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Indicators

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Indicators

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INTRODUCTION

The long-term aim of *Heritage Counts* is to provide a comprehensive audit of the quality and condition of historic assets in this country, to assess the significance of their contribution towards meeting the government's social and economic goals, and to draw attention to the pressures that the historic environment faces. The report uses data produced by organisations involved in protecting and explaining the historic environment, as well as other relevant information sources, and features current research activity into the survival, identity and use of our historic assets. This form of report is only in its second year. Future editions of *Heritage Counts* must be able to articulate their messages to the widest possible audiences, including decision makers at all levels of government.

For the claims of the historic environment to be heard among the many competing calls upon government, the key trends and developments reported in *Heritage Counts* must be expressed clearly and in a way that is easily understood by widely different audiences. One way of achieving this is by adopting a set of indicators about the management and use of the historic environment. Last year's *State of the Historic Environment Report* suggested some headline indicators, based around the core themes of sustainability – environment, society and economy. This year, a wider discussion about the role of indicators is invited, with a view to defining a set of key indicators for regular measurement in future editions of *Heritage Counts*.

4.1 WHAT ARE INDICATORS?

Indicators are now a commonplace tool in managing business and assessing the effectiveness of public policy. As unambiguous measures of change in key areas they help to:

- Summarise where we are at a given point of time
- Reveal trends, explain causes and report change
- Provide a basis for establishing direction and targets and
- Inform and stimulate action such as changes in behaviour, policy, information, regulation and incentives

Adopting indicators carries risks. Inevitably, they are selective and partial. They depend upon the quality and availability of the data upon which they are based. To be useful, trends need to be tracked so that they can be followed over reasonable periods of time. By their nature, indicators can often miss important issues that have value but are not easy to measure, such as the quality and character of the countryside. Indicators that can span and address the concerns of expert, lay and political audiences are difficult to find. And of course ultimately an indicator only highlights issues; it cannot guarantee the delivery of appropriate action.

It is therefore critical to select the 'right' indicators and be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. This means being realistic about what they can achieve, balancing what is needed with what is available and ensuring the suite of indicators adopted covers the broad range of key issues. The process can be simplified and made easier to manage by using a relatively small number of 'headline' indicators rather than attempting to measure too much detail at once.

4.2 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Indicators have been successfully developed within other parts of the environment sector as part of the government's sustainable development strategy process. ■ 'Quality of life' indicators have helped place environmental concerns in the mainstream of government, and are used to monitor progress on the delivery of key government objectives. From an overall set of about 150 indicators, some 15 have been developed for annual reporting. Taken together, these headline indicators give a broad overview of trends and are described as a 'quality of life barometer'. Some have been linked to relevant policy targets and have had a significant impact on policy decisions.

The wider set of indicators focuses on specific issues and can help identify areas for action by providing greater detail on trends and interactions. A series of regional and local indicators have been produced subsequently. The regional indicators were subsequently reported on annually by government, and local authorities have been encouraged to use the local indicators in their own strategies and monitoring.

The historic environment is currently only minimally represented at national level by just a single indicator (K5 – to ‘ensure that development takes account of history and look for opportunities to conserve local heritage’), measured by the Grade I and Grade II* buildings on English Heritage’s Buildings At Risk register.

The Sustainable Development Strategy is now under review with a view to producing a revised set of ‘quality of life’ indicators in 2005. There is an important opportunity here for the sector to ensure that the historic environment is better represented in the final suite of indicators.

Some of the key issues to emerge from the experience of developing and utilising sustainable development indicators are outlined below.

- Headline indicators are a good way of communicating an overview of a complex picture
- Grouping indicators into separate ‘families’ of indicators can help understand relationships and interactions between trends
- Close analysis of indicators can help identify the main drivers of change
- Ensuring indicators and the interests they represent have a wide ownership and a high profile will increase the chances of necessary action being taken in response to what they tell us
- Developing regional and local indicators usefully connects strategic policy with the realities of the situation on the ground in local communities
- Requiring the use of a comprehensive set of indicators can be more of a burden than a benefit
- Regular reviews of indicators can help ensure their relevance and continuing influence on policy and practice

4.3 WHAT DO WE WANT FROM HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS?

A workshop discussion hosted by the National Trust in September 2003 considered the issue of the purpose of indicators for the historic environment. The key priorities to emerge from the workshop centred around five themes: raising awareness; demonstrating value; monitoring condition and extent; fostering wider ownership and responsibility; and informing management. It was agreed that indicators were needed to:

- Measure change in the quality and quantity of the historic environment
- Integrate relevant heritage/historic environment issues throughout Government
- Improve accountability and challenge performance of those organisations responsible for the historic environment
- Generate awareness about the historic environment among others outside the heritage sector
- Clarify the significance of the historic environment in everyday life
- Prioritise use of resources by organisations responsible for the historic environment
- Quantify issues to determine the scale and the disciplines involved
- Encourage joined-up departmental Government working
- Monitor the success and failure of policies for aspects of the historic environment
- Justify the usefulness of activities in the heritage sector and spending public funds on them
- Develop a sense of responsibility and ownership amongst those whose lives and work engages them with aspects of the historic environment
- Assist with the business-planning process for those managing work programmes in the historic environment

EXAMPLES OF HEADLINE INDICATORS USED IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

- **Investment:** Total and social investment as a percentage of GDP
- **Employment:** Proportion of people of working age who are in work
- **Housing:** Percentage of households living in non-decent housing
- **Land use:** Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land
- **Road traffic:** Total road traffic volume
- **Wildlife:** Populations of farmland and woodland birds

- Monitor and contribute towards developing a country-wide perspective
- Enable comparisons between localities, regions and countries
- Provide pointers for sharing good practice and success
- Highlight damage and loss affecting historic assets and help control destructive processes
- Reflect an integrated process

4.4

HOW DO WE JUDGE A GOOD INDICATOR?

Indicators can vary considerably in their relevance and usefulness. Choosing the right ones is critically important, and fortunately there is a wealth of experience in understanding the criteria for identifying a good indicator. Taking as a starting point the criteria used in the development of the Government's sustainable development indicators, the following criteria were proposed by the workshop (those starred were deemed particularly useful):

A good indicator should:

- Be resonant and meaningful*
- Capture the imagination and stimulate action*
- Inform a number of policy areas, not just within the historic environment*
- Demonstrate cause and effect and inform solutions*
- Be owned by a range of stakeholders*
- Integrate and reflect the breadth of the historic environment*
- Highlight and monitor key policy initiatives, commitments and targets
- Describe overall what it is that needs to be achieved
- Be scientifically valid and robust
- Be simple and easy to interpret
- Show trends over time
- Provide early warning of potential problems
- Be based on readily available data or data that can be collated at a reasonable cost
- Be sensitive to the changes it is meant to indicate
- Be capable of being updated at regular intervals

4.5 FRAMEWORKS FOR DEVELOPING INDICATORS

Having analysed why indicators are needed and understood what constitutes a good one, it is necessary to consider a possible framework for grouping indicators for the historic environment. A framework can be a useful development tool for organising candidate indicators and ensuring the final suite covers the appropriate needs and issues. The sustainable development indicators were developed within a framework of the three themes of sustainability – environmental, social and economic – and the broad objectives outlined in the overall Strategy for Sustainable Development. Another general approach is the pressure-state-response model that seeks to draw out the causes of changes and possible actions/solutions in response to them as well as the changes themselves.

The workshop eventually adopted a putative framework based around three broad themes, 'Benefits', 'Identity and condition', and 'Conserving and explaining':

Benefits

Indicators under this theme would attempt to measure the economic and social benefits of the historic environment for its users and the wider community. The historic environment brings great value to users as an educational resource and as a means of promoting life-long learning. It a powerful way in which communities achieve their sense of cohesion and identity, but it is necessary to measure the extent to which all members of the community are able to participate in and enjoy the historic environment around them. The value of the historic environment can also be expressed in terms of the number of people who enjoy visiting historic sites, the amount of revenue such visits generate, and the indirect economic benefits that this brings in terms of jobs and consumer spending. Indicators under this heading may also refer to public attitude surveys or other measures of popular support for the historic environment.

Identity and condition

This theme would group together those measures that assess the nature, extent and condition of our historic assets. Obvious candidates would be the measures used in Section 1 of this report to identify the extant number of various types of historic assets, (historic buildings, monuments, sites, landscapes etc) and the pressures that they face. Quantitative and qualitative elements must go together, and should build upon the 'At Risk' measures that English Heritage and other organisations are developing.

