

# ENGLISH HERITAGE

## ENGLISH HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**OPEN MINUTES OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup> MEETING HELD AT 10.30AM  
ON THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2005 AT 23 SAVILE ROW, LONDON W1**

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**Members Present:** Les Sparks OBE (Acting Chair)

David Baker OBE  
Alan Baxter  
Dr Martin Bell  
Professor Timothy Champion  
Bridget Cherry OBE  
The Venerable Peter Elliott  
Jane Grenville  
Nick Johnson  
Helen Maclagan  
Julian Munby  
Barry Shaw MBE  
Professor Gavin Stamp  
Peter Studdert  
Paul Walshe  
Elizabeth Williamson  
Dr Stuart Wrathmell

**Observers:** Amanda Mathews (Countryside Agency; and on behalf of English Nature)

**Staff Present:** Dr Simon Thurley (Chief Executive)  
Steven Bee (Director, Planning and Development)  
Bob Bewley (South West Regional Director) (Item 5 only – telephone link)  
Louise Brennan (Team Leader, East Midlands)  
Vida Cody (Committee Administrator)  
Ian George (Committee Co-ordinator)  
Deborah Lamb (Director, Policy and Communications)  
Stephen Nelson (Casework Manager, East Midlands)  
Adrian Olivier (Head of Archaeological Strategy)

### **ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

#### Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Richard Morris (Chairman), Professor Keith Branigan, William Du Croz (English Nature), Barry Cunliffe, Rodney Melville, Rachel Thomas (English Nature) and Charles Wilson.

- 1.2 Apologies were also received from: Ann Bond (Historic Buildings Inspector), Nigel Hewitson (Legal Director), Dr Edward Impey (Director of Research and Standards) and Jeff West (Policy Director).

#### Announcements

- 1.3 Members were reminded to return their forms on declarations of interest to the Secretariat Manager, David Burgh (sent with Committee papers) by 4 March.

#### Declarations of Interest

- 1.4 Les Sparks declared an interest in item 5 on Wollaton Hall as an advisor to the City Council on various issues and left the room for that item.
- 1.5 Amanda Mathews declared an interest in the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill.

### **ITEM 2 – OPEN MINUTES OF THE EHAC MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2004 (EHAC 2005/1)**

- 2.1 The minutes were approved, subject to the following amendments:
- i) Paragraph 1.7: Helen Maclagan's name to be included in the list of those who had declared an interest in item 6 as a member of an institute holding human remains.
  - ii) Paragraph 4.2 to read: The new arrangements for the Countryside Agency would be established in April 2005. The landscape, access and recreation strand will remain part of the Countryside Agency for legal reasons but will work with English Nature and the Rural Development Service as a close confederation (but still as three separate bodies) until 2007 when the new organisations would be formally established in law, subject to the parliamentary timetable.

- 2.2 There were no matters arising.

### **ITEM 3 – EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE EHAC MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2004 (EHAC 2005/2/E)**

- 3.1 The minutes were approved.

### **\*ITEM 4 – DEENE PARK ESTATE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (EHAC 2005/3/E)**

- 4.1 *This item is included in the exempt minutes of this meeting as it contains information that is potentially exempt from public access under the Freedom of Information Act, Section 36: prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs.*

