



DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Government Response to the  
Culture, Media and Sport Committee Report  
on Protecting and Preserving our Heritage

*Presented to Parliament by the  
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport  
by Command of her Majesty  
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# GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT COMMITTEE REPORT ON PROTECTING AND PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

## Introduction

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee published its report on Protecting and Preserving Our Heritage on 20 July 2006.

The Government welcomes this report for its wide-ranging and timely look at the opportunities and challenges facing those concerned with managing change in the historic environment, and with interpreting and communicating its significance.

The Government's policy on the historic environment is set out in *A Force for Our Future* (published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR), now DCLG, in December 2001). This makes clear that the historic environment should be protected and sustained for the benefit of our own and future generations.

Five years on, significant progress has been achieved across Government: sustainable development is now at the heart of a reformed planning system, conservation of the historic environment is an integral part of the England Rural Development Programme, and a root and branch review of heritage protection legislation is now drawing to a close.

The Government's response to the Select Committee's report is set out below. Where appropriate, conclusions and recommendations from the report have been re-ordered and grouped together to avoid repetition.

# Government's response to the Select Committee's conclusions and recommendations

## 1. Government commitment to heritage

**The omission of a reference to the importance of the historic environment from the Prime Minister's recent 'priorities letter' to DCMS is a surprising and worrying omission, given the emphasis the Government places on regeneration and the important role of the historic environment in leading urban regeneration. We encourage DCMS to restate the priority it attaches to the role of the historic environment, and the Government should remedy this omission in its response to this report. (Paragraph 41)**

The Government's priorities for the historic environment remain those set out in *A Force for Our Future* in 2001:

- that public interest in the historic environment should be matched by firm leadership, effective partnerships, and the development of a sound evidence base;
- that the full potential of the historic environment as a learning resource should be realised;
- that the historic environment should be accessible to everybody and be seen as something with which the whole of society can identify and engage;
- that the historic environment should be protected and sustained for the benefit of our own and future generations; and
- that the historic environment's importance as an economic asset should be skilfully harnessed.

The historic environment continues to feature prominently in DCMS priorities, as was made clear in the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport's response to the Prime Minister's letter.

This emphasised that heritage plays an important part in attracting visitors to the UK, but that its intrinsic value also helps to shape and define our national identity, contributing to community cohesion at home and public diplomacy abroad. Similar themes were also explored in the Secretary of State's 2005 essay, *Better Places to Live – Government, Identity and the Value of the Historic and Built Environment*, and in the subsequent conference sponsored by DCMS, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Trust on *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage*.

**We believe that a mechanism is needed to achieve more in representing heritage across Government. Although there is merit in the concept of rural proofing, we suspect that heritage proofing could too easily become bureaucratic and develop into a tick-box, formulaic approach. Inter-departmental understanding is what is needed and we recommend that the heritage role envisaged for Green Ministers in *A Force for our Future in 2001* should be revived and enhanced. (Paragraph 45)**

The focus of 'Green Ministers' continues to be sustainable development. In this context the Government is committed to protecting and preserving historic assets in its ownership and the preservation of the historic environment in a sustainable way. Ministerial Design Champions and public sector Design Champions also have an interest in encouraging the preservation of the historic environment because it is a core part of sustainable development which entails environmental sensitivity and achieving places with a sense of identity.

**DCMS and DCLG should take more account of examples of best practice in refurbishment that have already been demonstrated and which are more likely to command the support of local communities. (Paragraph 49)**

We are pleased that the Committee notes some of the excellent work done by Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders in refurbishing and converting properties, including Victorian terraces, and we

are already encouraging the Pathfinders to share best practice. The Government fully supports refurbishment where that is a viable option and many more Victorian houses in the Pathfinders will be refurbished than demolished. Similarly, we agree that the involvement and support of communities is essential to housing market renewal and have commissioned a best practice guide from the Chartered Institute of Housing to provide the Pathfinders with further support.

The suggestion of a ‘presumption in favour of large-scale clearance’ is wrong. We agree with English Heritage that, although some demolition of low demand housing will be required, it is important that we learn from the past and do not sweep away places with real value that have the potential for imaginative renewal. However, as the ODPM Select Committee stated, houses should not be maintained purely for heritage value if there is no demand for them. In some places refurbishment alone cannot provide the economic lift these areas need. In such cases the Pathfinders have to look at a mixed approach that includes removing or replacing some houses to ensure neighbourhoods can retain their residents and meet modern housing needs.

When we assess Pathfinders’ bids for funding, we expect them to demonstrate that they have worked with experts such as English Heritage to ensure that development proposals preserve those aspects of their neighbourhoods that give them character and value. Decisions to replace properties are never taken lightly, and they are always taken with the full involvement of the community. Replacements are only undertaken where the Pathfinder can demonstrate that this is the best option to deliver a sustainable community for the neighbourhood.

Examples of best practice in refurbishment are highlighted by English Heritage in its publication *Low Demand Housing and the Historic Environment* (including: New Frodingham, North Lincolnshire; Albion Street, Chester; Mount Street, Fleetwood; Langworthy, Salford; Ashton-under-Lyme; and the Byker Estate in Newcastle upon Tyne). Together with additional advice in the form of *Building Sustainable Communities: Actions for Housing Market Renewal*, this can be found in the guidance library of the HELM website (<http://www.helm.org.uk>). English Heritage is also working directly with a number of pathfinder authorities, and in the case of Elevate, is part-funding a post to ensure the best use is made of the heritage assets in the regeneration area.

**We recommend no change to existing responsibilities for heritage matters within Government but would like to see more effective action from DCMS to promote the value-added aspects heritage can bring to planning and developing cohesive communities. (Paragraph 50) We welcome the avowed commitment of the present Minister with responsibility for heritage, but he will need to demonstrate his commitment through action not just within his own Department but across Government. (Paragraph 51)**

The Government welcomes the Committee’s conclusion. DCMS will continue to work with partners across Government to promote the intrinsic and instrumental values of the historic environment.

For example, DCMS, DCLG and the leading national cultural agencies, including English Heritage, have recently signed an agreement setting out how we will work together to promote culture in sustainable communities, especially in areas designated as Growth Areas and Housing Market Renewal Areas, under the branding ‘Where We Live’. The agreement sets out the aim of the bodies involved to support local authorities and planners in maximising the potential of culture in these areas. The outcome of this will be that cultural provision and infrastructure will be more firmly embedded in area based planning frameworks and delivery mechanisms at national, regional and local levels.

