

KEY MESSAGES

1 The rural landscape is the product of human interaction with nature over many centuries. It can be managed effectively only if this interaction is understood, appreciated and reflected in policy and delivery. **The heritage sector calls on government and its agencies to ensure that conservation of the natural and historic environments is effectively integrated at all levels.**

2 The heritage of our countryside is a national asset of incalculable value and is, in large part, maintained by those who manage the land. **The heritage sector calls for adequate cross-governmental support for those responsible for the stewardship of the historic environment, through advice, targeted grant-aid and fiscal incentives.**

3 The uncertain future of farming in the face of global pressures will have major implications for the continued upkeep of cherished historic places and landscapes. **The heritage sector seeks government support for new research to monitor and respond to the impacts of agricultural restructuring on all aspects of the historic environment.**

4 The historic environment is fundamental to our local and national sense of identity, and it makes a vital contribution to the economic regeneration of deprived areas. **The heritage sector calls for greater partnership working to maximise the value of the historic environment as an engine for renewal in our small towns, villages and depressed rural areas, as well as in our major cities.**

5 The heritage sector welcomes the Government's commitment to increase public access to the countryside and its unparalleled natural and historic inheritance. **We invite all those who manage the countryside to work with us to broaden access to, and enjoyment of, our rural heritage by all members of society.**

KEY FACTS

- Designated heritage assets in England include: 372,038 listed building entries; 19,717 scheduled monuments; 9,374 conservation areas; and 1,587 registered parks and gardens.
- There are 1,302 Grade I and II* listed building entries and structural scheduled monuments on English Heritage's national register of buildings at risk – 126 fewer than in 1999.
- In the East Midlands, 35 per cent of scheduled monuments are at risk, while a quarter of Gloucestershire's monuments are at high risk.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund has given £3.3 billion to heritage projects since 1994 in 18,000 awards. £1.3 billion has gone to areas which contain high levels of deprivation.
- In 2004, 58 million tourist visits and 2.4 million school visits to heritage sites were recorded.



Heritage Counts 2005 is produced by English Heritage on behalf of the wider historic environment sector.

The main national report and nine regional reports can be downloaded from www.heritagecounts.org.uk.

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HERITAGE COUNTS

The State of
ENGLAND'S
Historic Environment

2005



www.heritagecounts.org.uk

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT – LIVING LANDSCAPE

The countryside is England's best-loved asset. Its beauty, character and diversity are deeply cherished. It is a place of work and sustenance, an inspiration for generations of artists and writers, and now increasingly a place of recreation.

The historic dimension to the rural landscape is the key to its distinctiveness. Every corner of England has been settled, farmed or altered in some way. The result is a vivid record of thousands of years of interaction between people and their environment.

The countryside has always been a living, working place and change has always happened there. However, for change to occur for the better in future, what has gone before should be respected.

The historic environment comprises all those buildings, places and landscapes that are rich in historic character – from timber-framed buildings to medieval parklands. Many of these places face new challenges in the 21st century. We need to protect and understand their significance and value for the benefit of future generations.

The historic environment creates jobs, attracts businesses and can even kick-start the regeneration of run-down areas. Heritage promotes recreation, education and volunteering.

Unfortunately, many historic places continue to suffer from a lack of protection and inadequate maintenance. Resources to assist owners of historic places are still scarce. In recent years, there has been an increase in the funding available to help communities and farmers care for their environment, but this alone might not be enough, particularly as agricultural incomes are continuing to fall.

Heritage and nature conservation need to be managed in a more integrated way to maximise the benefits for everyone. New uses need to be found for threatened historic buildings, and public access, understanding and enjoyment of the rural heritage need to be extended and enhanced.

'The outstandingly beautiful landscapes of rural England are our most cherished inheritance. For generations they have provided inspiration for poets, artists and writers and they are fundamental to how we see ourselves today. The unique character of the English countryside is the most significant legacy we can pass on to future generations. We have a duty to care for it at all costs.'

Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman, Heritage Forum and English Heritage

'England's distinctive countryside is a living asset which fosters thriving communities, attracts visitors and brings invaluable economic benefits. For the 80 per cent of England's population who live in cities, the rural heritage is not just a beautiful backdrop for a day out – it serves as a potent force to shape people and remind them who they are.'

Bill Bryson, author and English Heritage Commissioner



HERITAGE COUNTS

Heritage Counts 2005 is the fourth annual survey of the state of England's historic environment. The report identifies the principal trends affecting the historic environment and the threats, challenges and opportunities faced by those responsible for managing it.

The report assesses the extent and condition of heritage of all kinds, from buildings and monuments to wider landscapes and areas of historic character. It also highlights evidence for the range of social, economic and environmental benefits that actively engaging in heritage can bring to people and communities.

This year, *Heritage Counts* focuses on the state of the heritage in our countryside. This emphasis is timely because it coincides with a serious debate on the future of the countryside. There are changes occurring in the way rural issues are addressed by Government which, combined with a major shift in farm policy, could have significant implications for the future of our rural heritage.



KEY FINDINGS

- **The historic environment makes a fundamental contribution to the character and public appeal of the countryside and its towns and villages.**
- **Most of our countryside heritage – whether buildings, monuments or areas – is privately owned**, which emphasises the important contribution the private sector makes to conserving our heritage.
- **Market towns have been important beneficiaries of heritage-led regeneration schemes over the last 20 years.** The Heritage Lottery Fund has given £860 million to projects of all kinds located in English rural areas.
- **There are major pressures for change on the traditional farm building stock** as a result of changes in farming methods and the decline in profitability of agriculture. Almost a third of listed working farm buildings have already been converted to other uses, the majority to residential use, while large numbers of agricultural buildings are well on the way to becoming derelict.
- **Nearly half of the historic parkland recorded in 1918 had been lost by the close of the 20th century.** In some places, these losses have been as high as 70 per cent.
- **Agri-environment schemes make an increasingly important contribution to conservation of the historic environment.** They are a principal source of funding for the management of rural archaeological sites, parkland and some traditional farm buildings.
- **Owners of historic assets face major challenges in securing their upkeep.** At 70 privately owned historic houses open to the public, £66 million worth of repair and restoration work was outstanding in 2005, of which £20 million was urgent.



- **60 per cent of all Anglican parish churches are located within rural areas.** £163 million is needed to meet their repair needs, including £147 million needed for listed church buildings.
- The nine **National Parks** and 36 **Areas of Outstanding National Beauty** contain over 10,000 scheduled monuments, over 43,000 listed buildings and over 300 registered landscapes.
- **The countryside is still a favourite destination for tourists.** The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 showed that, to a great extent, the rural economy is now supported by tourism.
- **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) has increased public access to the heritage.** 26,000 historic sites are situated on publicly accessible land.
- **The shortage of craft skills is particularly acute in the countryside.** Dry-stone walling, thatching, millwrighting, earth walling and flint-knapping traditions are seriously threatened. According to the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the National Farmers' Union, more than two-thirds of farmers said that there were no skilled builders or thatchers within ten miles of their farms.