

News from English Heritage

European Heritage Summit

Between 26 and 28 April English Heritage hosted (with the assistance of an anonymous donation) the first meeting of the heads of the European (EU) heritage agencies on the initiative of English Heritage Chief Executive, Dr Simon Thurley. The event was attended by representatives from 21 EU countries (including the four UK home countries) and resulted in an Action Plan, which states that the group will:

continue to meet as the European Heritage Forum to exchange experience, ideas and best practice, to strengthen and support existing networks dealing with heritage and tourism and carry out the following specific actions. 1) to make a high-level public statement of the outcomes of this meeting, 2) to develop common statistical information on European heritage by strengthening our commitment to HEREIN and other available tools, 3) to commit to using the new European Heritage Forum to exchange information and to share best practice on all aspects of the management of the historic environment and its sustainable use, 4) to develop as a specific publication from the European Heritage Forum an analysis of the economic and social benefits of investment in the historic environment, including sustainable tourism.

It was also agreed that the forum should meet annually (hosted by different member organisations) and should establish a 3-year rotating secretariat. Further information and related papers from the Summit are available on www.english-heritage.org.uk.

Capturing the Public Value of Heritage

On 25–26 January more than 400 people came together at the Royal Geographical Society to discuss the ‘public value’ of heritage. Organised by the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the National Trust and the DCMS, the conference focused on the question of how we capture the value of heritage. We know that people care about it, and that funding it generates all sorts of social and economic benefits. The bigger challenge is to present that evidence in a way that is relevant both to the public and to politicians.

The proceedings of the conference will be relevant to anyone involved in looking after the heritage, or who is interested in how ideas of ‘public value’ can be applied to cultural heritage. Copies* are available from English Heritage Postal Sales at the address on the back cover of this issue of *Conservation Bulletin*.

* Clark, K (ed), *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage: Proceedings of the London Conference 25–26 January 2006*. English Heritage (2006). Paperback, 112 pages. ISBN: 1 905624 10 7; Product Code: 51216; £10

Capturing the Public Value of Heritage

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE LONDON CONFERENCE
25–26 January 2006



Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) website update

Since its launch in March 2004, the HELM website has developed as a comprehensive resource for historic environment decision-makers. Annual figures for 2005–6 have shown a sharp increase in use, with 127,209 unique visitors to the website.

In July 2006 HELM will launch a pilot online learning project aimed specifically at local authority Historic Environment Champions.



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Delegates from 21 countries to the first European Heritage Summit attended a dinner at Eltham Palace hosted by English Heritage Chairman, Sir Neil Cossons.

A key aim of the pilot will be to evaluate the effectiveness of HELM training and guidance in an online format. HELM eLearning will provide a range of interactive courses on local heritage management issues in a more accessible and personalised way than ever before. A brief introduction to HELM eLearning can be viewed at <http://www.helm.org.uk/elearning>.

In the future, the HELM website will feature more best-practice case studies from local authorities nationwide, some examples of which have been covered in recent publications such as *Heritage Works* and *Shared Interest*.

New HELM publications will continue to be published, alongside more links to local authority guidance and up-to-date news of training and education schemes run by English Heritage and its partners.

Protecting and Preserving and Making Accessible our Nation's Heritage

The Chairman and Chief Executive of English Heritage gave evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee on 25 April. The questioning from the committee members allowed key messages on heritage protection reform, modernisation, resources and Stonehenge to be re-emphasised. David Lammy, the Minister for Culture, and Baroness Andrews, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the ODPM (now DCLG), presented evidence at the same hearing. The committee has begun work on preparing a report on all the evidence it has received, which will be published later in the year.

The Country Houses Foundation

The Country Houses Foundation, formed as a grant-giving charity in 2005, has launched a scheme to assist the repair and restoration of buildings in England considered of historic or architectural significance. Trustees expect to

make approximately six grants a year, of between £50,000 and £250,000.

Projects likely to be favourably considered will be those associated with listed or scheduled buildings, their related gardens and grounds, or those located in a conservation area. To be eligible projects must contribute to a sustainable future for the building and provide some public benefit, typically in the form of a degree of public access.

Christopher Taylor, Chairman of the Country Houses Foundation, says, 'The trustees are aware of the huge backlog of repairs that is putting many historic buildings at risk. Funding from mainstream sources is in short supply and many projects receive only partial funding or do not qualify for assistance. We hope to be able to help where others cannot and no doubt will have a difficult time deciding which of the many deserving projects we can support.'

For further information please contact Amanda Witherall, Country Houses Foundation, Bloxham Mill, Bloxham, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4FF; tel: 0845 402 4102; fax: 0845 402 4103; email: info@countryhousefoundation.org.uk.



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Cllr Hilary Nelson, Historic Environment Champion for North Norfolk District Council. English Heritage's first national conference for local authority historic environment champions will take place on 12 July.