## **\*ITEM 5 – SILBURY HILL: OPTIONS FOR STABILISATION (EHAC 2005/4)**

- 5.1 The Committee was asked to consider three options for the future of Silbury Hill following the collapse of the vertical shaft: 1) do nothing; 2) fill the voids; 3) support the voids.
- 5.2 It was confirmed that the first option did not include any backfilling at the top of the mound as extra weight on the polystyrene blocks would have a detrimental effect further down the shaft. Filling the tunnels would cover the earlier Merewether tunnel as best as possible although it was unclear how much of this had been backfilled already.
- 5.3 Health and Safety checks would need to be in place particularly in the case of unauthorised public access.
- 5.4 It was agreed that work already carried out had advanced our understanding of Silbury Hill. There were complex issues and a legacy from the Atkinson excavations. The meeting at Devizes on 28 September 2004 had been useful in demonstrating the extensive research EH had undertaken and that EH had taken on board a wide spectrum of opinion.
- 5.5 The Committee agreed that the paper presented was helpful in enabling them to reach a decision and that EH had taken time to consider the various options. Option 1 presented an unknown risk to the monument; option 2 had problems with further intervention and concerns about the additional boreholes; and option 3 posed minimum intervention in terms of further damage to the monument. The variation to option 3 which proposed keeping the tunnel accessible for visitor access was a concern because of the frequent air exchange. There was, however, a need for monitoring the stability of the repairs over a timescale yet to be defined.
- 5.6 The key was in not moving too quickly but in taking time to consider the best option. There was no planning application that necessitated the need for speed, but there was a lot of local interest and frequent radio coverage.
- 5.7 It was acknowledged that there were still a lot of unknown factors and risks in further intervention. For option 3 to be recommended, there needed to be a demonstrable link to management-critical research objectives. The cost of the project would be in the region of £600k plus on-going maintenance costs. It was suggested that a combination of all these factors meant clarifying the uncertainties before doing anything further.
- 5.8 Costs would be spread over a number of years, as it would be impossible to find the money in the short term. A five year plan could be considered and it was possible that other organisations (or companies) might share the costs if they wished to join in and be seen to be helping with conserving the environment.
- 5.9 The area is also a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) and, as such, consent will be needed from English Nature for potentially damaging operations. None of the options, however, sounded intrinsically damaging to

the chalk grassland interests of the SSSI. EH should maintain close contact with the Conservation Officer at English Nature, Patrick Cashman.

5.10 The comment was made that there was not enough engineering advice in the report and that it was necessary to establish how, for example, the timber and iron from previous interventions would perform under further construction work. A paper on the engineering side of the project would be welcomed.

**5.11 The Committee agreed that:**

- i) Option 3 was preferable, more engineering advice was needed and there was no need for haste;**
- ii) the site should be open for monitoring purposes and in situ preservation would be one of the key strategies in future.**

#### **ITEM 6 – WOLLATON HALL – IMPLICATIONS FOR DISABLED ACCESS (EHAC 2005/5)**

6.1 Elizabeth Williamson took the Chair of the meeting as Les Sparks had declared an interest and had to leave the room for this item.

6.2 Wollaton Hall is a Grade I listed mansion, built for the Willoughby family in the 1580s and now situated in the suburbs of Nottingham. Its unique feature is the Prospect Room which rises above the half-leads. Wollaton Hall is of national and regional significance. Its natural history collection has been assessed as regionally important.

6.3 Wollaton Hall has experienced a lack of investment and maintenance over the last 30 years. Its stonework has decayed and two of the buildings in the park, one of which is England's earliest known camellia house, are on the Buildings at Risk Register. The City Council produced a Conservation Plan for the site in 2001 and has been liaising with English Heritage since 2000. HLF funding has been secured and will enable work to be carried out on the conservation of the external stonework and for engineering works to allow limited public access to the Prospect Room. There are plans to re-present the lower ground floor as the kitchen suite of the 16<sup>th</sup> century house. The issue still outstanding concerns providing access for the disabled.

6.4 The City Council and English Heritage had agreed that a lift was essential for improved access but whereas EH considered this should be for the disabled only, the City Council wanted improved access for all users. The City Council had challenged EH's advice and lengthy and difficult negotiations had ensued. The Committee's advice on this particular case and on its national implications for casework was now being sought.