**DCMS should strive to put together an economic case to justify to the Treasury the level of settlement which the historic environment deserves, and we believe that there is no justification for allowing its share to decrease. Again, we find this state of affairs a surprise given the emphasis the Government, including the Treasury, places on regeneration. Taken with the omission of the historic environment from the Prime Minister’s recent ‘priorities**

**letter’, the falling relative share of spending begs the question of how hard DCMS champions heritage and the historic environment in joined-up working across Government. (Paragraph 59) We encourage DCMS not to take a short-sighted approach to heritage funding and to recognise the long-term benefits in terms of leverage, value added, and an enhanced sense of place. (Paragraph 64)**

HM Treasury announced in July 2005 that there would be a Comprehensive Spending Review of Government spending. As part of this, DCMS has been asked to identify how value for money could be improved.

In response, DCMS is compiling evidence on the value of the historic environment, including the wider benefits that it brings to the economy, education and communities. Our aims are outlined in the published conference proceedings of the “Capturing the Public Value of Heritage” conference in January. We have ensured that a wide range of sector representatives have been engaged with the process of defining “public value”, and are currently working with our sponsored bodies, including English Heritage, to put together proposals.

**We have received evidence that public heritage investment has been successful in leveraging in significant private and voluntary investment, and DCMS should undertake research to enable this case to be put clearly to the Treasury. The significance of heritage as a factor in tourism growth must also be identified more effectively, particularly in view of the opportunities provided by the London 2012 Olympics. We look to DCMS to redress the balance in the case which it presents to the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. (Paragraph 59)**

The outcomes of extensive research into the extent to which investment in the historic environment levers in private investment have already been published by English Heritage in the form of *Heritage Dividend*, *Heritage Works* and *Regeneration & the Historic Environment*. Following further analysis, the methodology used in *The Heritage Dividend 2000* and *The Heritage Dividend 2002* has been refined and published as *The Heritage Dividend Methodology*. This methodology is in tune with government appraisal and evaluation of regeneration more generally, and is used in, for example, *Building Value: Public Benefits of Historic Farm Building Repair in the Lake District*. Copies of these reports can be found in the guidance library of the HELM website (<http://www.helm.org.uk>). Further research by English Heritage is underway and publications planned to better understand and promote the wider benefits of heritage.

Similarly, the historic environment is widely acknowledged by DCMS as a key driver of holiday and leisure activity. Heritage sites are consistently represented in the top ten visitor attractions for both the country as a whole and by region. The importance of heritage in this respect was highlighted in the DCMS paper “Tomorrow’s Tourism Today” published in 2004 and it features strongly in VisitBritain’s marketing strategy, especially through the *Enjoy England* campaign. We are working closely with English Heritage and others to maximise the opportunities for promoting heritage and the historic environment through tourism in 2012.

**DCMS should bear in mind that 2012 will be a showcase for tourist attractions across the UK. Investment to ensure that major sites are presented to best effect should begin now, and the point should be driven home to other Departments which play a role, such as the Department for Transport in relation to Stonehenge, and to the regional development agencies. (Paragraph 80) All interested parties should recognise that it is in the interests of the general public that the current opportunity to reach a solution at Stonehenge should not be lost. (Paragraph 163)**

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will bring enormous opportunities for the visitor economy in London and across the UK. In partnership with Visit Britain and Visit London, in July 2006 DCMS launched *Welcome > Legacy, Tourism Strategy for the 2012 Games Consultation*, the widest ever consultation of the tourism industry, which will inform a comprehensive strategy for making the most of the Games as an opportunity for tourism across the UK.

This highlighted how iconic London heritage sites will form the backdrops to many of the Games events, and that DCMS sectoral organisations (including English Heritage, Historic Royal Palaces, the Royal Parks and CABE) are exploring how they can add value in 2012 – both through their assets and as sector leaders. Specifically in terms of London, for example, Historic Royal Palaces is developing its own Games strategy while English Heritage is assessing the archaeological potential of the Olympic site, which is likely to provide tourism marketing and media opportunities as work progresses. English Heritage will also continue to champion and promote proposals for the better presentation and enhancement of key areas of London which are set out in their document “Capital Spaces”. The Heritage Lottery Fund is a member of the Government’s new Culture and Creativity Forum for the Cultural Olympiad which met first on 25th July.

Outside London, Stonehenge is perhaps the most iconic site in England. DCMS, the Department for Transport and DEFRA, together with the Government Office for the SW, English Heritage and Natural England, were members of the cross-government Review Group commissioned to report to Ministers on options for the A303 improvement scheme at Stonehenge. The significance of Stonehenge as a World Heritage Site which draws some 800,000 visitors each year has been fully recognised in the Review Group’s report. Ministers are currently considering the report.

## 2. Other key players

### English Heritage

**We are in no doubt that the decline in real terms in grant-in-aid to English Heritage has led to justified fears that English Heritage will in future be unable to carry out its functions to the standard required. There is a real prospect that the condition of heritage assets will worsen and that grassroots organisations and local authorities will lose confidence in English Heritage’s ability to provide the support which they need – whether that be grant funding or expert advice. It is also essential that the key role provided by English Heritage expert advice and leverage funding in delivering regeneration of historic city and townscapes and World Heritage Sites, is understood and supported by the Department of Communities and Local Government; and DCMS must ensure that the role is communicated effectively. DCMS needs to take action to ensure that English Heritage can fulfil its functions properly. (Paragraph 33) We find the logic underlying DCMS’s explanation of why funding to English Heritage has decreased in real terms in recent years unconvincing, and it inevitably leads observers to conclude that its claim to attach priority to heritage issues is cosmetic and not borne out by the facts. (Paragraph 60)**

English Heritage is funded at a level which is sufficient for it to discharge its responsibilities and to deliver to a high standard. Stakeholder surveys and the conclusions of the Peer Review make clear that a great deal is being achieved. The modernisation programme and the Efficiency Delivery Plan produced by English Heritage have identified scope to reduce bureaucracy and release more funding to front line services.

We note the Committee’s comments, but the Government made clear its position with regard to the current level of funding for English Heritage in its memorandum to the Committee. Such support needs to be viewed in context. Government investment in heritage (which includes museums, galleries and the National Heritage Memorial Fund as well as English Heritage) currently exceeds £600 million a year. This is more than ever before and is complemented by additional investment in heritage-led regeneration projects at regional level by Regional Development Agencies, English Partnerships and others, and through agri-environment schemes administered by Natural England.

We would also point out that English Heritage’s valuable and varied contribution to national and local priorities is already reflected in the terms of its funding agreement, which is co-signed by DCMS, DCLG and DEFRA.

