



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## 1.1 THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN 2005

## THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN 2005

### KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS 2005

The historic environment is cared for by a wide variety of people and organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Private owners have by far the greatest role, as most heritage assets are in private hands. The ability of private owners to invest sufficiently in the maintenance of historic buildings and places is crucial to the long-term management of the historic environment. Voluntary effort is also of enormous significance: many regeneration projects are carried out by charitable buildings preservation trusts, and volunteers have an important role to play in ensuring that historic sites are well maintained and accessible to members of the public.

Responsibility for the historic environment within the government is widely shared. This responsibility goes far beyond the work of agencies such as English Heritage and the thousand listed buildings that are in the direct care of government departments (see page 78). Virtually all major Whitehall departments have policies that impact in some way on the management and maintenance of heritage sites, for instance in relation to transport, education, agricultural policy, planning and taxation.

Significant policy developments that have affected the historic environment in the last 12 months include:

- Major changes in the system of historic environment protection in England, as part of the wider programme of **heritage protection reform**. On 1 April 2005, the administration of the listing system was transferred to English Heritage from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). In addition, the DCMS and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) held a consultation on the criteria used for listing buildings. Continuing work on the wider reform of the system will be set out in new legislation, incorporating proposals for a unified Register of Historic Sites and Buildings for England, a unified consents regime and the introduction of statutory management agreements.
- The current reform of the **planning system**, which has significant implications for the management of heritage assets. Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1), published in 2005, is the cornerstone of the new planning system. It sets out the principles governing the role of planning in promoting development and sustainable communities, including 'protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities'. Other PPSs of relevance to the historic environment published in 2005 include PPS12 (guidance on local development frameworks), PPS9 (protection for habitats) and PPS6 (planning for town centres).
- The ODPM's **sustainable communities** agenda, a £22 billion programme to tackle areas of housing need. Up to 200,000 new homes will be built in four growth areas in the south and east of England, including up to 128,000 in the Thames Gateway area. Plans to tackle low housing demand through the demolition of older terraced housing in the Pathfinder areas of the north of England were subject to scrutiny by an ODPM Select Committee in February 2005. 67 per cent of new homes are now being built on brownfield sites, compared to 56 per cent in 1997.



English Heritage's *Streets for All* guidance offers advice on managing historic streetscapes.

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- Closer examination of the Government's role in protecting and promoting the historic environment, as considered by Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, in a major essay published in March 2005. **Better Places to Live** set out the importance of the historic and built environment in contributing to place, identity and community cohesion, and it invited a debate about the best role of government in supporting efforts to widen public engagement in heritage.
- Major changes in the **management of the countryside**. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill will create a new agency, Natural England, bringing together English Nature, parts of the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service (currently part of Defra). The aims of the new agency will be to promote the natural environment and biodiversity, and support landscape conservation, access and recreation. The new Commission for Rural Communities will be the Government's independent adviser for rural communities, with a Chairman acting as Rural Advocate. The Commission will continue to develop the rural evidence base and will monitor the performance by the Government and others in delivering outcomes for the countryside.
- Changes in the operation of the **National Lottery**. New legislation was introduced to Parliament to enact the merger of the New Opportunities Fund, the Communities Fund and the Millennium Commission as the Big Lottery Fund, as well as to introduce powers to redistribute the interest on funding. Between November 2005 and February 2006, the DCMS will be consulting on the share of the good causes money that will go to heritage, arts, sport and film after 2009.
- Changes to the **VAT** rules on repairs to historic places, as announced by the Chancellor in March 2005. As well as extending the existing listed places of worship scheme for three years, the scheme was widened to apply to memorials, while there may now be an opportunity for the Government to negotiate at European level for a permanently reduced rate of VAT on repairs to these unique sites.

