iaa.bham.ac.uk>]
- *The Archaeology of the East Midlands: an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda* (Leicester University Press, 2006; draft documents at <http://www.le.ac.uk>)**
- *Shared Visions: the North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (Durham County Council, 2006)
- *Research and Archaeology in North West England. An archaeological research framework for north west England* (Archaeology North West, 2006 [resource assessment], 2007 [research agenda and strategy]; draft documents at <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk>)
- *The Archaeology of Yorkshire: an assessment at the beginning of the 21st century* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2003 [*resource assessment only])
- *A Research Framework for London Archaeology 2002* (Museum of London, 2002)**
- *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties* (East Anglian Archaeology, 1997 [resource assessment], 2000 [research agenda and strategy]; <http://www.eaareports.org.uk>)**
- *An Archaeological Research Framework for the Greater Thames Estuary* (Essex County Council, 1999)**
- *Solent-Thames Archaeological Research Framework* (*draft documents at <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk>)
- *South East Research Framework* (*seminar papers at <http://www.kent.gov.uk>)

2 Other Research Frameworks

- *The City by the Pool: assessing the archaeology of the City of Lincoln* (Oxbow Books, 2003; includes Lincoln Archaeological Research Assessment on CD-ROM)
- *England's Coastal Heritage* (English Heritage/RCHME, 1997)
- Dominic Perring *Town and Country in England: frameworks for archaeological research* (CBA 2002)

Appendix 4: Priority research programmes and projects

EH Research Priority 2010-15	Focus topic	Supporting comments	Corporate objective	Corporate Research Strategy Programme	Possible SHAPE sub-programme	SHAPE number
URI Developer-funded research	Syntheses of developer-funded research into the urban historic environment	Projects to exploit the potential of past developer-funded research to contribute to knowledge and inform future interventions	IA Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A3. Unlocking the riches: Realising the potential of the research dividend	Tapping the motherlode: supporting synthesis of key commercial project research	11113.410
UR2Urban Characterisation	County-based Extensive Urban Surveys	Projects to complete national coverage of the Extensive Urban Survey programme and disseminate its findings	IA Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A1. What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment	Understanding Place: Historic Landscape Characterisation (urban and metropolitan)	11111.210
	Metropolitan Historic Landscape Characterisation	Projects to complete coverage of metropolitan historic landscape characterisation	IA Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A1. What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment	Understanding Place: Historic Landscape Characterisation (urban and metropolitan)	11111.210
	Urban Archaeological Databases	Projects to complete the Urban Archaeological Database programme and disseminate its findings	IA Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A3. Unlocking the riches: Realising the potential of the research dividend	Realising the research dividend from past unpublished historic environment investigations	11113.110
UR3 Survival of early form and fabric in historic towns	The study of urban forms	Projects to establish the survival of early topographical features in historic towns as an aid to understanding development and informing the planning of change	IA Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A1. What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment	Understanding Place: assessing historic areas	11111.150
	Medieval buildings in	Projects to develop evidence	IA Ensure that our	A1. What's out	Understanding Place:	11111.150

	English towns	of survival of early fabric (to c 1650) as an aid to understanding time depth and significance in towns.	research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment	assessing historic areas	
	Transitions: the rebuilding of English towns	Projects exploring how, why and when English towns assumed 'modern' forms in the post-medieval period, leading to new understanding of urban development and significance	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	New frontiers: Clarifying poorly understood chronologies	11112.510
	The English market place	Projects aimed at exploring the importance of market places in the identity of market towns	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Understanding Place: researching regional diversity	11111.310
UR4 The 20th century	Post-war mass housing	Projects assessing the character and value of mass housing. Intended outcomes include changed perceptions, exploration of local values, and better management of significant landscapes.	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	New frontiers: the recent past	11112.410
	New Towns	Projects which assess the significance of New Towns and contribute to appreciation and planning policy	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	New frontiers: the recent past	11112.410
	Post-war reconstruction	Projects which assess the changes made to historic towns following WW2 as an aid to evaluating significance	2A Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic environment	B2. Gauging the mood; establishing perceptions and attitudes to the historic environment	Researching perceptions of the historic environment	21122.110
UR5 Parks, open spaces and cemeteries	Local authority parks and gardens	Projects which assess local authority research needs. Intended outcomes include identification of research which	2A Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic	B3: Understanding the needs: delivering sector intelligence	Researching Local Authority priorities and requirements	41123.110