**We can see no reason why funding for English Heritage should remain at a level which is clearly insufficient, particularly if there are to be significant costs in establishing the new heritage protection regime. We recommend that there should be an above RPI annual increase in Grant-in-Aid to English Heritage for the term of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. English Heritage should not be expected to fund its portion of the costs of setting up the new heritage protection regime without such an increase. (Paragraph 61) The argument on additionality is unlikely to be resolved. We warn that any further decline in the capacity of English Heritage to give grants for repair or capacity development will inevitably lead to more pressure on the Heritage Lottery Fund and that substitution will appear to be the outcome. This reinforces our argument for better funding for English Heritage. (Paragraph 91)**

Future funding for English Heritage will be given due consideration, alongside other priorities, in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. DCMS is working closely with English Heritage to develop robust and well-evidenced proposals to feed into the CSR process. EH has recently completed an extensive programme of modernisation that will provide a good basis for CSR discussion.

**While we commend the positive approach to the Peer Review adopted by English Heritage – at least in public – we are not convinced that this is a good time for further examination of English Heritage’s internal structures and method of operation. We strongly encourage the Peer Review to bear in mind that a period of stability and confidence-building is needed at English Heritage, both for its own good and to permit sound medium-term planning with stakeholders. (Paragraph 36)**

The Peer Review of English Heritage took place in June and July 2006. In establishing the Terms of Reference of the Review it was recognised that the organisation had undergone significant changes as a result of its modernisation and Efficiency Delivery programmes. The review fully recognised what has been achieved and seeks to identify ways of building on the progress that has been made.

The review has made recommendations about further changes to the management and reward structure in the organisation, about more effective evaluation of the value added by its activities, improving the strategic engagement between English Heritage and government and making more effective use of the skills of the Commissioners.

English Heritage and DCMS are considering the recommendations together and will publish a joint response in the near future.

**We believe that dual sponsorship of English Heritage by DCMS and DCLG would introduce confused lines of accountability that would outweigh any benefits. We therefore reject the idea. (Paragraph 62)**

The Government welcomes the Committee’s recommendation, which supports the recommendation made by the ODPM Select Committee’s report in 2004.

**We endorse the efforts of English Heritage to become more responsive to the wishes of the public and those partners it needs to work with, and we believe this approach will pay long-term dividends. However, refashioning should not be at the expense of its functions as regulator and source of advice: no other body has the expertise to provide such a service. It is not clear how English Heritage’s ethos of constructive conservation will manifest itself, but it should not be allowed to develop into a willingness to be accommodating to all. It should not run away from taking principled and possibly exposed decisions defending historic assets from inappropriate development. (Paragraph 37)**

The adoption of *Conservation Principles* – which are informed by English Heritage’s ‘Constructive Conservation’ ethos – will help to reinforce a consistency of approach taken by English Heritage in all its work and will help explain its approach to local authorities, developers and the general public.

Neither the *Conservation Principles* nor the ‘Constructive Conservation’ approach increase or decrease current levels of protection, but the former explains the approach English Heritage takes in dealing with casework and the latter is an expression of the importance of making the system of heritage protection more flexible and fit-for-purpose.

**We recognise the distinct roles of English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. However the HLF should not be expected to fill the gap caused by the decline in English Heritage’s ability to continue grant funding, as is evident from Table 3 in paragraph 32. Assistance for private owners should remain a function of English Heritage when a clear public benefit can be shown. (Paragraph 70)**

We agree with the Committee that English Heritage and HLF have distinct and complementary roles as grant givers. However, there are circumstances, such as the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme, where HLF funding compliments investment by English Heritage.

English Heritage is currently undertaking a review of its investment in third parties, which includes both grants and capacity-building work, and will be consulting key partners on its future strategy for resource allocation in the coming months. The Committee’s comments on private owners will be taken into account as part of this.

## **HLF**

**We encourage the HLF to follow its instincts and design programmes which are flexible enough to be accessible, sustainable and meet the needs of a wide range of community and public interests. (Paragraph 66) We wholeheartedly support the Heritage Lottery Fund’s stress on encouraging access for all to heritage assets: we are confident that this policy will have long-lasting benefits. (Paragraph 67)**

The HLF is reviewing and developing all of its programmes as part of the planning for its third strategic plan period (2008-2013). It will continue to have both general and targeted programmes; and to offer grants of all sizes from £5,000 upwards (in addition to its support for Awards for All).

**We believe that simplification of the application process for Heritage Lottery Fund grants and a commitment of resources to facilitate applications should be high priorities for the Fund. (Paragraph 72)**

The HLF is currently undertaking a number of initiatives to simplify further the application process. It is committed to facilitating applications, particularly from areas and communities that have benefited less from its funding in the past.

**We are satisfied that the HLF’s current policy on public involvement in its strategy and decision-making is healthy and does not threaten the professional knowledge on which decisions must be based. We will watch with interest the experiment by DCMS with public voting, although we recognise that it should not be allowed to descend into a crude beauty contest. DCMS should explore whether the public preference should be treated as a presumption in favour of a project rather than as a binding commitment. (Paragraph 75)**

The Heritage Lottery Fund has been proactive in exploring ways in which the public can have a greater say in where local Lottery funding goes. We are determined that in future people will have more say in deciding what kind of projects Lottery money should support, but this needs to be done

in a way which ensures that worthwhile causes which are less popular or less well-known are not left out.

DCMS's National Lottery Funding Decision Document included a recommendation that the Lottery distributing bodies, and in particular the Big Lottery Fund, working with Camelot, would pioneer new ways of consulting local people about local Lottery decisions. There was no stipulation as to how this would be done but one of the methods which should be included was experimentation with tick box consultation slips made widely available, particularly through Lottery ticket retailers. Other methods of public involvement could include opinion polls, citizen's juries, focus groups, interest surveys, telephone and Internet voting on actual projects or by joining local or regional award panels.

The Lottery distributors are working together to identify best practice and to develop options for increasing public involvement in decisions about Lottery funding themes and local Lottery spending.

**We are concerned that latest assumptions of the number of applications which the HLF will receive show a dramatic fall, from 6,385 in 2005-06 (estimated) to only 2,400 in 2006-07 and 2007-08. (Paragraph 78)**

Latest HLF figures show that in 2006-07 it expects to assess around 1,500 applications across the grants programmes it handles, with nearly 2,000 more applications for schemes processed on its behalf by partners – Community Fund (Big Lottery Fund), Countryside Agency and English Heritage.