## Sector Priorities

The Heritage Forum brings together representatives of the major heritage organisations in England to agree policy priorities for the sector. As agreed at the Forum meeting in July 2005, these priorities are to:

- **Promote the public value of heritage and its contribution to national identity**
- **Broaden access, inclusion and engagement**
- **Deliver sustainable development through heritage**

Achievement of these aims will be underpinned by further work to champion the Heritage Protection Reform agenda, press the case for fiscal support and better maintenance, and raise the profile of the nine regional historic environment forums. Updates on progress against the Forum priorities are available at [www.heritagelink.org.uk](http://www.heritagelink.org.uk).

## 1.1.2 FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

The data presented in *Heritage Counts* make it possible to identify the main trends affecting the historic environment and the areas of greatest challenge for the future. These include:

### **Demolition and insensitive new development.**

There were 645,900 decisions made on planning applications in 2004/05, an increase of 3.3 per cent on 2003/04. Many new developments have direct implications for the historic environment and can sometimes involve the demolition of historic properties. Conservation services and Historic Environment Champions at local authority level help to ensure that new developments take the historic environment into account. However, a report by the New Economics Foundation in 2005 found that 42 per cent of towns in the UK are now 'clone towns', featuring bland and repetitious design. Insensitive street and road signage and clutter can be a particular blight in rural areas.

**Lack of maintenance.** The best way to care for the heritage in the long term is to maintain it, yet there are few incentives to do this and no legal requirements. Private owners are faced with growing repair bills and declining financial support from public sources including local government. According to research by the Historic Houses Association at 70 privately owned historic houses

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open to the public, £66 million worth of grant-aidable work was outstanding in 2005 of which £20 million was urgent. Over 17,000 listed buildings are currently at risk in England, and Grade I and II\* buildings at risk alone face a conservation deficit of £400 million. The current VAT position means that it can be cheaper to build a new structure than to repair an old one. Long-term solutions are needed for buildings whose original use or function is no longer relevant, such as redundant churches and farm buildings.

**Climate change.** Historic environment assets such as buildings and monuments may be vulnerable in the future to the effects of climate change, which include rising sea levels, greater volumes of rainfall, higher temperatures and erosion. 451 coastal archaeological sites in the National Trust's care in England face the possibility of flooding or erosion within the next 100 years. Responses to climate change can also have implications for the historic environment, whether in relation to changes in cropping regimes on agricultural land as a result of increased use of biomass fuels or the expansion of wind farms and other renewable forms of power generation.

**Shortage of craft skills.** Although there are 90,000 people working in the built heritage sector, a new report suggests that, in 15 to 20 years, key skills could disappear completely because of the lack of new apprenticeships and recruits. An estimated 6,590 additional skilled craftspeople are needed to meet shortages in the built heritage sector. The workforce is getting older: only five per cent of workers in historic and botanic gardens are under 25. There is a shortage of building craftspeople between 30 and 45, so there will be problems when the current older generation retires.

**Volunteering and participation.** The UK has one of the strongest heritage voluntary sectors in Europe. Around 157,000 people give their time to over 100 voluntary bodies in England, contributing around £25 million in unpaid work to the historic environment. Volunteers are crucial to opening places of worship, saving buildings and running heritage sites. The National Trust would need to find £16.3 million a year to pay staff to carry out the work its volunteers do. However, there are few resources to support voluntary organisations and to capitalise on this enthusiasm and commitment. Also, the voluntary sector is ageing: 52 per cent of the National Trust's volunteers are over 65 and four per cent are under 35.

**Inclusion.** Many people still feel that their own culture is not reflected in heritage as it is presented today. 'Missing' audiences can include teenagers, young adults, older people, black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities, people without cars, unemployed people and people from low-income households. The sector now has a target set by the Government to increase participation among key priority groups: black and minority ethnic people, people from social classes C2DE, and people with disabilities.

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### 1.2.1 AN HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AND A LIVING LANDSCAPE

England's distinctive rural landscapes have evolved over thousands of years, providing an historical record of enormous importance. There is no part of England that has not been settled, farmed or managed in some way. Consequently, the countryside is a unique record of human development, revealing the changing nature of the relationship between people and the land. The continuing survival in today's countryside of medieval parish churches, traditional farm buildings, ancient hedgerows, historic houses and estates, and the earthwork traces of prehistoric field systems provides glimpses into the lives of past societies and their evolution over time.

