

# Legal Developments

## CDP – from lawyers?

Go on – admit it, the last thing you'd expect to receive from a group of lawyers is good professional continuing professional development (CPD). Yet for dozens of English Heritage conservation professionals that's exactly what they've received over the last couple of years from the in-house English Heritage legal team.

A couple of years ago we held a series of two-day training courses for field monument wardens and ancient monument inspectors run by Linda Russell, an ex-local authority planning solicitor who is also an ex-police officer. The course took participants through gathering evidence in compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act – what are the elements of the scheduled monument offences, what evidence is admissible, how does one interview suspects, etc.

The course went down extremely well – so well, in fact, that we ran a cut-down version of it for regional managers so that they could understand what their now well-trained subordinates were talking about! Just about everyone at English Heritage involved on the front line of monument protection (and their managers) has now been trained in these skills and a new dialogue has been opened between the monument inspectors' peer group and the legal team.

Next up were the historic buildings inspectors and area advisers. We have now run two annual updates on developments in historic building law, which have been extremely popular not just with the original target groups but also with the engineers and architects. One inspector described the most recent update, held at the rather pleasant offices of our new London law firm, Bircham Dyson Bell, as 'gold-plated CPD – exactly what we need'.

In the pipeline is a course for case workers – who I am sure would get more from their work if they better understood the documentation they process. We are also planning to train people in thinking ahead to the requirements of a public inquiry. We'd like to get people thinking right from the outset of a case: 'how would I deal with questions at a public inquiry about the decision I'm about to make?'

All well and good for English Heritage staff you might think, and to some extent you'd be right. But wait – we have also been asked to produce a module for the Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) training programme for local authority professionals providing an overview of the law in the area of the historic environment.

Of course, none of this is aimed at creating pocket lawyers. What we're about is training people in areas of law which will enable them to do their job more effectively – enabling an inspector of ancient monuments to put together a convincing case for prosecution or giving a historic buildings inspector the confidence to say with authority whether a particular feature is a fixture or not. I like to think my team have made a contribution to professional development in the sector and I know they will continue to do so.

This is my last column for *Conservation Bulletin*. By the time you read this I'll have left English Heritage for the private sector. I'd like to thank the long-suffering editor, Rowan Whimster, for his patience and to wish my successor as Legal Director all the very best.

**Nigel Hewitson**

*Legal Director, June 2001–September 2006*