

Training the Decision-Makers

To satisfy popular demand for open government we need decision-makers who are up-to-date and well informed.

BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

English Heritage was set up in 1984 to protect, promote and educate the public about England's historic environment. It achieves this in a variety of ways, for example through high-profile public campaigns on subjects such as Buildings at Risk, UPVC windows and street clutter; activities for schoolchildren; listed building, scheduled monument and conservation area casework; or grant-aid funding for repairs.

There has been a marked shift in the public's attitude to experts since the early 1980s: people are no longer content just to take the word of a specialist but expect to be involved and consulted at all stages in a decision-making process. Decisions, particularly those taken by public bodies, have to be reached in an informed and transparent way and are often challenged – this is particularly true in cases to do with development. Decision-makers, therefore, constantly have to update their knowledge and skills by attending continuing professional development (CPD) seminars, by reading policy guidance and sharing best practice, or by completing e-learning courses and modules. Information is much more readily available now via the internet, which has revolutionised the way in which people can access information.

The need for informed decision-makers across the board has been recognised by both central and regional and local government. It is also fully endorsed by the professional institutes. For the historic environment sector this issue was clearly identified in *Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment* (English Heritage 2000), which spelled out the need for a shared understanding of historic environment and urban design issues by planning officers, conservation officers, surveyors, architects, archaeologists and others. There were also calls for more involvement by the local community to encourage wider appreciation, understanding and a feeling of 'ownership', increased emphasis on partnerships and greater training of decision-makers.

The government agreed with these points, in

particular the need for transparency in decision-making and wider capacity building of non-heritage specialists. It encouraged English Heritage as sectoral leader to extend the capacity building work it was already doing with voluntary groups, professional organisations and public bodies. This was to ensure not only that the historic environment is better appreciated and taken into account when decisions are being made by non-heritage specialists, but also that heritage professionals possess the skills that the sector needs. Similarly, government was making changes elsewhere to encourage more community participation in decision-making – for example, as part of the revised planning system all local authorities have to produce a Statement of Community Interest to sit alongside the Local Development Framework plans. All local authorities now use the Planning ePortal, which allows submissions for planning permission to be made on-line, and planning applications and decisions posted on websites to enable wider public consultation. Government also set up organisations such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to help local authorities develop the skills of their staff and share best practice. The Beacon scheme was established whereby best practice could be exchanged, a successful example of which is the English Heritage-led Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) partnership.

At English Heritage a real-term decrease in government funding coincided with a modernisation process that sought to use English Heritage expertise and funding to the best effect. The heritage cycle model was developed, which explains that broad public understanding of the historic environment leads to its enjoyment, which in turn leads people to value and care for it, and so the cycle repeats. Increased priority has been given to working in partnership with other organisations to achieve specific goals, including a more strategic role for English Heritage and increased capacity for operational delivery within local government and across the rest of the historic environment sector.

Historic Environment Champions, Cllr Hilary Nelson (North Norfolk District Council) and Cllr John Crockford-Hawley (North Somerset Council). The first national conference for Historic Environment Champions took place on 12 July 2006, at the Royal Aeronautical Society in London. The conference was about celebrating all that Champions have achieved to date and exploring the challenges that lie ahead.

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This led to projects such as Heritage Gateway, a web-based portal that is being developed by English Heritage, the Association of Local Government Officers and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation to help users gain access to online Historic Environment Record information held by local authorities; to English Heritage's Conservation Principles project, which is currently addressing the need for increased transparency and community involvement in decision-making; to its Streets for All campaign; and to the establishment of local authority Historic Environment Champions, which are described below. Policy guidance is provided wherever possible in partnership with other organisations to pool resources and expertise, increase organisational buy-in and help in its dissemination.

Training and capacity building is now an increasing part of English Heritage's work. The Heritage Protection White Paper, which is expected towards the end of 2006/early 2007, is likely to recommend changing the way in which the historic environment is protected.