However, with over nine-tenths of England's land cover regarded as rural and just under one-fifth of England's total population living there, the countryside cannot be treated as a museum. It is a place where many people choose to work and live and where change is necessary if communities are to flourish. This change should be guided by an understanding of the significance, value and irreplaceability of a heritage which is increasingly recognised as a key factor in people's quality of life.

Caring for the historic environment ensures that the places where we live are diverse in character with a strong sense of place and enhanced community identity. The historic environment creates jobs, attracts and promotes businesses, and can kick-start

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the regeneration of run-down areas. In addition, the rural landscape attracts millions of visitors each year – domestic and international – keen to enjoy scenery which is unmistakably English. This heritage is an invaluable asset for stimulating recreation, education, lifelong learning and volunteering.

Only by improving our understanding of the historic dimension to rural landscapes can we begin adequately to protect its character and distinctiveness for future generations. *Heritage Counts 2005* provides an important addition to the growing body of data available to guide those responsible for policy decisions on the countryside, sitting alongside comparable evidence-based publications from the Countryside Agency (including the newly formed Commission for Rural Communities) and English Nature.

Arguably, no work has done more to increase our understanding of the history of the rural landscape than W.G. Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955). Hoskins's approach was to consider the landscape as a multi-layered historical document. Through fieldwork observation techniques, Hoskins uncovered layer after layer of change in the landscape to reveal new insights into the development of English society and agriculture over millennia. Hoskins's work inspired both a new way of looking at landscape and new research to understand better the pressures facing the countryside, both in the past and in the present day.

It is particularly fitting then that, 50 years after the publication of Hoskins's seminal work, the theme of *Heritage Counts 2005* is the historic environment in the English countryside, at a time when its future purpose and trajectory are being actively debated. It is also timely that publication of *Heritage Counts 2005* should coincide with important milestones in the way the countryside is managed. When enacted, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill will lead to the creation of new agencies championing rural people (the Commission for Rural Communities) and nature and landscape (Natural England). 2005 has also seen radical reform of the complex system of Common Agricultural Policy production subsidies and the launch of an important new agri-environment scheme. The new Single Payment Scheme, which replaces production subsidies, encourages farmers to be more reactive to the market, in order to reduce over-production. It also requires some commitment to environmental management and provides a baseline of protection across all farmland for the first time. In parallel, the new Environmental Stewardship scheme simplifies



Grade I Church of St. Mary, Almer, East Dorset.  
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the current system of agri-environment schemes and will reward farmers for undertaking good environmental practices, including actions to protect heritage features, conserve landscape and encourage access. It is also an opportune moment to consider the substantial contribution made by the National Lottery to rural projects, in light of the forthcoming review of the lottery good causes.

### 1.2.2 KEY FINDINGS

- **The historic environment makes a fundamental contribution to the character and public appeal of the countryside and its settlements.** Villages, hamlets and the open countryside contain 47 per cent of list entries, 67 per cent (by area) of scheduled monuments, 75 per cent (by area) of World Heritage Sites, 68 per cent (by area) of registered parks and gardens, and 58 per cent (by area) of registered battlefields.
- **The majority of designated and undesignated historic sites in the countryside – whether buildings, monuments or areas – are privately owned,** emphasising the important contribution made to heritage conservation by the private sector.
- **The majority of historic sites lie within local authority areas which are significantly or predominantly rural,** confirming the importance of these 178 unitary or district authorities in managing England's historic environment.