**We are concerned that the Secretary of State has already accepted that £410 million from non-Olympic Lottery games will be diverted to the public funding package. This will increase the fears of the heritage sector that an overspend on the Olympics will lead to a further diversion of funds from good causes. The Government should give an assurance that the £410 million limit will not be exceeded. (Paragraph 81) We welcome the Secretary of State's confirmation that heritage will continue to be one of the good causes to benefit from Lottery proceeds and that the 16.66% share will remain until 2019. (Paragraph 83)**

The Government has been quite clear since deciding to support London's Olympic bid that money raised by the National Lottery will be a key part of the funding package and that, as part of the Lottery contribution, £410 million from the proceeds of mainstream National Lottery games might be needed from 2009. We do not pretend that there will not be an impact on the existing good causes, including heritage, although the Department, the National Lottery Commission and the Lottery operator will make every effort to maximise income for both the Olympics and for the other good causes.

However, it is legitimate for a share of Lottery money to be allocated, from time to time, to major and exciting projects that command widespread support. In 1993 that special cause was celebrating the Millennium, which led to major national investments like the Eden Project and the Tate Modern. From 2009 to 2012 it will be the Olympics that receive special support and we are confident, as the preparations develop, that this share of the funding will be well spent and will achieve something genuinely memorable.

Should costs increase, the 2003 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the Mayor provides for an agreement between them to share the increase. The assumption in the Memorandum is that the Government's share would be drawn from National Lottery proceeds. If more has to be drawn from the Lottery than already planned, there may naturally be less to fund the other good causes during the period leading up to 2012. The Government would aim, however, to minimise the extent of any such additional call on Lottery funds.

## Local authorities

**A detailed picture of the level of provision of conservation advice in local authorities both now and in the mid-term is fundamental to any decisions on resources for implementation of the Heritage Protection Reform programme. DCMS should undertake such research now. (Paragraph 104)**

DCMS is working with English Heritage and local authority partners to develop a regular and systematic survey of historic environment services within individual local authorities. It is planned that these surveys will provide information on the numbers of staff in the service, what they do in terms of casework, advice, grant applications and other activities together with an identification of the workload of the service. Results will be publicly available, with the headline findings included in *Heritage Counts*.

**We agree that encouragement should be given to local authorities to treat the historic environment as a higher priority. We recommend that a set of statutory services and standards should be developed, possibly along the lines suggested by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, with discretion left to local authorities on how they should be met, according to the extent and range of heritage assets to be managed. Alongside research into the availability of conservation skills within local authorities, DCMS should, with DCLG, also examine how bodies such as the CABE-sponsored Architecture and Built Environment Centres might be augmented in terms of skills and funding to be a pooled source of conservation as well as urban design expertise for local authorities. (Paragraph 110)**

The Government shares the Committee's view that local authorities should have discretion in sourcing the range of expertise necessary to fulfil their duties in relation to the historic environment. At present these duties are highlighted in PPG15 & PPG16. Following completion of the Heritage Protection Review, a new PPS on the historic environment will be published that will set clear policy, priorities and expectations. This will encompass new statutory duties that are being considered as part of the Review.

Historic Environment Champions have a key role to play in shaping their Council's response to these responsibilities. June 2006 witnessed the landmark appointment of the 200th Champion and saw David Lammy and Baroness Andrews address the inaugural National Champions Conference. This heard first-hand evidence of the impact that Champions can make, including:

- providing leadership for heritage issues within their authority;
- promoting the opportunities and benefits of the historic environment;
- motivating and inspiring cabinet portfolio holders and senior officers;
- embedding the historic environment in activities of their authority; and
- supporting the local community and others by acting as a point of contact.

Providing Champions with the support they need to operate effectively is one of the principle aims of English Heritage's HELM programme (<http://www.helm.org.uk>). This is building historic environment capacity within local and regional government through the dissemination of information, guidance and case studies of good practice, and the delivery of training and networking opportunities. HELM's focus extends beyond Champions and heritage specialists to include officers who come into contact with historic environment issues during the course of their work – including planners, regeneration officers and highways engineers.

In addition, DCMS is working with the Improvement and Development Agency and other partner organisations, including English Heritage, to encourage local authorities to improve performance management in the delivery of local cultural services. The Department's emerging strategy for

improvement will take into account the wider performance management framework for local government that is expected to feature in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper.

Architecture and Built Environment Centres already work in conjunction with CABE and English Heritage to provide local authorities with expertise to promote expertise on good design across historic and contemporary contexts. In 2005 the Architecture Centre Network (the link body for all the UK ABECs) held a Regional Heritage and Design Champion seminar with CABE and English Heritage to feedback research into national activity taking place nationally around Local Authority Heritage and Design Champions.

This research found that regional Architecture Centres are working in partnership with relevant agencies (like EH and RDAs) on Historic Environment/Design Champions to provide pooled sources of heritage and urban design expertise to Local Authorities. The research acknowledged this is an emerging initiative and needs to be further developed by CABE and EH.

**DCMS and DCLG should make renewed efforts to encourage public bodies to exercise dispensations to dispose of assets for less than best consideration when those assets have heritage value and it is satisfied that the buyer has a viable plan for maintenance. (Paragraph 114)**

Current government policy on the disposal of historic buildings is set out in a guidance note for Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, issued by DCMS in 1999. This note is endorsed by HM Treasury's *Government Accounting* (Annex 24.2). The Government Historic Estates Unit (GHEU) in English Heritage is regularly involved in advising on individual disposal cases and in ensuring that the guidance is followed. They consider that the policy is sufficiently robust and clearly worded to ensure that the interests of the historic environment are protected. However, the guidance is not as widely available as it should be. GHEU are considering updating and reissuing the guidance in 2007 to ensure that it has a wider circulation, for example through publication on the internet.

### **Voluntary sector**

**We recommend that DCMS ministers improve dialogue with Heritage Link as the collective voice of the voluntary heritage sector. (Paragraph 118)**

DCMS would welcome an improved dialogue with Heritage Link as a means of structuring its engagement with heritage sector organisations. David Lammy, the Minister for Heritage, has attended a number of Heritage Link events and debates, including "Heritage Day" in December 2005. Close links already exist at official level, with Heritage Link represented on the steering groups for Engaging Places and the Heritage Protection Review.

### **Private owners**

**We recommend that DCMS and English Heritage should undertake research into the problems faced by private owners of small-scale built heritage assets. (Paragraph 119)**

The problems faced by some private owners of small-scale built heritage assets are very varied.

Rather than undertake a comprehensive survey that would be burdensome and might not produce helpful results, English Heritage is considering researching distinct categories of buildings and thematic issues. Jointly with the Countryside Agency, they have already undertaken a survey of the state of the traditional farm building stock, a major category of buildings in private ownership, which faces problems of redundancy and dereliction. The results of this research were published in *Heritage Counts 2005* and *Historic Farm Buildings: Constructing the Evidence Base* and were followed in 2006 by the publication of a new policy statement *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings* and detailed good practice guidance

on conversion projects. This work complements the wider Historic Environment at Risk project (HEAR) which is shedding light on the threats to the historic environment.