Training will be required to enable decision-makers and other users to operate the new system. It seems likely that this will be delivered through a project such as HELM and will complement the long-standing training courses that are provided for conservation officers and archaeologists on aspects of the historic environment. Greater emphasis will be put on e-learning modules to help decision-makers and others to self-test, and guidance will continue to be offered to professional institutes such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and to specialist organisations such as the English Historic Towns Forum (EHTF) and the amenity societies.

Of course, more training and capacity building is always needed and the right balance is required between training and implementation. English Heritage will continue to look for ways in which it can spread the message that the historic environment matters to all people and that it should be understood, valued and cared for so that everyone can enjoy it now and in the future.

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Colleagues from Local Authorities, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty visit Walmgate Stray in York as part of a HELM training day on 'Understanding and Managing Landscapes'. Alistair Oswald points out historic features on this well-used and publicly accessible site.

Historic Environment Champions

Good leadership is essential to improving the management of the historic environment and to building capacity in the sector. This means securing individuals with the right skills and qualities to provide strong and visible leadership for heritage issues. It also means developing the leadership role of local authorities at both political and managerial level, given their essential role in the protection and management of England's historic environment.

Local authority Historic Environment Champions is one initiative that aims to tackle leadership for the heritage sector at a local level. Abundant evidence exists of the importance of good leadership in local government – councils with strong leadership generally do well, whereas councils with weak leadership often perform poorly. More than 54 per cent of authorities have recognised the benefits of appointing a Historic Environment Champion and have asked an elected council member to undertake this vital role.

The Champion's role

Historic Environment Champions provide leadership for heritage issues within their local authority. The role of Champion requires a number of different skills and attributes to ensure strong leadership. Historic Environment Champions are:

- Decision-makers – they set priorities and are accountable for balancing competing demands and interests in the historic environment
- Ambassadors – they promote the opportunities and benefits of the historic environment
- Leaders – they build a vision for the local historic environment, setting a clear direction and ensuring that the vision is delivered
- Shapers of services – they forge local partnerships to marshal resources in a way that best meets the needs of the historic environment and its local community
- Challengers and scrutineers – they ensure that the historic environment is embedded in the authority's activities, across services and in all the authority's policies, plans, targets and strategies
- Motivators – they inspire Cabinet portfolio holders and senior officers, lead local partnerships and bring stakeholders together
- Enablers of the community – they support and empower local people to get involved in their local heritage and act as a point of contact.



The historic environment is a powerful force for improving everybody's quality of life and helping create sustainable communities. Local Authority Historic Environment Champions provide leadership for heritage issues within their authority and are playing an essential role in unlocking heritage potential.

Capacity building and champions

English Heritage is committed to supporting local management of the historic environment and is investing in local authorities through the provision of grants, guidance and training. As part of this capacity-building programme, Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) was launched in 2004 to ensure that local authorities are equipped with the resources, knowledge and skills to make the most of their historic environment. Champions, aimed at the level of elected members, are one strand of this package and HELM also supports local authority historic environment officers and non-heritage professionals.

The concept of Champions for the historic environment was introduced in *Power of Place* (2000), when the heritage sector set out its shared vision for the future. The government's response, *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* (2001), welcomed this vision and set the sector a series of challenges. This included the need to provide clearer and stronger leadership for the historic environment (at both national and local levels) and to develop effective working relationships across the sector and beyond.

In 2004 local authorities were invited to nominate elected-member Historic Environment Champions. The response was encouraging and by the end of a year 36 per cent of authorities had a Champion. Two years later, this figure has risen to more than 54 per cent of local authorities, and three national parks and the Greater London Authority have also

appointed Champions. Historic Environment Champions are one of the key success stories that demonstrate how far the historic environment sector has moved to address positive leadership and management of the historic environment at a local level.

Developing skills and knowledge

English Heritage is working with both government and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to support Historic Environment Champions in their role. A three-year strategy has been developed that includes a combination of local, regional and national events and seminars, through which Champions are kept up-to-date and can develop their skills, share ideas and build partnerships.