6.5 An EHAC member, Jane Grenville, had visited the site with EH staff in early February and had met the project architect and museum curator. Ms Grenville had learnt that access from the lower to upper ground floor in the north-east tower had already been agreed by EH and the City Council the previous year (but was not part of the Conservation Plan). The area of contention was

whether to install a single passenger lift from the lower ground floor to first floor in the north-east tower (the City Council's preferred option) or to achieve access in two stages: 1) by a lift from lower to upper ground floor in the north east tower; and 2) by a platform lift from the upper ground to the first floor in the west range. The latter was EH's preferred option on the grounds that it would strike a balance between access and conservation.

- 6.6 Both schemes would mean interfering with 16<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric and the platform lift would emerge in the award winning Minerals Gallery, the former Lady Middleton bedroom suite.
- 6.7 Disabled access and general management issues were both being considered, for example fire regulations and the provision of toilets. Fire proofing of the platform lift would be intrusive and there would be a need for extra disabled toilet space in the Minerals Gallery, which would cause further intervention, should the platform lift option be chosen. It was also noted that platform lifts were generally not liked by disabled people, partly because users were separated from their carers for the duration of their journey, although Ms Grenville had tried out a platform lift and as a result gave less weight to this objection.
- 6.8 Ms Grenville's opinion was that the positive aspect of having the platform lift in the west range and the passenger lift in the tower would be that it would encourage circulation around the building. The City Council disagreed with this. Ms Grenville considered the decision to be very finely balanced as damage to the fabric would be involved in both options. On balance she felt that it would be preferable to concentrate damage in one area and considered an important aim would be to minimise any future disruption.
- 6.9 It was noted that HLF had confirmed they would accept English Heritage's advice on access to the first floor. The Chief Executive reminded the Committee of the Rotunda case in Scarborough and that there was in fact a third option: not to have a lift to the first floor at all if damage to the fabric was unacceptable.
- 6.10 A member pointed out that a public museum with limited access was unlikely to be socially acceptable and such limitations might restrict access to funding grants for collections management. Lack of access would also be detrimental for the people of Nottingham for whom the Natural History collection had iconic status. The majority of visitors went to Wollaton for the collection, not for the building itself.
- 6.11 Various members repeated that it was essential for a museum to have good access. Wollaton Hall is a public natural history museum and not a private house.
- 6.12 As Conservation Plans were not intended to be sacrosanct and could be changed, divergence from this Plan was not considered a major problem. However, to agree to the removal of so much 16<sup>th</sup> century fabric to create access was very significant and might have the effect of setting EH policy on these matters in concrete. The crux of the matter was whether access was more important than historic fabric. Once destroyed, there would be no

possibility of restoration if the project was found not to work. Damage should therefore be localised. It would be better to isolate the lifts in the one tower as this would contain the significant damage to the historic fabric in one location. It was stressed that the design should be completely revised in order to reduce the amount of fabric lost.

- 6.13 A lift on the outside of the building was briefly considered but rejected because of Wollaton's site and remarkable symmetry. It was also thought that a platform lift emerging in the Minerals Gallery would be visually intrusive. A lift up to the Prospect Room had already been rejected by the Council as unrealistic.
- 6.14 The Committee agreed that their obligation was to the disabled and not to the principle of improved access for all. The lift chosen should be the smallest possible and the design of the lift and anything affected by it needed careful thought; the detail had to be just right. It was also suggested that a lift manufacturer should be approached to develop a bespoke design solution for Wollaton and that a hydraulic lift system should be explored, which could avoid the unfortunate over-run into the mezzanine space above.
- 6.15 The outcome should not set a precedent; each new, similar case should be considered in its own right. A series of test cases should be published in due course.
- 6.16 On a specific point raised, the Committee agreed that the fireplaces it was necessary to remove should be relocated in the building rather than stored. It was also considered that all historic fabric should be recorded before it was removed and that care should be taken to dismantle the floor structure and retain the floor joists in store. Similarly it was thought important that tower rooms affected should be interpreted and presented as historic spaces and that the insertion of the lift should be used as an opportunity to show changes to the historic fabric caused by this intervention and to explain them.
- 6.17 The Committee agreed that:**
- i) access from the lower ground floor to first floor should be via a passenger lift in the north-east tower;**
  - ii) additional access should be primarily targeted towards the disabled and not improved access for all and that therefore the design of the lift should be significantly revised to cause the minimum loss of historic fabric necessary to achieve disabled access;**
  - iii) this was a particular solution for a specific case and not a general decision that should establish a principle.**