**We believe that a statutory duty of care could be a significant disincentive to private owners to take on properties where unique features and required conservation standards make maintenance particularly expensive or problematical, and we reject the idea. (Paragraph 159) DCMS has in the past shown welcome signs of recognising the case for grant funding to encourage preventative maintenance work on buildings. It should now report on progress made in developing policy on such grant funding. (Paragraph 182)**

English Heritage has published guidance on maintenance and the majority of its repair grants now include provision for the preparation of a maintenance plan. They also include contract conditions requiring that the site in question be maintained after repair, ranging from five years duration to fifteen.

Targeted funding to support the maintenance of scheduled ancient monuments subject to management agreements made under Section 17 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 is already available from English Heritage. English Heritage is also exploring the benefits of providing assistance for planned maintenance for a number of historic buildings via its area-based grant schemes. This has been piloted in Bath, for privately-owned buildings, and is now being tested for church buildings in two Church of England dioceses (London, and St Edmundsbury and Ipswich).

English Heritage has also worked closely with Defra to ensure that the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme includes incentives to encourage farmers to maintain historic farm buildings on their holdings, ensuring they are weatherproof and watertight. The option proved popular with land managers during trials and was added to the scheme in 2006.

### **Regional development agencies**

**We recommend that RDA Boards should have at least one member able to serve as a persuasive advocate on behalf of heritage. More effort should be made by RDAs to identify the benefits of heritage-led regeneration and share good practice. (Paragraph 125)**

Some RDA boards already have heritage champions on their Boards. For example, ONE North East has a Design & Historic Environment Champion, who is also the chair of the Regeneration Committee. The benefits of heritage-led regeneration are promoted through its IGNITE project, and good practice is shared regularly and systematically as a result. The Regional Cultural Consortium (RCC) has provided an effective mechanism for consultation and most RCC boards include a member of the RDA. RDAs are exploring the case for establishing an informal 'cultural leads' group similar to the successful RDA 'tourism leads' group.

All RDAs are involved in major heritage-led regeneration projects. Advantage West Midlands has worked with English Heritage and a number of key local, regional and national partners to secure the sustainable future for Chatterley Whitfield Colliery, near Stoke. This is the most complete surviving example of a Victorian colliery in England and the restoration is part of the wider heritage led regeneration of the area. SWRDA is working with English Heritage, developers Urban Splash, the Phoenix Trust, English Partnerships and others to regenerate the 19 acre Royal William Yard in Plymouth. This is now recognised as one of the finest examples of heritage led regeneration taking place in the UK. EMDA is investing £1.2m in The Old Market Square in Nottingham, which is a significant public realm investment to make the City a more attractive place for visitors, residents and potential investors.

**We recognise that World Heritage Site status can place extra cost processes on local authorities and we believe that regional development agencies should do more to recognise the strategic importance of World Heritage Sites to local communities and to help local**

## **authorities with these costs to maximise the benefits of World Heritage Site status. (Paragraph 167)**

We recognise and value the important contribution of local authorities, as part of World Heritage Site partnerships, to the protection and management of World Heritage Sites. The Government supports the Committee's finding that local authorities should determine whether to directly employ a World Heritage Officer in the light of local circumstances.

The Government acknowledges that there is a need for proper resourcing at the local level. Many World Heritage Sites in the United Kingdom are under multiple ownership, and are funded from the normal budgets available for conservation and a variety of other sources, for example government agencies, private sector, charities, tourism revenue and the Lottery, from which over £216 million has been allocated to World Heritage Sites in the UK since 1994. The costs associated with World Heritage Status must be considered alongside the benefits which can ensue, for example, through increased tourism or regeneration opportunities. This is a complex equation. For this reason DCMS proposes to conduct research to look more closely into the costs and benefits associated with World Heritage status.

The Government notes and endorses the Select Committee's comments on the role of Regional Development Agencies in recognising the strategic importance of World Heritage sites. The RDAs are major supporters of World Heritage Sites, fully recognise their strategic importance and work with partners to maximise the sustainable economic impact of such sites, particularly in relation to their ability to act as icons that create positive perceptions of a region; increase the impact of the visitor economy and act as invaluable educational tools. Specific conservation and preservation actions are not within the remit of the RDAs. However, they actively work with Local Authority partners to raise standards in these areas through knowledge sharing and jointly invest in specialist co-ordination/development staff at existing sites. The RDAs are required by the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 to prepare economic strategies on behalf of the region which set out the policies, aims and objectives for the regional economy for the medium to long term. DCMS already works with the RDAs in recognising the importance of World Heritage Sites so that heritage development issues and opportunities are taken into account when drawing up the Regional Economic Strategies.

In terms of World Heritage, the SWRDA has supported the Jurassic Coast WHS plan to deliver sustainable growth and development and will invest £7m over five years. ONE and NWDA are investing in the Hadrian's Wall WHS with £5m invested by ONE and significant funds from NWDA coming on stream.

### **3. Tools for supporting the historic environment**

#### **HPR**

**DCMS's approach to reform of the heritage protection system has been less than energetic. The process of consultation on the reforms has been commendably thorough, but the slow progress is placing stakeholders in limbo and delaying decisions by local authorities on medium-term allocation of resources. (Paragraph 55) While we see no harm in restating principles, the groundwork has already been laid: the priority for the Heritage White Paper is to state exactly what action the Government proposes to take and when, and how it expects to resource its plans in the medium term. (Paragraph 56)**

It is true that the Heritage Protection Review has been a lengthy process. The Review covers a broad range of policy areas. We have been concerned to consult and involve stakeholders throughout, and this has inevitably had an impact on timescales. DCMS has also commissioned English Heritage to run a series of pilot projects designed to test out our proposals on the ground. Again, this has made for a longer process, but has been helpful in developing our final recommendations. At the same time, we have taken forward three separate reviews looking at

specific policies relating to the marine historic environment, the Ecclesiastical Exemption, and Historic Environment Records.

Based on this work, it our intention to publish the Heritage Protection White Paper later in 2006.

Developing the White Paper has not been our only focus. We have also been working to implement changes to the heritage protection system within existing legislation. Last year, DCMS transferred responsibility for the administration of the listing system to English Heritage, and introduced some improvements to the system. DCMS and DCLG have also carried out a public consultation on new, more understandable listing criteria.