English Heritage also

- aims to keep Champions informed about new initiatives via the HELM website (www.helm.org.uk) and a quarterly newsletter. A new e-learning module for elected Members will be available later this year on championing the historic environment.
- regularly sends out guidance on important local issues such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. This guidance can also be found on the HELM website.
- recently organised a national conference, *Championing the Historic Environment: Local Leadership for the Historic Environment*, which was supported by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Communities and Local Government. A further conference (for local authority

Design Champions) is being planned by CABE for the autumn of 2006.

- works through its regional offices to develop local networks for Champions, including lunch-time networking events with the English Heritage Chairman, Sir Neil Cossons.
- provides training for Champions such as formal seminars, workshops, site visits and discussion groups. This includes joint training with CABE Design Champions and HELM that focuses on specific issues such as regeneration and improving streetscapes and conservation areas. There is also a broader induction to the historic environment and the role of a Champion.

Champions – making a difference for the better

Champions have been involved in a wide range of activities and projects that have enabled their local authorities to make much better use of the historic environment resources at their disposal. At the national conference of Historic Environment Champions last July there were presentations from five Champions and table discussions on what other Champions had achieved so far, and it is clear that Champions have been working hard on a variety of issues that are helping place the historic environment at the heart of Council agendas. For example, Cllr Hilary Nelson talked about the important role the historic environment plays in the future of North Norfolk and the excellent progress North Norfolk District Council has made in regenerating Cromer, as well as her own role in this as Chair of the steering group. Cllr Heather Garnett, from North Yorkshire County Council,



Delegates deep in discussion at the first national conference of Historic Environment Champions in July 2006.

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spoke on the leadership she has provided within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to encourage community involvement in heritage.

More information about these and other case studies, as well as Ministers' speeches and papers from the conference, can be accessed via the HELM website.

Developing a shared agenda for the future

In the future, English Heritage will continue to develop the role of the Historic Environment Champions so as to attract and support high-quality leaders and to ensure that they can make a difference.

Historic Environment Champions set their own goals, which vary considerably according to local circumstances and needs. There are also various national issues that English Heritage and the government will be urging Champions to engage with in the future. For example, Champions have an important role to play in ensuring that the historic environment is included in:

- the overarching vision set out in the local authority's Sustainable Community Strategy
- the spatial strategy described in the authority's Local Development Framework
- the detailed outcomes, indicators and targets presented in the authority's Local Area Agreements.

Champions will also play a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of the new system for managing the historic environment that is expected to result from the forthcoming Heritage Protection White Paper.

Opening up the debate

Two years on, we can confidently demonstrate that Historic Environment Champions do make a positive difference. There is more work to be done, however, to ensure that Champions have the support and skills to provide strong leadership within local authorities and that the historic environment sector continues to develop. Championing the historic environment is a challenge to us all.

If you want to find out more on the Historic Environment Champions initiative, read the latest publications or see if your local authority has a Champion, visit the HELM website (www.helm.org.uk) or email: champions@english-heritage.org.uk.

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HELM and capacity building

The Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) project started out as a gleam in the eye of Jeff West, then policy director at English Heritage. It arose in particular out of the work he put into *Power of Place*, the sector's challenge to government.

He persuaded government in the form of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), now the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) that a critical part of protecting the historic environment was influencing and training the non-heritage professionals in local authorities who were making decisions that impacted on it every day. Studies of capacity knowledge – that is, the knowledge decision-makers must possess in order to make effective and informed decisions on the historic environment – showed a clear shortfall in various sections of local authorities and other organisations that traditionally were not easy to access. These included local authority transport engineers, leisure managers (particularly those managing historic parks and cemeteries), strategic planners and property asset managers, as well as Regional Development Agency staff, particularly those who manage grants for economic regeneration, and other organisations.