		will assist protection and policy making	environment			
	Management issues in historic parks	Projects facilitating strategic decision making in historic parks by demonstrating significance and values	2A Provide better evidence of the importance and value of the historic environment	D2: Measuring threat: studying the reasons for risk and devising responses	Heritage at risk: identifying threats and developing responses	32142.210
	Cemeteries	Projects to assess the resource, its significance or its vulnerability. Intended outcomes include better protection and conservation	3A Promote better legislation, policies, guidance and good practice to improve the system of protection	D3. Keeping it safe: Protection and conservation	Heritage Protection Research	31143.110
UR6 Coastal towns and historic ports	Develop management agreements for historic ports	Projects which establish long-term heritage management plans for historic ports as an aid to conservation and protection	3A Promote better legislation, policies, guidance and good practice to improve the system of protection	B1. Valuing the historic environment: quantifying the economic and social value of historic assets	Developing Management Plans and Agreements for Historic Areas	31521.110
	Developing a methodology for assessing historic port environments: national and regional surveys	Modular approach to national coverage of historic port environments (complement to Rapid Coastal Zone Assessments) as an aid to assessment and protection	1D Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Fresh toolkits: methodological and theoretical research and innovation	14171.310
	Assessing port environments: town studies	Projects which assess the special character of historic port towns as a way of understanding distinctiveness and significance	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A1. What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment	Understanding Place: Assessing historic areas/Understanding Place: Analysis of specific historic assets and locales	11111.150/11111.130
	Specialist ports (coal, fishing, etc)	National assessment of specialist ports to assist understanding of significance and protection	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A1. What's out there? Defining, characterising and analysing the historic environment	Understanding Place: Assessing the national resource	11111.140
	National review of port infrastructure	National assessment of historic port infrastructure to provide	1A Ensure that our research addresses	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly	Understanding Place: assessing the national	11111.140

		understanding of significance and inform protection	the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	understood landscapes, areas and monuments	resource	
UR7 Providing the evidence base for regeneration and renewal	Regeneration in major cities: promoting the historic environment	Establishing the importance of the urban historic environment and providing a historic environment layer to major city regeneration; demonstrating the value of the historic environment for tourism	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Understanding Place: assessing historic areas	11111.150
	Regeneration in market towns	Establishing the importance of the urban historic environment and providing a historic environment layer to market town renewal schemes: demonstrating the value of the historic environment for tourism	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Understanding Place: assessing historic areas	11111.150
UR8 Suburbs	Strategies for conservation in suburbs	Working with local authorities to produce long-term strategies for assessment, conservation and management of historic suburbs	1D Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment	G1. Sharpening the tools: Developing new techniques of analysis and understanding	Fresh toolkits: methodological and theoretical research and innovation	14171.310
	Placemaking: the identity of suburbs	Projects to establish the values attached to historic suburbs. Intended outcomes include better local protection and engagement of communities in local decision making	5A Increase public awareness of the historic environment	C1: Opening doors: Understanding public participation in the historic environment	Community Involvement and Awareness Projects	51311.110
	City-wide studies	Projects providing contextual understanding of suburban development in major towns to assist strategic decision making by local authorities	1A Ensure that our research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Understanding Place: Analysis of specific historic assets and locales	11111.130
	The 20 th -century	Projects investigating the	1A Ensure that our	A2. Spotting the gaps:	Understanding Place:	11111.130

	suburb: comparative studies	causes of variety in 20th century suburbs. Intended outcomes include better appreciation and understanding	research addresses the most important and urgent needs of the historic environment	Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Analysis of specific historic assets and locales	
UR9 Threatened or vulnerable building types	Public and institutional buildings	Projects which assess the significance of poorly understood threatened or vulnerable public or institutional building types, leading to better protection	3A Promote better legislation, policies, guidance and good practice to improve the system of protection	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Heritage Protection Research	31143.110
	Schools	Projects which assess the significance of poorly understood threatened or vulnerable public or institutional building types leading to better protection	3A Promote better legislation, policies, guidance and good practice to improve the system of protection	A2. Spotting the gaps: Analysing poorly understood landscapes, areas and monuments	Heritage Protection Research	31143.110
	Schools	Projects which develop the methodology for assessing historic schools as an aid to strategic planning	1D Develop new approaches which improve understanding and management of the historic environment	G1. Sharpening the tools: Developing new techniques of analysis and understanding	Fresh toolkits: methodological and theoretical research and innovation	14171.310

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