#### **\*ITEM 7 – ENGLISH HERITAGE'S POLICY ON CLIMATE CHANGE (EHAC 2005/6)**

- 7.1 Climate change had become a political priority which was likely to gather speed once the UK had the presidency of the EU and G8. The Government's commitment to climate change meant that proposals now coming forward

would have an impact on the historic environment. It was important therefore that EH's position was clear as regards climate change and the historic environment. The draft policy statement had tried to set out the context regarding sustainable development. EH's job was not to challenge science. A series of detailed guidance notes was being prepared; the note on windfarms would be brought to the next EHAC meeting; biomass crops would be another.

- 7.2 One Committee member talked of the impact from the biomass plant in Cornwall, the scale being 10,000 hectares within a 25 mile radius. Dramatic changes had occurred and there were below ground archaeology implications. The worry was that there was a tendency to concentrate largely on windfarms when biomass was also very important. Reassurance was given that this was a priority for future guidance and that a paper was being produced on the effects and procedures.
- 7.3 Another comment was that more emphasis should be made on the sustainability of existing buildings, to counter the assumption that buildings had limited lives. If well maintained, buildings had unlimited lives.
- 7.4 Positive aspects needed pointing out too, for example regarding the high standards of energy efficiency and sustainability that EH would meet in constructing any of its own new buildings. The problem would in part become more prevalent for homeowners, for whom guidance notes should be produced and best practice shown.
- 7.5 Some members thought there was a slightly nannying tone about the document and the feeling that "EH knows best", although there was general appreciation of EH's work in this respect and the recognition of the need to work side by side with the scientific community. More thought was needed on energy efficiency and its possible implications and further discussion with EH's scientific staff.
- 7.6 English Nature's position statement on climate change was made available to the Committee, its main focus being on biodiversity. Common areas of interest had been discussed with EH and there was scope for further talks.
- 7.7 The Countryside Agency had no formal statement on climate change but had an approach of robustness and resilience to a range of scenarios. They also had a computer visualisation CD showing England in 2050 in various scenarios and were keen for EH to join them in their Community Renewables Initiative.
- 7.8 **The Committee supported the approach made by EH and agreed there was scope for further development.**

## **ITEM 8 – UPDATE ON PREVIOUS BUSINESS (ORAL)**

### Tottenham Park, Wiltshire

- 8.1 The developers were thought to have withdrawn their application. It was not clear how Lord Cardigan would wish to proceed.

## **ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### SS Great Britain/Great Western Dry Dock (EHAC 2005/7)

- 9.1 This was one of two items considered under Chairman's Action. The proposal was for a substantial redevelopment, within the Conservation Area, involving buildings of large mass within about ten metres of the Grade II\* dock and its occupying ship. The proposed development was for mixed commercial, residential and educational use, including a new Brunel Institute in partnership with Bristol University. A planning application was due to be submitted in February 2005 by the SS Great Britain Trust.
- 9.2 A site visit had taken place in January by David Baker and Helen Maclagan. Following the visit and full discussions between EH staff and the SS Great Britain Trust, the City Council, architects and planning consultants, EH was recommending that a full understanding of the archaeological potential of the site first be gained before any decisions were reached on the principle of development. The proposal appeared unique and distinctive and had the potential for preserving and enhancing the character of this part of the Conservation Area. EH supports the development of a design ethos informed by, but not replicating, the Brunel-period building. It was recommended that EH act as a consultee throughout the successive design stages of the development.

