

Earlier this year English Heritage was asked to lead a review of policies relating to the historic environment of England. We saw it as a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

This is not an English Heritage report. The review has been led by a 20-strong steering group representing a wide range of interests. Well over 100 people have contributed to five specialist working groups, each looking at a specific aspect of the historic environment. Detailed consultation papers were issued in June and published on the Web, and we have received and analysed over 600 responses. We have commissioned MORI to carry out a major survey of people's attitudes to the historic environment and of the value they place upon it. We believe that the broad approach we are advocating, and the principles behind it, command general support. It is inevitable, in such an inclusive process, that not everyone will agree with all the detail but, in its essential substance, this Report reflects the widely held views of the sector and the population at large.

There are five main messages.

- Most people place a high value on the historic environment. 87% think it is right that there should be public funding to preserve it. 85% think it is important in the regeneration of our towns and cities. 77% disagree that we preserve too much. It is seen as a major contributor to the quality of life.
- Because people care about their environment, they want to be involved in decisions affecting it. And, in a multi-cultural society, everybody's heritage needs to be recognised.
- The historic environment is seen by most people as a totality. They value places, not just a series of individual sites and buildings. What people care about is the whole of their environment. This has implications for the way we identify and evaluate significance.
- Everyone has a part to play in caring for the historic environment. Central and local government are critical; so too are amenity societies, community groups, owners, developers, professionals in the field, schools and universities. More will be achieved if we work together in partnership. Understanding and commitment are essential. So are leadership, and adequate resources.
- Everything rests on sound knowledge and understanding. Good history is history that is based on thorough research and is tested and refined through open debate. It accommodates multiple narratives and takes account of the values people place on their surroundings.

We make 18 headline recommendations. Some are for central government, others are for local government, heritage organisations, owners and developers.

There is no need for immediate legislation but there is a strong need for immediate action. Many of our recommendations can be acted on straight away.

Power of Place is about our future. That future will be richer if it is built around the values people place on their historic environment.



Sir Neil Cossons

Chairman of the Historic Environment Review Steering Group