The vision – which subsequently became the Historic Environment Local Management project – was to provide face-to-face training across England on the basics of managing and protecting the historic environment for non-specialists, as well as information about key topics of interest and a website giving up-to-date guidance and services.

ODPM, DCMS and the Planning Advisory Service contributed funding in 2004 to launch the HELM project, with training subcontracted to the English Historic Towns Forum in the first instance. This was to provide a basic introduction to the historic environment, and included a guided tour to look at particular issues on the ground. Feedback from the courses showed that they were well received and responses set out a detailed 'wish list' for future training topics. Subsequent courses were run by English Heritage on topics such as maritime issues and coastal land management, landscape characterisation, management of historic green spaces and analysing and managing the historic environment. These are aimed at a professional audience of non-historic-environment decision-makers to increase their awareness of the importance of the historic

environment and capacity, particularly in local authorities. Wherever possible training is done in partnership with others – for example, HELM and the Regional Development Agency in North-West England ran a joint seminar for planners on historic environment-led regeneration, and a similar event was held with the British Urban Regeneration Association. More than 170 people were trained at these two seminars.

The HELM website (www.helm.org.uk) receives more than 120,000 hits per year; the aim is to provide a one-stop resource for professional decision-makers making decisions affecting the historic environment. Some 159 English Heritage guidance leaflets are already on the system as well as 669 guidance documents from local authorities, and more are being added as they are produced. The aim is to make sure that information is widely available and accessible to all. Local authorities are encouraged to submit guidance and case studies where they wish to showcase best practice. Over the next year we will work with organisations such as the various Home Country heritage agencies and professional institutes such as the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Royal Institute of British Architects to either post copies of their guidance on the HELM website or to provide links to their own websites. Local authority members, particularly Heritage Champions, are encouraged to look at

the website and David Lammy, Culture Minister in the DCMS, and Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the DCLG, both recently praised HELM as a good and essential resource. Other organisations regularly look at the website either through INFO4LOCAL or following recommendations from local planning authorities – for example, HELM was recently cited by the Local Ombudsman in one of its decisions.

Work is currently under way to provide e-learning self-assessment modules. The first modules – one aimed at Heritage Champions and the other at decision-makers such as asset managers and planners making decisions affecting historic school buildings – will be on the HELM website by the autumn of 2006.

HELM has achieved a great deal in its first two and half years and we look forward to achieving even more in the future.

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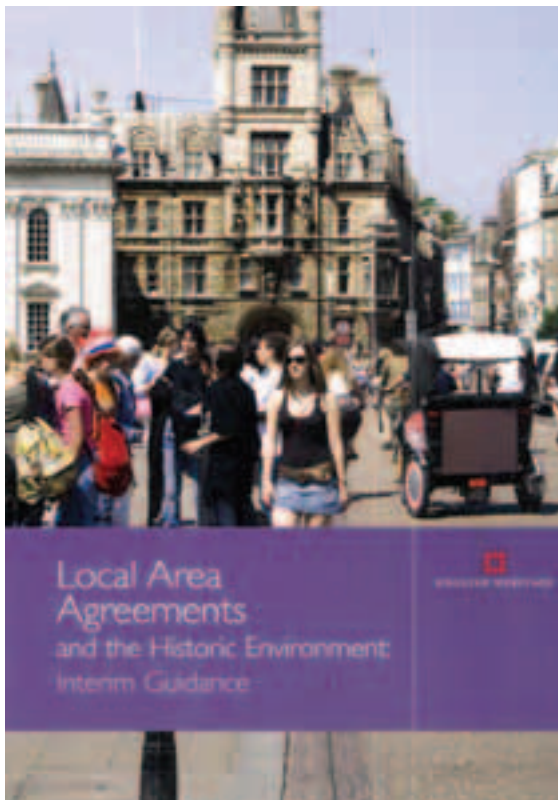
Streets for All – save our streets

The English Heritage Streets for All project is a good example of capacity building both to professional decision-makers in local authorities and to the wider public. Transport engineers have traditionally been seen as a ‘hard sector to access’ for historic environment training, so great emphasis has been placed on capacity-building schemes to encourage greater collaboration and understanding.