**The proposed combined Register is sound in principle, but the supposed benefits cannot be realised unless resources are made available for a substantial one-off task in updating existing records. (Paragraph 138)**

The new unified Register of Historic Sites and Buildings of England is designed to improve the understanding of historic assets and their importance by local planning authorities, heritage organisations, owners, managers and members of the public and to inform more effective management of these assets.

The Register will encompass over half a million records. It would be neither practical nor appropriate to attempt to rewrite all records simultaneously. The Heritage Protection White Paper will include proposals for a programme for updating existing designation records, based on an assessment of where updated records are likely to be of most benefit. All new records will be produced according to the new Register format. The time taken to produce designation records to the new format will speed up once the new system has had an opportunity to bed in.

**The Government should consider carefully whether target times for processing applications for listed building consent should be revised to reflect the extra task of rewriting the relevant list description. (Paragraph 144)**

There are no plans at the present time to amend target times. However, should it become apparent that the task of rewriting the list descriptions is having a negative effect on English Heritage and local authorities' ability to respond to listed building consent applications, we will consider, in liaison with English Heritage, whether action is needed.

**We agree with witnesses that a statutory requirement on local authorities to maintain or have access to Historic Environment Records is an important step in disseminating information and increasing public engagement. DCMS should confirm that it intends to bring the proposal forward. (Paragraph 140)**

The Government agrees that local access to comprehensive information about the historic environment is key to effective stewardship. Cost-benefit analysis has indicated that the eighty-five historic environment records (HERs) maintained by (or on behalf of) local authorities provide a sound basis for collecting, collating, managing and disseminating this information and proposals will be brought forward to make access to an HER a statutory requirement of all planning authorities.

**DCMS should make it clear what priority local authorities should give to the digitisation of paper-based records to form Historic Environment Records; and it must recognise the scale of the task. (Paragraph 141)**

HERs generally consist of two elements:

- databases incorporating indexes to information sources for all known historic assets in their locality, together with information about historic landscape character; and

- reference collections (which typically include copies of photographs, historic maps, fieldwork reports, books and journals).

Most HERs are already held in an electronic form (at least at index level) and these are increasingly being linked to GIS systems. This is a key step towards broadening access to the wealth of information they contain, both within the authority, and externally through its website and the Heritage Gateway portal that is being developed by English Heritage, ALGAO and IHBC. Some authorities are also taking steps to digitise elements of their reference collections and making these available as additional GIS layers.

We expect local authorities to continue to take forward the e-enablement of HERs as an integral part of their corporate information management and e-government strategies, with the priority being to ensure that they hold digital records relating to all designated historic assets in their area by 2010, and that their digital content is made available through the Heritage Gateway. This will ensure that local HERs add value to the national Register, which we also propose to make accessible through the Gateway.

However, it is important to distinguish between the information held in HERs and that collected by local planning authorities and their advisors in the course of their duties. While the outcomes of archaeological or building recording projects undertaken as a consequence of pre-application discussions or as a condition of planning consent for historic assets should be forwarded to the local HER as a matter of course (in digital form), other information will usually be retained in planning 'case files'. Many of these are already in the process of being digitised by local authorities as part of the implementation of e-planning.

**A measure which permits the blanket authorisation of damage to archaeological sites of national importance cannot be allowed to continue in its present form, but we believe that the provision of financial incentives to encourage good environmental stewardship may be a more promising approach than straightforward repeal of the Class Consents Order. (Paragraph 152)**

We recognise the damage that inappropriate ploughing can do to important archaeological sites.

As part of the Heritage Protection Review we are reviewing Class Consent No 1 and considering how to improve the protection of archaeological sites from the damaging effects of ploughing. It is not the Government's intention to prohibit ploughing on all scheduled ancient monuments, only in high risk cases. As part of the review, we are considering how a revised class consent system might operate alongside existing agri-environment schemes.

**We accept that there is a clear rationale for reforming the present system of designation protection: it is indeed disjointed, complex and confusing. We also welcome the Government's assurance that the reforms would not entail any dilution of the current levels of statutory protection. (Paragraph 154)**

We welcome the Committee's endorsement of the need for reform to the present system.

**We are not certain however that DCMS has grasped fully the implications for local authority staff, some of whom are already struggling to find space for conservation work in a timetable driven increasingly by the demands of giving advice on development applications. (Paragraph 155) If the Government wants the heritage protection reforms to succeed, it must ensure that local authorities invest in historic environment services and that they are funded to do so. We note the Minister's assurance that resources would be provided to local authorities to meet the costs of any further burdens: we expect to see this commitment delivered by DCLG. (Paragraph 155)**

Many HPR proposals are focussed on streamlining and improving current processes, not imposing new requirements. For example, it is intended that heritage protection reform should lead to:

- A new Government policy statement on the historic environment (new PPS);
- A unified national Register provided to local authorities in accessible electronic format; and
- Clearer and quicker designation process (around a quarter of all listing requests come from local authorities).

Where new activities will be introduced, it is intended that many of these, such as increased use of local designation, or the use of management agreements, will be optional.

In addition, it is intended that heritage protection reform will be accompanied by a renewed and expanded training and capacity building programme for local authorities delivered by English Heritage.

Government policy is that no new burdens shall be imposed on local authorities without appropriate funding being secured by the Department with lead responsibility for the policy giving rise to the new burden. We are looking carefully at the implications of our proposals for local authorities as well as costing these in advance of the White Paper. As David Lammy made clear to the Committee, DCMS will deliver the funding for any new burden, co-ordinating contributions from other Departments, as appropriate

**We recommend strongly that the merger and replacement of existing Planning Policy Guidance concerning the historic environment and archaeology should be undertaken without delay after publication of the Heritage White Paper. It should not be delayed until implementation of the proposed new heritage protection regime in 2010: some of the advice is very outdated and needs revision, but the principles are largely sound and significant benefits could be gained from comparatively little effort. (Paragraph 134) We believe that successor guidance to PPG 16 should be enhanced to reflect the importance of public access to information from archaeological excavations, and proper storage of items unearthed. Records of excavations should be publicly deposited, with appropriate linkage to Historic Environment Records. (Paragraph 210)**

Planning Policy Statements (PPS) must reflect the current system. Were the Government to publish a new PPS15 (incorporating the current Planning Policy Guidance Notes 15 and 16 relating to the historic environment and archaeology) after the publication of the White Paper, a new Statement would then be needed soon afterwards in order to reflect the changes in a new heritage protection system. This would represent an unnecessary duplication of effort, and would be likely to create confusion about the heritage protection system both within local authorities and the general public.