### McArthur's Warehouse

- 9.3 Adjacent to the SS Great Britain/Great Western Dry Dock, McArthur's warehouse was originally a 19<sup>th</sup> century brewery building in the City Docks Conservation Area. The case had first been presented to HABAC in April 2001 after a planning application had been submitted to demolish the (unlisted) building. Consent to demolish the warehouse had been granted against EH advice (but redevelopment refused) and a public inquiry had followed. A collapse in the building had altered the viability for re-use that EH had proposed and this led to EH withdrawing its objection. The application was now back with the City Council. The building was likely to be lost and the site redeveloped.

### Lime Street Gateway, Liverpool (EHAC 2005/8)

- 9.4 This was the second item considered under Chairman's Action. The proposal involved replacing the 50m high Concourse House (adjacent to Lime Street station) with a new 84m high tower, partially within the World Heritage Site boundary. A site visit had taken place in mid January with Alan Baxter and

Charles Wilson participating. The recommendation of staff was for the Committee to endorse the proposal with one or two caveats and to recommend to Commission that they do likewise.

- 9.5 Alan Baxter commented that the application focused very much on the new building alone where it should rather be an issue of the whole part of that area of Liverpool (and not just a fragment of it). The new tower would be 12 storeys higher and the applicant wanted it taller. The urban street scene was very much damaged around the station and the new building would stand as an icon. Mr Baxter recommended that the proposal be supported but that a proper policy for that area of Liverpool should be demanded. There was also a threat to the WHS from the proposal for a cluster of tall buildings near Lime Street which should not be supported. It was questioned why Lime Street station was listed Grade II only.
- 9.6 The City Council had welcomed EH input and the site visit had been positive. The visit was timely as the City Council had been developing a tall buildings policy. A planning application had also just been received for an even taller building but this was likely to raise objections. The proposal for a cluster of tall buildings was therefore very much a live issue.
- 9.7 The Committee agreed with the proposal for the new 84m high tower with the conditions suggested and agreed that the recommendation needed re-wording as EH would be responding as a statutory consultee.**

#### Greenside

- 9.8 The case was moving to a higher court with EH in a much stronger position than before.

#### Draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill

- 9.9 The draft bill was published on 10 February. English Heritage's position was to set up a Commission for rural communities. It was pleasing to see that the statutory explanatory notes had a definition of the landscape that included the cultural environment. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be established with the Integrated Agency. A policy statement accompanied the Bill with regard to historic buildings. EH was to respond to the consultation on the Bill that DEFRA had put forward, by 11 March deadline.
- 9.10 The Countryside Agency saw the Bill, Explanatory Notes and Policy Statement as a package. It was thought that the Policy Statement was not given formal status in the Bill and that, as it offered clarity and strength regarding the Commission for Rural Communities, these should be incorporated if possible.
- 9.11 The delivery of socio-economic functions via the RDAs, Government Offices and local authorities would go ahead from April 2005 as these did not require statutory legislation. The Countryside Agency would be working with English Nature and the Rural Development Service as a confederation until the new Integrated Agency was established. The Commission for Rural Communities would monitor delivery of the new arrangements from April onwards.

9.12 All existing English Nature functions will be transferred into the new Integrated Agency. Nature and landscape conservation was at its heart and its remit extended across rural, urban, marine and coastal areas. There were concerns over some technical details on transfer schemes and the overall independence of the new Integrated Agency. English Nature was finalising its comments to DEFRA.

Alan Baxter

9.13 The Chairman announced that this would be Alan Baxter's last EHAC meeting. Mr Baxter was thanked for his invaluable advice and contributions to the work of EHAC. His presence at the meetings would be greatly missed.

Date of Next Meeting

9.14 The date of the next EHAC meeting was confirmed as 31 March at Savile Row.

**Vida Cody**  
**Committee Administrator**  
**February 2005**

**Acting Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_