Streets provide the setting and foregrounds to buildings and the backdrop to the public’s everyday lives. They are the public service used by everyone every day. However, they are increasingly cluttered with a proliferation of traffic signs, bins, bollards, guard rails, street furniture and other accoutrements. This results in streetscapes that are both unsightly and lacking in character. Retaining a street’s historic features maintains its individual character and helps create a sense of place, which is vital in maintaining a sense of community. It can be achieved without compromising accessibility or safety. Well-designed streets that use quality materials and are carefully looked after help regeneration and are an expression of confident, well-organised local authorities; unfortunately the reverse is also true as chaotic, badly maintained and cluttered streets are often symptoms of authorities and communities in decline.

English Heritage’s streetscape manuals – *Streets for All* – set out the principles of good

One of the aims of the HELM website is to provide one-stop access to information about the historic environment. Some 159 English Heritage guidance notes have already been posted on the site, alongside nearly 700 guidance documents produced by local authorities.



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practice for street management such as reducing clutter, co-ordinating design across the streetscape and reinforcing local character. These are all available on the HELM website (www.helm.org.uk). The manuals are aimed at local authority transport engineers, local amenity societies, utility companies and regional government. They have been produced in conjunction with the Department of Transport and their regional focus emphasises the need to retain local character and distinctiveness when considering highway and street design. They look at issues such as paving, street furniture, environmental improvements and street management.

The Save our Streets campaign was taken up enthusiastically by the public, with street audits being completed and sent to many local authorities, highlighting the level of people's concern about their local surroundings. Training courses for about 300 local authority highways, planning and conservation staff were organised by four English Heritage regions to highlight the importance of the historic environment.

In the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the council, in collaboration with the traders of Kensington High Street, wished to improve the quality of the Kensington High Street streetscape in order to maintain the viability of the locality as a shopping destination in the face of threat from nearby large-scale retail development. Consultants were appointed to review the constraints and opportunities and to achieve consensus on the way forward. New leadership led to a change in direction for the project and a refocusing of priorities to achieve simplicity, quality and elegance without compromising safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists alike. Emphasis was placed on high-quality materials to reduce maintenance costs, such as the use of York stone and granite for paving, the reduction of street furniture to the absolute minimum, the provision of improved pedestrian crossings and the removal of guard rails, the construction of a central linear island with integrated bike parking to encourage pedestrians to cross sensibly at will (this has also worked as a mechanism to encourage car drivers to reduce speed) and the replacement of tactile-blister coloured paving (used prolifically across the country) by paving in York stone with stainless-steel studs. The subsequent post-scheme evaluation has shown that safety has not been compromised and that the streetscape is seen as an attractive setting for leisure and retail use.

In Crossley, Halifax, a number of partners worked together to achieve a good result. Various traffic-management techniques were used



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Kirkgate in Ripon, North Yorkshire. Natural materials, minimal clutter and good-quality workmanship and maintenance contribute to an attractive shopping area.

to reduce the conflict of traffic speed and volume and pedestrian flows across the street. The town centre was divided into five zones with no access between them except for buses, taxis, delivery vehicles and cycles. This zone and loop system resulted in a 28 per cent reduction in traffic. During the day, rising bollards controlled by the town's CCTV system protect the Central Market pedestrian zone, and have successfully prevented the abuse of the restricted entry system.

Local York stone paving was used to widen pavements and sandstone setts provide level crossing 'tables'. The reduction in traffic speed has allowed the use of less obtrusive traffic signs, which have a highly reflective finish to avoid the need for lighting. Tactile paving at crossings has been achieved by using paving with inserted brass studs. Post-scheme evaluation shows a high degree of public satisfaction.

Streets for All regional seminars for 2006–7 are under way at the moment and the collaborative partnership networks that come out of such training are helping to transform England's streetscapes.

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