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- **The heritage of England's market towns is central to their character and a major asset in terms of their economic vitality.** An enhanced understanding of the historic character of these towns will improve the quality of planning decisions and maintain individuality in the face of increasing development pressures. Market towns have been important beneficiaries of heritage-led regeneration schemes over the last twenty years. Nevertheless, there continues to be a clear need to support the maintenance of the built heritage in towns particularly those that are lagging economically.
- Radical restructuring and the decline in profitability of agriculture poses serious challenges for the continued upkeep of historic sites and landscapes. This is exemplified by major pressures for change on the **traditional farm building stock**, the single largest group of historic buildings in the countryside. Of the more than 30,000 listed working farm buildings, almost a third have already been converted to other uses, the majority to residential use. In more remote rural areas, large numbers of agricultural buildings face dereliction. Listed buildings are not immune: 7.4 per cent of listed farm buildings are in the severest state of disrepair.
- **Losses of historic parkland** have been calculated for the first time. Nearly half of the parkland recorded by the 1918 Ordnance Survey Edition was no longer extant at the close of the 20th century and, in some places, losses have been as high as 70 per cent. The principal causes of loss have been conversion to arable land, development and, more recently, golf course construction.
- The value of **heritage lottery funding** for rural heritage projects. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has given £860 million to projects of all kinds located in English rural areas since 1994.
- Over the last 18 years, **agri-environment schemes have made an increasingly important contribution to conservation of the historic environment.** In the period 2000 to 2004, the Environmentally Sensitive Area and Countryside Stewardship schemes have directed an estimated £90 million towards conservation of the rural historic environment and have been the principal source of funding for management of rural archaeological sites, the restoration of parkland and repair of traditional farm buildings.
- **Despite these sources of grant-aid, the owners of historic assets face major challenges in securing their upkeep.** Private owners face similar challenges. Preliminary results from a sample of members of the Country Land and Business Association in 2005 suggested that they each spend £29,000 per year on the upkeep of listed buildings and scheduled monuments in their care.
- **The conservation deficit faced by rural places of worship.** 60 per cent of all Anglican parish churches are located within rural areas, and an estimated £163 million is needed to meet the repair needs of churches in rural areas, of which 90 per cent (£147 million) is required for listed church buildings.
- The protected landscapes of England make a fundamentally important contribution to the protection and public enjoyment of the rural historic environment. In total, the nine **National Parks** and 36 **Areas of Outstanding National Beauty** (AONBs) contain over 10,000 scheduled monuments (53 per cent of the total national stock), over 63,000 listed building entries (17 per cent of the total), over 300 registered landscapes (22 per cent of the total) and 10 registered battlefields (23 per cent of the total). They are the focus of exemplary projects to improve understanding and management of their heritage, often undertaken in partnership with national agencies.
- The countryside remains a strong pull for **tourists.** There were 1.26 billion day visits to the countryside in 2003, with 62 per cent of the population claiming to have made a visit in the previous 12 months. The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 demonstrated that the rural economy is now supported to a great extent by tourism, for example, in the form of heritage attractions in the ownership of the National Trust, the Historic Houses Association and local authorities. However, the National Trust has drawn attention to the fact that UK holiday makers spend £17 billion more abroad than visitors to the UK spend here, a gap that has increased fivefold since 1997.

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- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) has resulted in **important increases in public access to the heritage**. 26,000 historic sites are situated within access land, including 5,088 scheduled monuments and 1,140 listed buildings.
- **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. Farmers are finding it particularly difficult to find people with specialist skills at the local level. According to one survey, more than two-thirds of farmers said that there were no specialist builders, stonemasons or thatchers within ten miles of their farms.

### 1.2.3 DISCUSSION

To provide a comprehensive account of the state of the rural historic environment is a major undertaking. The picture presented by *Heritage Counts 2005* is inevitably partial and influenced by current research programmes and preoccupations. It does not, for example, consider the state of England's historic villages, the heritage of its woodlands or the integrity of its historic estates in any particular depth. Nor does it address the implications of climate change on the countryside. These are areas in which detailed national research by the heritage sector is still awaited.

Nevertheless, *Heritage Counts 2005* represents an important step forward, not only in terms of the new research it presents, but also in terms of the heritage sector's increasingly sophisticated ability to analyse its core data and present it in ways which are meaningful to its partners. The sector has traditionally been rich in detailed records – nearly half a million list entries and more than one million records of sites and monuments – but it has lagged badly in terms of strategic information to inform policy and shape its delivery. *Heritage Counts 2005* begins to redress this balance and provides a valuable addition to the environmental evidence base for the countryside, complementing more developed datasets on species, habitats and natural resources.