Conserving and explaining

This set of indicators would attempt to measure the support available for the management of our historic assets – their conservation and their interpretation. Indicators under this heading might measure the funding available from public and private sources in the form of grants and relief for maintenance of historic sites. Measures in this family of indicators could also capture the level of skills available to ensure high quality conservation work. In addition, it might incorporate an assessment of the degree to which sites are being managed with the needs of the public in mind, including the needs of those who face additional barriers to participating in the historic environment.

4.6 CONSULTATION ON A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS

Although this is still only an early stage in the development of historic environment indicators, the particular strengths of this approach are that it helps to capture issues around the three critical questions relating to why the historic environment matters, its state and extent, and how its needs are being met. Having agreed a workable set of indicators, future *Heritage Counts* reports could be structured around assessments of the measures under each heading, drawing out the main themes and developments from what the measures tell us. It would also be possible to use the indicators to demonstrate clearly and concisely how the sector is contributing to wider government objectives.

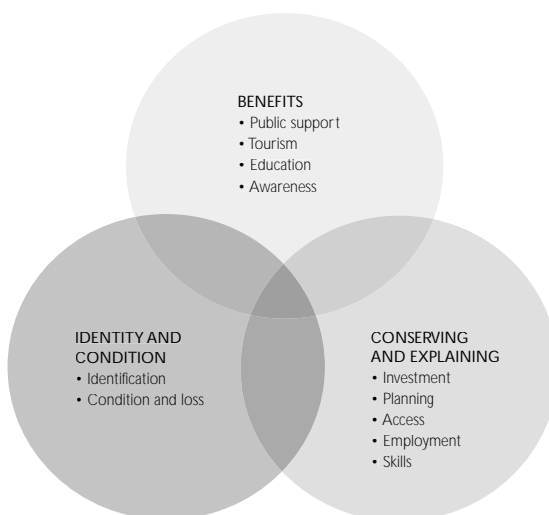
A suggested list of indicators using the proposed template framework is set out in **Table 1**. The measures identified in the table are only suggestions at this stage, and there will inevitably be other indicators that could be used to throw light on pressures and developments. *Heritage Counts 2003* is therefore launching a wider **consultation** of stakeholders and other interested groups, with a view to refining and agreeing a final set of indicators for the historic environment sector. The objective for the consultation is to:

- Gather and collate best practice thinking from across the sector into how indicators should operate
- Use the results to inform a further workshop, intended for early 2004, to agree a final set of historic environment indicators
- Develop the final set of indicators so that the sector can contribute most effectively to the Government's review of the current set of sustainable development indicators (in 2005)
- Consider how the indicators might be used a structure for future *Heritage Counts* reports

Any comments are welcomed on the suggested overall framework and the list of draft indicators set out below. Responses are invited in particular on:

- Whether the approach set out here is helpful
- Whether the proposed framework is sound
- Whether the potential headline indicators listed are fully reflective of the historic environment as a whole
- Any further suggestions for headings or data sets that might be used as indicator measures
- Any suggestions on how the historic environment indicators could feed in to the Government's review of its headline sustainable development indicators

Please send all comments to: ben.cowell@english-heritage.org.uk by 27 February 2004.



1 A provisional set of indicators for the historic environment

| GROUP | SUB-GROUP | REF | INDICATOR |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------|---|
| BENEFITS | | | |
| | PUBLIC SUPPORT | B1 | MEMBERSHIP OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ORGANISATIONS Possible measures: membership figures for National Trust, English Heritage, amenity societies, Council for British Archaeology, Garden History Society and county gardens trusts, other environmental organisations. Data on membership profiles (by social class, ethnicity etc) could also be used |
| | | B2 | VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY Possible measures: numbers of volunteers at sites open to the public; numbers of volunteers contributing in other ways towards the protection and management of the historic environment for instance through the amenity societies |
| | | B3 | PARTICIPATION BY SOCIALLY EXCLUDED GROUPS Possible measures: number of new visits to heritage sites by people from priority groups (defined as: black and ethnic minority; social classes C2DE; people with disabilities) |
| | TOURISM | B4 | VISITORS TO HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS Possible measures: annual number of visitors to historic attractions |
| | | B5 | REVENUE AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATED BY HERITAGE TOURISM Possible measures: % GNP deriving from tourism; total income from visitors to historic attractions and numbers of people employed in opening historic sites to the public |
| | | B6 | MOTOR TRAFFIC IN HISTORIC AREAS Possible measures: visits made to historic tourist attractions by car, bus, train and cycle; number of Quiet Lanes implemented by local planning authorities in Local Transport Plans |
| | EDUCATION | B7 | SCHOOL VISITS Possible measures: number of schools visiting or planning to visit historic sites; number of qualified educational staff and projects available at sites |
| | AWARENESS | B8 | MEDIA INTEREST Possible measures: hours of programming relating to historic environment, or number of publications relating to history and the historic environment in the bestseller lists |
| | | B9 | PLANNED VISITS Possible measures: number of people who say that they intend to visit a historic attraction over the next 12 months |

