

**Intelligent, adequately funded and democratic conservation requires leadership. The MORI poll shows that there is solid public support for looking after the historic environment and using it to create a better quality of life and a fairer society. This report has demonstrated many ways in which the power of place can be harnessed for the public good. Communities – of place, faith, culture and interest – will play their part, but effective leadership is essential.**

### Local leadership

110 Throughout this report there has been an emphasis on the need for co-ordinated action at regional, local and neighbourhood level.

111 Key decision-makers can come from government and statutory agencies, owners and developers and non-governmental organisations. All must be encouraged to understand the value of the historic environment to their objectives and be aware of the issues affecting it.

112 At regional level, important decisions are made by regional planning bodies, RDAs and cultural consortiums. In some regions regional assemblies have been given important powers. At a local level, decisions rest with elected mayors, members of a local authority executive and members of planning committees. The strength and direction of the non-governmental sector will be critical. Local amenity societies can be a powerful voice for effective change management. The most successful programmes involving socially excluded groups in the environmental planning process are the result of local initiatives. At neighbourhood level, effective Local Strategic Partnerships will depend entirely on the quality of local leadership. (Case Study 25)

113 Leadership is found in many places. Projects happen because people make them happen. We should identify and back the individuals in all communities who deliver results.

114 A system of local 'heritage links' involving all those providing leadership in the historic environment, and including related sectors such as tourism, would enable the co-ordination of initiatives and the sharing of best practice.

### *Recommendation 17*

#### **Support local leaders**

For local government:

- a Work with regional bodies and the heritage sector to draw up a national programme for training elected members on issues affecting the historic environment
- b Back people rather than structures

For the heritage sector:

- c Back people who make things happen
- d Develop local 'heritage links' bringing together non-governmental organisations, agencies and local government

### Leadership from Government

There must be much closer co-operation across Government to recognise that the historic environment impacts on the work of many Departments... Departments with historic buildings and landscapes within their estates need to set an example by adopting best conservation practice as a matter of course.

Save Britain's Heritage

**115 Central Government must lead by example.** This does not mean setting up new and cumbersome structures to co-ordinate action. The mechanisms already exist. We are pleased that in *Our Countryside: the Future* the Government has recognised the need to develop a joint countryside planning process that will include the historic environment. Similar initiatives are needed across the whole of Government.

**116** The Government has appointed 'green ministers' across Whitehall, not only to improve environmental housekeeping such as energy

consumption, important though this is, but also to ensure that policies across Government are environmentally sustainable. The responsibilities of these ministers should explicitly include the historic environment. Their regular reports should include an evaluation of the impact of policies on the historic as well as the natural environment. This is probably the single most powerful action the Government could take to demonstrate concern for the historic environment.

### Redundant public buildings

**117** The public estate has undergone a transformation as great as the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. Plans need to be drawn up for buildings owned by large public sector bodies whose pattern of service provision has changed radically, leaving them with important and, in many cases, locally valued redundant buildings: hospitals, defence establishments, village schools, town halls.

#### Case Study 25

##### King Street, Great Yarmouth

Local leadership from the Borough Council and the business community has been crucial in making a success of the Great Yarmouth regeneration partnership. Private developers, English Heritage, the County Museums Service and the National Trust have all been involved in a programme that has seen the town's central conservation area put into good repair and buildings brought back into use, including upper floors over shops. Projects have included a community-based oral history project and work with local schools. The town's tourism industry is being boosted by heritage-based tourism, particularly in the shoulder periods outside the main summer peak season.



Photo: Boris Bangs

118 The examples of best practice in positive and active estate management are found not in the public sector but in the large private estates of urban residential and business properties and rural landowners. The Government's responsibilities towards managing its historic buildings was made explicit in a Nine Point Plan of Action launched in 1991 and revised in 1996. Progress is monitored through a biennial Conservation Report prepared by English Heritage on behalf of DCMS. The Plan now needs to be linked more closely to the Government's wider environmental agenda.

119 The work which CABE is doing to encourage quality in new building in the public sector should be reinforced by a new emphasis on managing the existing estate responsibly. The recent report, *Better Public Buildings*, is an important and welcome initiative, highlighting the importance of properly maintained and improved historic buildings. Since much of the construction work carried out by government departments is repair and refurbishment, the responsibilities of the proposed 'design champions' within departments and other public bodies should explicitly include ensuring that the management and maintenance of the Government's own historic estate is carried out to equally high standards.

DETR lacks an effective historic environment dimension to wider policy objectives and DCMS has never given the issue the attention or priority it deserves. These problems are in addition to the split responsibility for planning

and listed building and other consent procedures.

Council for the Protection of Rural England

120 English Heritage, as lead body for the sector, works closely with DETR on planning, environmental and transport issues, as well as DCMS. CABE's close working relationship with DETR, now with funding from DETR for a set of tasks, is a model which many feel should be extended to English Heritage. As lead body for the sector English Heritage should also have a closer working relationship with other government departments, including the Department for Education and Employment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

121 The UK has in the past had a well-deserved international reputation for its conservation work, though this has rested more on the achievements of the private and voluntary sector, and particularly the National Trust, than on political leadership. It would be a strong signal of the Government's commitment to the historic environment, and its determination to play a full part internationally, if it were now to ratify the relevant international conventions, including the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the Hague Convention), the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on the International return of Stolen or Illegally exported Cultural Objects, and the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention which was opened for signature in October 2000.

### *Recommendation 18*

#### **The Government should lead by example**

For the Government:

- a Extend the responsibilities of 'green ministers' to encompass the historic environment
- b Extend the role of departmental 'design champions' to cover the public sector's management and maintenance of its own historic estate
- c Require government departments to follow the advice issued by DCMS on the care of historic buildings and ancient monuments when considering the sale of redundant assets
- d Strengthen the relationship of English Heritage with DETR and other government departments
- e Ratify and implement relevant international charters