The evidence collected in *Heritage Counts 2005* suggests that many historic places continue to suffer from a lack of protection, poor management and inadequate maintenance. The report presents a picture of a rural heritage which has been under considerable pressure in the last half century and



Traditional craft skills are essential to maintain local character and sense of place, and provide much-needed employment.

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which has witnessed marked and irrecoverable losses of key assets, such as archaeological sites, historic parkland, and traditional boundaries. It also points to continuing pressures for change that threaten aspects of our rural historic environment, such as our rich legacy of historic parish churches and other places of worship, and traditional farm buildings. Some of these concerns, such as the declining availability of traditional craft skills and the loss of local character in historic settlements, are shared with cities and conurbations. Others, such as the uncertain future of our farmland heritage in the face of radical changes in agriculture, are uniquely rural.

At the same time as we are learning more about the scale of the challenges facing the national heritage, we are also increasingly recognising the benefits provided by the historic environment, not only as a driver of tourism and inward investment, but also as the underpinning for local identity and community pride. The importance of a parish church, for example, may go well beyond its immediate congregation, to include other local residents, visitors from near and afar and other users of parish facilities. All too often, these wider community values may not become apparent until they are in danger of being lost.

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Nowhere is this debate about multiple public values better exemplified than in the rural landscape. The heritage, wildlife, scenery and recreational access which people value so highly in the countryside are the product of countryside which has been actively managed over many centuries and, while the post-war intensification of agriculture has threatened many aspects of this heritage, its 21st-century restructuring could pose equally difficult problems. The effects of global competition and the Single Payment Scheme on the historic environment are difficult to predict, but it is clear that the long-term decline in farm incomes makes voluntary conservation effort by land owners increasingly difficult to support. The decline in on-farm labour also poses significant problems in terms of the maintenance of cherished landscapes. This effect is most evident in upland and stock farms. The National Trust, for example, has recently suggested that livestock hill farming faces 'rapid and unmanaged collapse' over the next seven years unless further support is available.

The great majority of the rural historic environment is privately owned although, as a result of recent access legislation, it is increasingly available for the enjoyment of the wider public. If cherished landscapes, vital natural resources and threatened species and habitats are to be conserved for future generations, landowners need to be supported and rewarded for the efforts required to deliver a wide range of public goods. Despite the major contribution to managing the rural environment made by the Heritage Lottery Fund, resources to assist owners of historic places, particularly private owners, continue to be scarce. English Heritage grant-aid has declined markedly in real terms since the mid 1990s as have local authority heritage conservation grants. Some fiscal assistance once enjoyed by owners (such as One Estate Election) has now been removed. Agri-environment funding for the historic environment has increased in recent years, but its continued expansion is not guaranteed. While the heritage sector would like to see further enhancement of agri-environment schemes and other programmes to benefit the historic environment, this carefully targeted grant-aid needs to be complemented by fiscal measures such as the reduction of VAT levels on repair and refurbishment.

The targeting of grant-aid poses a particular challenge for the heritage sector as it will require far more explicit frameworks for prioritisation than has previously been possible. In this respect, the sector has a great deal to learn from its nature

conservation partners and their approach to biodiversity action planning. The development of national condition and risk indicators for archaeology, buildings and landscapes together with the landscape-scale characterisation and monitoring work reported in *Heritage Counts 2005* will be critically important in developing these priority frameworks, but more needs to be done before the concerns of the heritage sector are as readily understood by government and others as those of the nature conservation sector.

New approaches to the management of the resource will also need to be embraced, including finding novel uses for historic buildings threatened by redundancy. The use of historic churches for the provision of community services such as Post Offices and crèches provides a good example of re-connecting historic buildings with their communities. Similarly, in the face of increasing rates of historic farm building redundancy and with major pressures on rural housing, policies on re-use and conversion will need to be reassessed.