It is possible however for amendments to be made to the current PPG15. ODPM (as it was) and DCMS consulted on proposals to amend the criteria for listing in July 2005. These changes, taking account of consultation responses will be taken forward in due course. Planning circulars have updated PPG15 as necessary since its original publication in 1994. However, the Government is not convinced of the case for wholesale revision of the PPG in advance of a new heritage protection system being implemented.

**The Government's approach in addressing the Shimizu decision has been dilatory and unacceptable. Nothing is to be gained from further delay, and steps to place the previous understanding on a secure legal footing should be given a high priority. (Paragraph 157)**

The Government had intended to address the lowering of protection for unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas resulting from the Shimizu judgement as part of a wider review of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. The Government announced its intention to address Shimizu in March 2001. However, in the light of other policy developments

such as the Householder Development Consents Review, the wholesale review of the GPDO has not been progressed.

With the taking forward of the Heritage Protection Review, and the potential changes to consent regimes, it makes sense to look at protection in conservation areas as part of that review. The Government has committed to maintaining levels of protection for the historic environment and still intends to address the Shimizu judgement. However, little comprehensive analysis or evidence which has been presented to Government suggests that this issue need be addressed immediately, given the ongoing Heritage Protection Review. It would potentially make the situation more complicated, certainly in legislative terms, to introduce changes before the final scope of changes from the review were clear.

**DCLG should aim to complete its consultation on the General Permitted Development Order and bring forward a statement of intent by the end of 2006. (Paragraph 158)**

Where there has been clear evidence of a need for change to the GPDO, the Government has taken forward measures to address that. For example, in August 2006 the Government consulted on proposed changes to the GPDO relating to Article 4 directions to control the subdivision of rural land, and to the demolition of sports buildings. There is limited evidence which suggests that there is an issue with the operation of article 4 directions in conservation areas. Any potential changes in connection with the use of article 4 directions in Conservation Areas will be considered as part of the Heritage Protection Review.

**Fiscal policy**

**The present VAT regime for repairs distorts priorities, rewards neglect and works against conscientious maintenance of historic assets. The result can be either a slide towards demolition or a call on public funds for grant aid. We find it extraordinary that the Government did not take up the opportunity afforded by the EU earlier in the year to seek a carefully targeted relief when urged to do so by Heritage Link, on behalf of the sector. Opting in would have cost the Government nothing. The chance to secure such a relief has passed for now, but the Government should instead take a policy decision to return as grants some or all of the VAT paid on repair work to listed buildings. At the very least, building preservation trusts and other charitable institutions should be beneficiaries of such a scheme. In addition, proper consideration should be given to including heritage properties in private ownership where a clear public benefit can be demonstrated. The Treasury should recognise that the majority of potential private owner beneficiaries would not be high income earners; and many of the buildings at risk that would stand to benefit are not residential properties. (Paragraph 177) We recommend that DCMS should encourage the Treasury to assess the cost of a limited relief set against income for private owners, subject to the same type of requirements as those placed on owners under the Conditional Exemption scheme. (Paragraph 180)**

The VAT treatment of construction work is partly the product of historical development. When VAT was introduced in 1973, zero rating applied to the construction, extension and alteration of all buildings. The current position is that zero rating applies to the construction and sale of new dwellings and communal residential and charitable buildings. In contrast, the repair or maintenance of existing buildings was and has always remained standard-rated.

As a result of campaigning by heritage bodies, the zero rate was also retained for approved alterations to listed buildings which are also dwellings or communal residential or charitable buildings. Long-standing formal agreements with our European partners allow us to keep these zero rates, but do not allow us to extend them or introduce new ones.

The reduced rates of VAT which cover certain Labour Intensive Services (LIS) were introduced into EU legislation on an experimental basis for a fixed period. One such rate covers the renovation and

repairing of private dwellings, and as such it does not provide the opportunity to introduce a reduced rate for all historic buildings. The objective of the experiment is to create employment opportunities by stimulating demand through lower prices. The UK has always chosen not to participate as the Government believes that employment objectives are better targeted through other measures, such as training and skills development through the welfare to work strategy and New Deal. The Government continues to take this view. Indeed, the EU Commission's evaluation report on the experiment concluded that a VAT reduction measure is not effective in stimulating employment and that its financial cost is disproportionate to its economic effects.

Special VAT refund arrangements remain limited exceptions to the general rule that Government funding and support for heritage should take into account irrecoverable VAT costs. They have only been applied where they provide the most direct, cost effective and best targeted method of delivering the available resources to achieve Government objectives and priorities. That was the case for the refund scheme for Listed Places of Worship where the Government has a long-term commitment to lower the VAT rate on such repairs and maintenance and is committed to negotiate at EU level for a permanent reduced rate of VAT in this area.

To date, where the Government has introduced VAT measures for housing, these have been targeted on its objective of making more affordable housing available. For example, since 1997 the Government has introduced targeted reduced rates of VAT on areas of specific need such as residential conversions (creating new homes through better use of the existing housing stock), and the renovation of housing that has been empty for more than three years (helping to bring vacant homes back into use).

The Government continues to keep under review the use of VAT reliefs for construction work where these could help to support regeneration and renewal.

We acknowledge the committee's recommendation that we should encourage the Treasury to assess the cost of a limited relief set against income for private owners and have passed the proposal to the Treasury for their consideration.

#### **4. Places of worship**

**We believe that state support for all places of worship through general taxation would not be readily understood by the public and would at present be inappropriate. (Paragraph 198)**

We agree that state support for places of worship through general taxation would not be appropriate. Congregations already do excellent work in raising large amounts of money for the upkeep of local churches and other faith buildings. This fundraising often contributes to a greater sense of local ownership of the place of worship. Current Government support for places of worship complements well the efforts of local communities and the voluntary support available.

**Faith groups have responsibilities: they should be approaching parish councils for support and showing imagination in how buildings could be used. We recommend that each denomination should fund small local teams to visit each place of worship perhaps once a year in order to carry out basic survey and maintenance services; individual dioceses might fund such teams for Church of England buildings. There will always, however, be a need for major repairs. Existing funding through English Heritage is quite inadequate, and the phasing of repairs which results is driving up their cost significantly. If dioceses are prepared to commit to providing basic maintenance services, then we recommend that in return English Heritage should be resourced to provide a level of grant funding for major repairs to both cathedrals and other places of worship equivalent in real terms to that provided until only five or ten years ago. If repair projects can be completed more quickly, more efficient use will be made of public funds. (Paragraph 199)**

We agree with the Committee that there is room for faith groups to engage more effectively with local communities and local authorities to encourage greater use of church buildings in a way that will attract new streams of funding. Since the publication of *Building Faith in our Future* in 2004, there is evidence that a growing number of churches are working more effectively with local communities and fostering more community use of church buildings.

