

DCMS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: SECTORS

ARCHITECTURE AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

England's historic environment is one of our greatest national resources.....(it) is something from which we can learn, something from which our economy benefits and something which can bring communities together in a shared sense of belonging. With sensitivity and imagination, it can be a stimulus to creative new architecture and design, a force for regeneration and a powerful contributor to people's quality of life.

(The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future DCMS Dec 2001)

CURRENT POSITION

A Force for Our Future, the joint DCMS/ODPM policy statement on the historic environment, set out a vision for how the historic environment can contribute to the Government's agenda of creating and maintaining a sustainable environment alongside economic stability.

The built environment is both as an exemplar of, and a challenge to, the Government's policy on Sustainable Development. The historic environment is by its very nature a flag bearer for sustainable development. It is a tribute to the way past generations managed their development. It is a major contributor to our current economic growth and well-being. Properly managed and cared for it will continue to be an asset for future generations.

Much of our historic environment is in private ownership. Other key players are Government Departments who between them have 1,700 historic buildings in their care, local authorities who own, manage and protect historic assets, English Heritage as the Government's advisers on the historic environment, the National Trust whose membership now exceeds 3.2 million, the Heritage Lottery, the Architectural Heritage Fund and the many other bodies who provide funding and advice on the protection of the historic environment.

Following the publication of *A Force for Our Future*, the historic environment became part of the remit of Green Ministers. As a result, the annual report on the state of Sustainable Development in Government now contains information about the historic buildings looked after by departments across Government. Green Ministers are supported in this work by the *Biennial Conservation Report*, which is published by English Heritage's Government Historic Buildings Advisory Unit (GHBAU). This provides a comprehensive overview of the condition and prospects for historic buildings owned and managed by Government and highlights when a building may be at risk.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment is the champion for architecture in England. Its function is to provide high standards in the design of buildings and the spaces between them. Through CABE Space, CABE also aims to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in our towns and cities."

As part of its commitment to evidence based policy making, DCMS commissioned English Heritage to produce regular reports on the state of the historic environment. The first report, an audit, was published in November 2002. In addition, the English Heritage 2003-2007 Funding Agreement, which is co-sponsored by DCMS, DEFRA and ODPM, recognises the contribution English Heritage makes to the wider sustainability agenda.

The built environment delivers against many of the Headline Indicators of Sustainable Development:

Economic Development

The historic environment is a massive draw for tourists. As such it makes a major contribution to the economy and underpins huge numbers of jobs, importantly in rural deprived communities as well as in traditional economic centres.

Social Equity

The built environment matters to people; it is the key to local identity and distinctiveness; and it is at the heart of much regeneration; it is something from which we all learn.

Environmental Protection

Recycling buildings, and where they cannot be saved, their materials, makes environmental sense. But there is a **challenge** here too. The historic environment sector recognised in its November 2002 State of the Historic Environment report that it is not yet in a position to demonstrate the environmentally sustainable credentials of historic buildings. Until it can do so, there will remain a tension between the conservation imperative and the environmental imperative. While plastic windows meet energy conservation standards they are unlikely to be acceptable for historic buildings in conservation terms.

The same report identified the need to give greater emphasis to the link between the management of the historic environment and sustainable development. A working group, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and being run under the auspices of Heritage Link, is developing a sustainable development strategy for the sector.

The sector is also working up a series of pilot indicators for use in future reports to monitor the contribution the historic environment makes to our social and economic well being, as well as demonstrate how well we are preserving our nation's assets for the future.

Craft and Conservation Skills

A Force for Our Future, building on the Heritage Lottery funded research *Sustaining our Living Heritage*, which highlighted lack of skills in the maintenance and restoration of historic properties, advocated an integrated approach to conservation training. English Heritage has joined forces with the Building Skills Action Group (BSAG), the Craft Skills Forum, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and other interests to ensure a coherent approach to meeting skills requirements. As a result, the CITB has set up a National Heritage Training Group. This has a membership from BSAG as well as industry representatives and is an innovative attempt to bring the "preservers" and the "developers" together to develop a shared approach to addressing the industry's skills requirements.

In addition, the Heritage Lottery Fund actively encourages applicants for grants to include training elements within their applications, especially for specialist craft skills, and to provide apprenticeships and work placements which may not be readily covered by the Learning and Skills Council. English Heritage also require all

contractors used on conservation work by EH directly or by grant recipients to be members of the Construction Industry Training Board.

Education

Over 800,000 people visited the built environment outside London as part of the Heritage Open Days weekend in 2002. English Heritage with the Civic Trust now has outreach officers in every region in England and we expect the popularity of this scheme to increase significantly.

Neighbourhood Regeneration/Community Building

On the grand scale - Iconic buildings

Building a new identity on an industrial heritage, these projects have acted as catalysts for the redevelopment of many neglected areas. For example, the Lowry in Salford Quays has become a significant local employer – currently over 10,000 people work there. The area is estimated to have attracted over £100 million of new investment in retail, leisure and residential development.

The Baltic Centre, opened in June 2002, is part of a 15 year, £250 million regeneration programme for Gateshead, which includes the award winning Millennium Bridge and the Sage Gateshead, a £70 million music centre due for completion in 2003. The regeneration programme is estimated to create 1,840 new homes and 1,500 new jobs.

At grassroots level

Streetwise Family Learning' - English Heritage South East Region and Isle of Wight Family Learning Consultant

To stimulate primary aged children to explore their local built environment as they go to and from school, English Heritage South East Region has introduced the "Streetwise Family Learning" project to enable parents and children to produce backpacks of fun learning activities (including, for example, I spy, counting and matching games, spotting different building materials, and making up stories about a particular building) and follow this up with creative activities back at home.

Climate Change

The November 2002 State of the Historic Environment report recognised climate change as one of the key threats to both the natural and the historic environment. We are already aware that, for example, changes in the intensity and frequency of storm events will pose a challenge to a wide spectrum of the historic environment, from coastal sites to veteran trees. Although DEFRA leads on climate change generally, DCMS has championed climate change in relation to the historic environment. Through English Heritage, DCMS commissioned a scoping study and report, which was published in late 2003, to explore how we can measure the likely impact and cost the necessary mitigation.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VISION

- Policy making which adopts an integrated approach to the historic and natural environment.
- The contribution the historic environment makes to the economy and quality properly articulated and recognised.

- The tensions between environment protection policies and conservation policies recognised and tackled.

FUTURE ACTION

- English Heritage and the sector to develop performance indicators which demonstrate the contribution the historic environment makes to the country's economic and social well being.
- English Heritage to commission research into the environmental benefits of re-cycling buildings and building materials.
- English Heritage to produce a discussion document on the impact of energy efficiency policies on the historic environment.
- DCMS to encourage Green Ministers to give greater profile to their work on the historic environment including using the Government estate as an exemplar of best practice (targets to include reduction in the number of buildings on the EH Buildings as risk register; Government Departments to promote training in specialist crafts skills when contracting out work on their historic estate).
- Work with English Heritage and ODPM on appropriate measures to improve energy efficiency in historic domestic dwellings.
- Encourage all public institutions to reduce carbon emissions by increasing use of alternative energy technologies and green transport.