

The historic environment is enjoyed by the whole population, yet is created, managed and maintained by a limited number of owners. Inadequate care and maintenance result in expensive repairs; loss of quality in town and countryside affects the economy as well as the environment.

35 The historic environment creates wealth, much of which goes direct to the Treasury.

Reinvesting only a small proportion of this would ensure that it continues to generate revenue in the future.

I cannot stress too strongly that I regard responsible Tourism as one of the few real resources which can support the Historic Environment.

Alan Britten, Chairman, English Tourism Council

36 Preliminary results from a British Tourist Authority (BTA) study indicate that £3 billion (14.1% of tourist expenditure) goes directly to the Government. This is in addition to the revenue from company and personal taxation generated by tourism.

37 The Historic Houses Association (HHA) represents the owners of 1,200 houses, 270 of which are regularly open to the public, attracting 10 million visitors a year. The HHA estimates that only 4% of the contribution this makes to the economy goes to the property concerned. On average, owners face maintenance bills of £40,000 a year, with major capital repairs needed every 10–25 years at an average cost of between £250,000 and £1 million. At present, these are being funded 30% from taxed income, 10% from grant aid and 22% from sales of works of art – itself a major loss to the historic integrity of house, landscape and contents. Incentives are needed to prevent further dispersal and secure continued public access. Sound stewardship by the few must be encouraged if the asset is to continue providing benefits to the many.

Domestic and overseas tourists to England currently generate £3 billion a year for the Treasury. If just 2½% of this existing tax revenue – £75 million a year – were reinvested in the historic environment, it could, for example:

- enable the backlog of repairs to Grade I and II* buildings to be cleared within 10 years rather than 60 *and in addition*
- enable every local authority to employ a qualified conservation officer *and in addition*
- double local authority conservation grants *and in addition*
- restore nearly a third of the cuts in local authority spending on parks over the last 10 years

Buildings, monuments and parks at risk

38 Nearly 4% (1,625) of Grade I and II* listed buildings and structural scheduled monuments are at risk through neglect and decay. Many are capable of economic use, and could be saved without grant aid if local authorities were more active in using their compulsory powers. The subsidy needed to bring the rest into good repair – the conservation deficit – is estimated at £400 million. Once they are in good repair, 44% of these will also be capable of economic use. The rest, mainly ruins, will need long-term stewardship and continuing financial support.

39 The indications are that a similar proportion of Grade II buildings are at risk from neglect, perhaps as many as 14,000 across the country. Again, most will be viable once repaired. Only a few building types are incapable of economic use. They include monuments and memorials, some specialised agricultural, industrial and military buildings, and ornamental buildings in parks and gardens. These need and deserve continuing support.

40 Public parks, themselves a vital part of the historic environment, have suffered severely in recent years from under-funding and lack of leadership. The House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee has drawn attention to their plight. Local authority expenditure on public parks has been cut in real terms by 16% from £638 million in 1990/91 to £538 million in 1998/99.

41 We welcome the Government's decision, announced in the Urban White Paper, to give Regeneration Minister Beverley Hughes responsibility for achieving improvements to England's parks. As a first priority, she needs to commission an in-depth review of the management and maintenance of public parks.

The decline of the public realm

The culprits are easy enough to identify, but less easy to control. To name but a few, they include too many cars, insensitive road signage, litter, derelict sites, reduced rural local authority maintenance budgets, the unregulated action of highways departments (making a mockery of conservation area restrictions), obtrusive supermarkets, petrol station forecourts.

Historic Houses Association

It is the richness of the public realm that governs perception of the historic environment and prompts both civic and new investment, creating a virtuous circle. It is also by its very nature a public rather than a private asset and so the benefits of involvement are most widely felt.

Planning Officers Society

42 The loss of quality in the public realm is degrading the historic environment across Britain. There are many reasons – fragmentation of responsibility, deregulation, privatisation of former public utilities, poor co-ordination between agencies, reduction in maintenance budgets and, above all, the relentless impact of traffic. Between 1987 and 1997 the number of vehicles licensed on Britain's roads increased by 22% whilst road traffic increased by 28%. Town and country alike are both affected, their character suffering from insensitive traffic management schemes as well as from traffic itself. The management and presentation of streets and public areas demand as much care and attention as that of the buildings which enclose them.

43 Yet improvements to the public realm have, perhaps, the highest payback in terms of attracting jobs and people back into an area. The Government's proposals for Town Improvement Schemes, announced in the Urban White Paper, *Our Towns and Cities: the Future*, will enable local authorities to work with local businesses to provide creative and popular improvements to streets, open spaces and parks in England's towns and cities.

Recommendation 3

Clear the backlog of repairs

For the Government:

- a Set funding targets for English Heritage and local authorities to clear the backlog of repairs to buildings, monuments and parks and gardens at risk within 10 years
 - b Commission a full review of the management and maintenance of public parks
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For local government:

- c Where necessary, restore cuts in the funding of neglected public parks
- d Work with local businesses to use Town Improvement Schemes to improve the management and maintenance of streets, parks and other public spaces



Case Study 5

**Grainger Town,
Newcastle upon Tyne**

Improvements to the public realm have been key to the regeneration of this important Georgian streetscape, attracting people back to live and work in this core inner city area. Half way through the project about £2.5 million has been spent. Public and private investment totals £60 million and both business and domestic property values have risen. Not long ago nearly 50% of the listed buildings were at risk. Through bringing back 35 buildings into use, 290 new homes have been created, many in previously unused upper floors above shops. So far, 393 jobs and 141 new businesses have been created. The public sector is making available expertise and support to help property owners and occupiers take advantage of the opportunities via a dedicated project team.