As we have said, local congregations often do an excellent job of raising funds and undertaking maintenance tasks. However, we would also agree that there might be scope for denominations, in dioceses or similar local or regional groupings, to establish a service whereby regular maintenance can be undertaken or encouraged.

The Government is committed to keeping the country's historic churches in a good state of repair. To this end, there a number of programmes in place whereby Government and Lottery money supports repairs to listed places of worship.

While the resources that English Heritage (EH) make available for church or cathedral repairs are a matter for its own Commissioners, the joint EH/Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme makes grants currently totalling £24.5 million per year, and has disbursed almost £90 million since the scheme began. EH has also contributed £42 million to the upkeep of cathedrals, and grants continue to be worth £1 million per year. The 2001 Cathedral Fabric Needs survey showed that Cathedrals were in much better condition than when the scheme started, when a more substantial repairs backlog existed.

The Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme returns the equivalent of the VAT incurred in making repairs to listed church buildings. The scheme has disbursed over £48 million since 2001 and has helped many thousands of listed faith buildings and their congregations. In the 2006 Budget, the scheme was extended to cover professional fees and repairs to some fixtures and fittings.

The Memorials Grant Scheme introduced in the 2005 budget repays to charities and faith groups the equivalent of the VAT incurred in building, repairing and maintaining memorial structures. In the 2006 budget it was announced that the Listed Places of Worship scheme and the Memorials Grant Scheme would continue until 2011. The 2006 budget also announced an extension in the type of expenditure that would be eligible for rebate, for example professional fees.

**We commend the Historic Chapels Trust for its vigour in raising funds and its success in sustaining itself. (Paragraph 206)**

The Historic Chapels Trust cares for seventeen redundant non-conformist chapels of architectural and historic interest. While it receives no direct funding from Government, it is supported by English Heritage which provides 70% of the Trust's running costs and makes grants towards maintenance of chapels. This support will amount to about £150,000 in 2005/06.

**The Churches Conservation Trust is being asked to achieve too much with limited funds. Its grant should be increased substantially, although we see benefit in any increase being linked to proven community gain or generation of match funding. (Paragraph 206)**

The Churches Conservation Trust does excellent work with the resources it has. It has a reputation for quality conservation work, and we are keen that this reputation should be maintained. The Redundant Churches Committee of the Church Commissioners, which decides which churches should be vested in the Trust, already takes account of the financial position of the Trust when making these decisions. We recognise that the flat funding in place since 2001/2 has had an impact, but we are confident of the ability of the Trustees and management to adapt the Trust to ensure that it is able to meet future challenges. For example, the regionalisation of the Trust in recent years has increased efficiency and cut costs.

We support the work that the Trust is doing in seeking to foster alternative management arrangements for some churches, where these can be self-sustaining by virtue of active ‘Friends’ groups or well-established community use. This will have an impact on the Trust’s outgoings, and could result in some churches being divested, with the Church Commissioners’ agreement.

At the same time, the Trust has been actively developing its fundraising activities. It is undertaking a number of measures with a view to regularising and encouraging voluntary donations. It is establishing a supporters’ scheme and is seeking patrons. Voluntary donations are on the increase.

## 5. Public engagement

**Recommendation 55. Both central and local government have a role in ensuring that grassroots initiatives enabling direct access at no cost to the local historic environment can prosper. Local authorities should be prepared to assist in publicity and administrative support for such events if required. (Paragraph 212)**

We welcome the Committee’s recognition of the role played by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund in supporting Heritage Open Days. Many local authorities work with the Civic Trust, and actively participate in promoting such events as Heritage Open Days. This year over 3,500 properties managed by English Heritage, the National Trust and members of the Historic Houses Association opened to the public free of charge over the weekend of 9th-10th September, aiming for the highest recorded visitor numbers ever for the event.

**We are confident that DCMS does recognise the presence of heritage beyond iconic sites, although it has yet to convince many in the sector. We recommend that DCMS should acknowledge clearly in policy documents that using targets which measure visits to designated sites does not reflect the full extent of engagement with the historic environment. We believe that the Department’s commitment to heritage would be reinforced if a specific PSA target were to be developed reflecting progress in protecting and preserving the historic environment, perhaps including a target for a reduction in the number of buildings classified as being at risk. (Paragraph 216)**

We acknowledge the Committee’s comments regarding the current PSA target. However, this is intentionally specific, with a focus on measuring the engagement of priority groups – people with disabilities, black and ethnic minorities and the lower socio economic groups (C2DEs) – with the historic environment, and not the number of visitors to designated sites.

The *Taking Part* survey, which has been generally welcomed by the heritage sector, monitors how this engagement takes place and the numbers/percentages from each priority group. The survey targets the general public and not visitors, which is where it differs from the visitor surveys conducted by the heritage bodies.

The use of the word “designated” in the *Taking Part* survey has a different meaning from its usual meaning in heritage publications, including the listing and scheduling process. In the survey the term is used to include different types of historic environment sites, including cities or towns with historic character.

Early findings from *Taking Part* confirm the enduring public popularity of the historic environment – a fact that is evident from the millions who enjoy heritage open days, vote for their favourite candidate for *Restoration Village*, or take up membership of the National Trust and English Heritage. However, the real value of *Taking Part* is that it will provide information on why some people, particularly from the priority groups, are less inclined to engage with the historic environment.

**We commend DCMS and DfES for their efforts to raise the profile of the historic environment in curricular education. We see this as a valuable long-term investment in participation in heritage. (Paragraph 220)**

We welcome the Committee's recognition of our work to raise the profile of heritage and built environment's support to the curriculum. We will continue to work with DfES, in partnership with English Heritage and CABE, to take forward the *Engaging Places* project.

Engaging Places will begin with a year long pilot project that will examine provision and users' key needs in three regions (London, the South East, and Yorkshire and the Humber.) To help achieve the project's aims and objectives we will form an Engaging Places national advisory group as well as 3 regional advisory groups in the pilot regions from a wide range of leading heritage and built environment stakeholders (including Heritage Link, the National Trust and others). These advisory groups will perform a crucial function in developing a holistic approach to learning and public engagement.

DCMS and DfES hope that Engaging Places will provide a way forward for government to work in partnership with the built environment sector to explore how schools' engagement with architecture, heritage and the built environment can help improve standards, support the principles of Every Child Matters and Youth Matters, nurture creativity and support personalised forms of learning.

A report evaluating the success of the project and offering an action plan will be put to Ministers in September 2007. We hope to share the results of the Engaging Places project at a National Built Environment Education conference to be held in the autumn of 2007.



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