IDENTITY AND CONDITION

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------|---|
| | IDENTIFICATION | I1 | CHARACTERISATION Possible measures: proportion of England covered by historic landscape characterisation backed by appropriate development plan policies; rate of loss of 1km grid squares continuing to reflect long-term historic pattern of settlement |
| | | I2 | DESIGNATING AND RECORDING Possible measures: number of formally designated sites (archaeological sites, buildings, conservation areas, parks and gardens, battlefields, maritime sites etc); number of records entered onto National Monuments Record, Historic Environment Records/Sites and Monuments Records |
| | | I3 | COUNTRYSIDE QUALITY Possible measures: various measures ranging from information on buildings, landscape features and land use |
| | | I4 | QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF HISTORIC HOUSING Possible measures: number of non-decent houses by dwelling age; amount of historic housing stock demolished every year |
| | CONDITION AND LOSS | I5 | BUILDINGS AT RISK Possible measures: number of Grade I and Grade II* buildings at risk; cost of restoring all the buildings on the buildings at risk register (£); buildings at risk removed from register during the year; movement in priority categories |
| | | I6 | PARKS AND GARDENS AT RISK Possible measures: number of parks and gardens that are deemed 'at risk'; number of parks and gardens subject to significant land use change |
| | | I7 | MONUMENTS AT RISK Possible measures: proportion of scheduled monuments at risk from damage, decay or loss |
| | | I8 | DETRIMENTAL CHANGE IN CONSERVATION AREAS Possible measures: overall index of detrimental changes affecting buildings in conservation areas; some other measure such as proportion of housing by age where external window design has been altered |
| | | I9 | DEMOLITION/DELISTING OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS Possible measures: number of listed buildings affected by an application for partial or total demolition |
| | | I10 | SALE OF WORKS OF ART FROM PRIVATE COLLECTIONS Possible measures: number of sales per year |

CONSERVING AND EXPLAINING

| | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------|---|
| | INVESTMENT | C1 | PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN HISTORIC AREA REGENERATION Possible measures: assessment of total levels of funding in historic areas by English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Local Authorities, Regional Development Agencies, Objective 1, Single Regeneration Budget; socio-economic statistics for levels of social cohesion, stability and employment for conservation-led regeneration compared with other regeneration schemes of a similar size, location and character |
| | | C2 | PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT Possible measures: match funding received against local authority, English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund investments; jobs created or safeguarded by heritage regeneration schemes; funding of repairs and maintenance by private owners; amount of construction work involved in maintenance, repair and refurbishment compared to new construction |
| | PLANNING | C3 | CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS Possible measures: proportion of conservation areas covered by an appraisal |
| | | C4 | MANAGEMENT OF LANDSCAPES AND OPEN SPACES Possible measures: number of historic urban parks and cemeteries with management plan in development or implementation |
| | | C5 | MANAGEMENT OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES Possible measures: number and proportion of World Heritage Sites with management plans |
| | ACCESS | C6 | INTELLECTUAL/PHYSICAL ACCESS Possible measures: number of historic sites with disability access audits and plans; number of initiatives which address the holistic interpretation and delivery of history to all members of society; the number of 'open day' sites open to the public and the number of visitors to them |
| | EMPLOYMENT | C7 | CONSERVATION OFFICERS Possible measures: number of conservation officers, architect/planners, archaeologists and SMR/HER staff employed by local authorities |
| | | C8 | HERITAGE CHAMPIONS Possible measures: number of designated Heritage Champions within local authorities |
| | | C9 | TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SECTOR Possible measures: number of permanent Full Time Equivalent posts in public, private and charitable sector organisations associated with the historic environment, including local authorities |
| | SKILLS | C10 | APPRENTICESHIPS FOR CONSERVATION SKILLS Possible measures: number of new apprenticeships and trainees for the traditional building crafts |
| | | C11 | INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION SKILLS Possible measures: number of new recruits to training courses leading to qualifications in heritage interpretation and presentation |

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