Integrating the management of multiple environmental interests at the landscape scale is becoming increasingly important in order to maximise public benefit and simplify delivery. England's agri-environment schemes have long provided an exemplar of this approach, and the new Environmental Stewardship scheme will allow even greater benefits to be delivered for the heritage as part of a multi-objective scheme. National Parks have also provided an excellent model of joined-up environmental delivery over many years, and this model is now being followed by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, extending integrated management planning to around a quarter of the English countryside. The same principle of integrated management has informed conditional exemption management planning and the Heritage Lottery Fund's land projects, and it has also been taken up as a central theme in the Heritage Protection Review. Defra's new integrated agency, Natural England, now faces a similar challenge as it assumes responsibility for key aspects of rural delivery.

Finally, it must be recognised that the continued well-being of our countryside and its heritage is dependent on the revitalisation of our urban environment and achieving targets for brownfield redevelopment. The rural/urban divide which led William Cowper to claim that 'God made the country, and man made the town', is arguably a thing of the past. The destinies of both are now inextricably linked. It will be through continued effort

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to regenerate conurbations and cities that we will most effectively protect the character and appeal of our market towns, our villages and our open countryside for residents and visitor alike. It is the historic environment of both town and countryside which will effectively unlock this potential.

### 1.3 INDICATORS OF CHANGE

*Heritage Counts 2005* reports on a set of key performance indicators that were featured for the first time in last year's report. The *Heritage Counts* indicator set is based on available data that make possible year-by-year analysis of key trends and movements. The data are collected under three headings: Understanding the Assets; Caring and Sharing; and Using and Benefiting. A summary of the data is presented in Section 3 of this report. Key headlines include:

#### Understanding the Assets

- The designated historic environment in England comprises 372,038 listed building entries; 19,717 scheduled monuments; 9,374 conservation areas; 1,587 registered parks and gardens; and 16 world heritage sites.
- However, only a small proportion of the historic environment receives special recognition in this way. Many areas and places of historic significance and interest have no direct protection under the planning system.
- Characterisation is one method that attempts to capture the significance of the historic environment as a whole, and studies have now been carried out for nearly two-thirds of England.

#### Caring and Sharing

- 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*, a reduction of 126 since 1999.
- Pilot studies have shown that 35 per cent of scheduled monuments are at risk in the East Midlands, a quarter of Gloucestershire's monuments are at high risk, and up to three-quarters of all the monuments in Herefordshire are at medium or low risk.

- The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has now been in operation for ten years, during which time £3.3 billion has been allocated in 18,000 awards. 26 per cent of awards and 32 per cent of total funding has gone to historic building and monument projects across the UK.
- New data from the HLF show that, since 1994, over £1 billion has gone to the physical conservation of around 8,000 historic buildings, including repairs to 1,800 places of worship and 263 buildings at risk. 61 buildings have been removed from English Heritage's register of Grade I and II\* buildings at risk as a result since 2001.
- There were 34,840 decisions on applications for listed building consent in 2004/05 (an increase of 4.5 per cent on 2003/04).
- The number of applications for total demolition of listed buildings reported to the Council for British Archaeology fell slightly to 49 in 2004, but there was a significant increase in applications for demolition of curtilage buildings to nearly 200.
- Over 500 specialist bricklayers, carpenters and slate and tile roofers; 400 joiners, lead workers and stonemasons; and 300 painters, decorators and thatchers need to be recruited in the coming year to meet conservation needs.
- 323,500 'new users' of heritage from priority groups were recorded at English Heritage sites in 2003/04 and 2004/05, compared to a target of 100,000.

#### Using and Benefiting

- There were 2.4 million school visits to heritage sites in 2004, an increase of 3.3 per cent on the previous year.
- Tourist visits to heritage sites have declined slightly. There were 58 million visits recorded in 2004, a one per cent drop compared to the previous year.
- Membership of heritage organisations has risen by four per cent since last year. There are now 3.4 million members of the National Trust and 550,000 members of English Heritage.