Case Study 6

**Segsbury Hillfort,
South Oxfordshire**

Grants under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme restored this important Iron-Age hillfort on the Ridgeway. It is now well managed and accessible to visitors. Previously it had been under the plough, with its ramparts inaccessible and covered with scrub, and the site damaged by burrowing animals.



Countryside at risk

44 The historic environment of the countryside continues to suffer from the intensification of agriculture, the restructuring of the farming industry and the collapse in farm incomes. An estimated 22,500 ancient monuments – one per day – have been destroyed since 1945, with cultivation the single greatest cause of loss. Between a quarter and a third of all field monuments remain under cultivation. One third of hedgerows were lost between 1984 and 1993. The last comprehensive survey of listed agricultural buildings, in 1992, identified 17% as being at risk and 24% as vulnerable. This loss of countryside quality will affect the rural economy, which benefits greatly from the historic environment. It is estimated that 60,000 new jobs could be created by an active programme of extending agri-environmental schemes and organic farming.

45 The historic environment of the countryside was created by the interaction of human activity and the natural environment. It can only be sustained by active management. Landowners need to be given an incentive to improve the management of archaeological and historic landscape and traditional rural buildings. It is particularly important to encourage the repair and restoration of the wood pasture and designed parkland that was once such a characteristic feature of lowland England.

46 The recently approved England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) provides for the first time an integrated framework for the delivery of rural development measures and environmental incentives to farmers. Welcome though this is, it is still dwarfed by production support. Resources need to be switched progressively to agri-environment measures,

starting at the mid-term review of the ERDP in 2003/04. A means has to be found of continuing to support the farming industry while securing a sustainable future for the environment. *Our Countryside: the Future* proposes setting up a review group to consider how best to assess the public benefits of managed landscape and land-based enterprises. It will need to look at the merits of introducing environmental impact assessment for major changes in agricultural practice.

The marine and coastal environment

47 Paradoxically, for a country with such a close association with the sea, marine archaeological sites – the evidence of ships and shipping and the prehistoric landscapes inundated by sea-level rise since the last ice age – are the least understood and the least well managed of all historic environments. The voluntary sector currently makes the major contribution to marine archaeology. Support for their efforts and greater collaboration between professionals and the voluntary sector is essential to any future management strategy.

48 Legislation protecting selected marine sites recorded in English territorial waters was introduced in 1973 as a temporary measure. 34,000 sites are already known, although there may be half a million more yet to be recorded. Of these, only 38 are afforded statutory protection. Reform of this system is long overdue. As a first step, the remit of English Heritage should be extended to include marine matters, and funds provided for effective protection.

Recommendation 4

Provide more support for rural, coastal and marine environments

For the Government:

- a Accelerate the switch of funding from agriculture production support to agri-environment measures
- b Use existing legislation more effectively to protect the historic marine and coastal environment and legislate to transfer responsibility for marine archaeology to English Heritage



Case Study 7

A gun being raised from the wreck of The Stirling Castle

Volunteer diving group Seadive is carrying out urgent archaeological work on the well-preserved wreck of *The Stirling Castle*, one of four warships lost on the Goodwin Sands in the Great Storm of 1703. Its survival is threatened by seabed instability. Co-operation with the voluntary sector is a key factor in managing marine archaeological sites, but more funding is needed for urgent operations on discoveries such as this. No professional heritage agency is responsible for marine archaeology in English territorial waters.



Photo: Seadive

Case Study 8

Gateshead Millennium Bridge

High-quality new-build such as that being encouraged by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) enhances the historic environment by making a contribution to the heritage of the future. A good understanding of the history and character of an area is essential as a basis for the best new design. The new Gateshead Millennium Bridge is the latest in a galaxy of outstanding bridges crossing the Tyne. Designed for pedestrians and cyclists, it is the world's first rotating bridge which swivels upwards to allow ships to pass underneath.

Creating the heritage of the future

49 Good new design will create a rich historic environment for the future. Some of the most important new architecture and landscapes have been produced in response to the constraints of a difficult site or a demanding brief. Understanding the nature and character of what is there before beginning work on a design is the best way of producing something that enhances its environment. Responding to context does not mean designing a pastiche. It means having the creative imagination to take into account the effect of any new work on the environment as a whole.

50 The Government recently established the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to promote excellence in the quality of new architecture and urban design. English Heritage and CABE must work very closely to ensure that the benefits of both old and new are fully respected and integrated in all significant new development schemes. In many cases this will mean joining forces to promote the highest standards of new architectural and landscape design in historic environments.

51 The Civic Trust, and many local amenity societies, are concerned to encourage high quality new design as well as protect old buildings and familiar landmarks. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, through its Philip Webb Award Scheme, actively encourages students of architecture to develop the skills needed to design new buildings in the historic environment. Leading modern architects

are involved in running the scheme. This creative interaction of new and old, based on an informed understanding of the significance of the existing historic environment, needs to be encouraged at every decision-making level.

52 The role of the client is critical. Owners and developers need to draw up a careful and sensitive brief. They must appoint a professional team who have the skills and experience to respond effectively to the challenges of the site.

Recommendation 5

Promote good design that enhances its context

For local government:

- a Use the planning system to encourage new design that responds creatively to its context

For the heritage sector:

- b Work at all levels to encourage high-quality new architecture and landscape design
- c Develop a joint strategy with CABE to ensure that new development enhances the historic environment

For owners and developers:

- d Show sensitivity, understanding and imagination in commissioning new design

