

# THE HERITAGE PROTECTION REVIEW



Chatterley Whitfield Colliery, near Stoke-on-Trent. The range of monuments English Heritage protects is increasing.  
Photograph English Heritage, by Borris Baggs Studio

Nothing is more fundamental to protecting the past than this government's review of heritage protection – the most important opportunity in a generation to improve management of the historic environment. English Heritage is at one with government in insisting that reform should maintain the current levels of protection – our system is, after all, the envy of the world – and that we must build on the sure foundations of our present regimes to create a more comprehensive approach to the management of the historic environment as an integrated whole.

So English Heritage, working closely with DCMS, warmly welcomes the government's approach to reform, which integrates time-tested core components of the present system and enhances them with simplicity, flexibility, openness and rigour. A comprehensive and appropriately resourced package of proposals will make a major contribution to moving the culture of management from its generally passive, reactive and often adversarial form towards a more comprehensive, proactive and collaborative approach. It will go a long way towards implementing the sector's thinking that originated in *Power of Place* and was developed by government in *A Force for our Future*.

Working with partners, English Heritage has endorsed the government's

key proposals for reform. A unified national list curated by English Heritage and compiled from international, national and local designations would be a major contribution towards a comprehensive inventory for England. Giving English Heritage the role of compiling the main list of historic buildings, the scheduling of archaeological sites and monuments, and the registration of historic parks, gardens and battlefields will deliver much needed clarity to the designation process. By incorporating local designations (conservation areas, areas of archaeological potential and local lists), the new list will confirm/endorse the importance of local assessment and ownership of the historic environment. And proposals for opening up the designation process, giving owners a new right of appeal against listing as well as offering guidance about the significance of their asset in information packs, should help engage the wider community.

Such unified listing will, as government acknowledges, need to be accompanied by a similarly unified consent regime that integrates listed building with scheduled monument consent and incorporates a statutory role for management agreements. This package is vital for the desired culture shift in management of the historic environment: management agreements require partnerships between owners

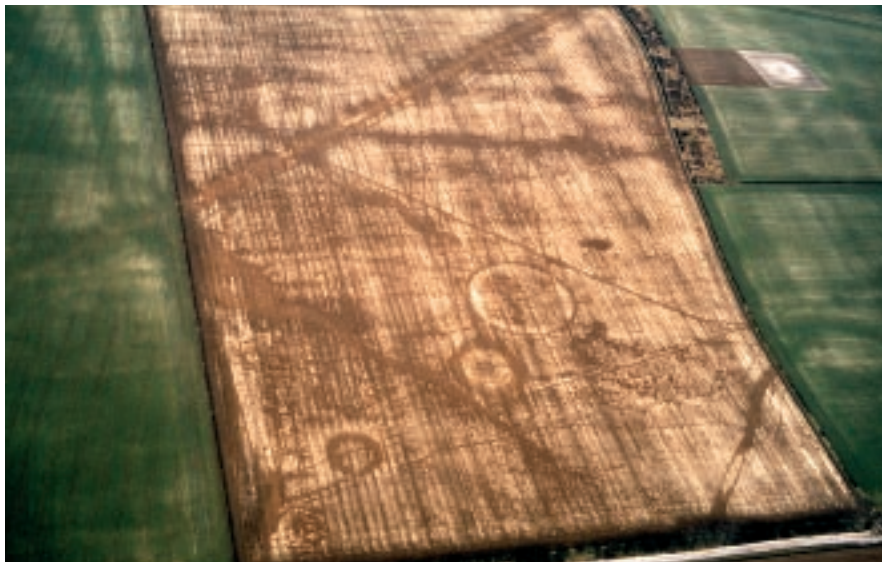
and regulators and investment from all parties if they are to deliver clarity and certainty over the medium to long term. Taking the place of close regulation where appropriate, such agreements will reward short-term investment with longer-term efficiencies.

Both these key proposals – for a unified list and a unified regulatory framework incorporating management agreements as an alternative to close regulation – could have huge benefits. Current statutory protection through scheduling can rarely encapsulate interrelationships between single components, which the new system can. And statutory management agreements would accompany statutory protection, defaulting to close regulation if an agreement were breached.

Early analysis of the three-month public consultation over the summer of 2003 has shown overwhelming support for this direction of travel and strong endorsement of the key proposals for reform. Of course, there are significant concerns about detailed aspects, and these will be clarified as the process moves through a White Paper in the spring of 2004 towards a bid for a slot in the parliamentary timetable for 2005/6. English Heritage is working hard to ensure that parallel consultations on marine archaeology and the ecclesiastical exemption will be fed into this process



Roman mosaic at Dinnington, Somerset, dramatic evidence of the damage ploughing can cause. An agri-environment scheme has now stopped damage here. Photograph Somerset County Council



Neolithic enclosures south of Rudston, East Yorkshire: crop marks as clear as this are in danger of serious erosion. English Heritage aims to stop damage at an earlier stage. Photograph English Heritage

to inform the legislative outcomes: delay in publication of these consultation papers is making this alignment look less comfortable than planned. The loudest concerns have been voiced, from all quarters, about the need for adequate resources to implement the new system. It is a message English Heritage has not only heard but is articulating on behalf of the sector as we explore how to build increased capacity.

Given the wide and positive consensus, it seems increasingly likely that the government will feel committed to the proposed reforms. Since this needs to be a gradualist process, we are now identifying steps for desirable and agreed changes that do not require primary legislation. We have also been asked by ministers to test key components of the new system in a series of 30 or so pilot projects all over England in the next two to three years. These will require us to construct effective partnerships with

local authorities and owners. Outcomes will feed directly into the finer detail of the new system.

### Historic Environment Records (HERs)

There are clear links between the Designation Review and the government's consultation on HERs: the form of a unified national statutory list, its relationship with local records, the management of records of local designation and characterisation, and emphases on openness and accountability.

It is difficult to over-estimate the role HERs play in planning and development control, land use management and historic environment site management. Good decisions can only be based on quality information. I also recognise the potential these records possess for local communities and all levels of education, from schools through

universities to life long learners. HERs can assist people in gaining enjoyment from heritage, becoming involved in conservation and taking pride in local communities.

English Heritage funded and worked in partnership on the production of *Benchmarks for Good Practice* to which it is fully committed, including the definition of a HER and the principle that Scheduled Monument Record (SMR) is no longer an accurate description for today's heritage information systems. Every encouragement needs to be given to SMRs to become broader-based HERs.

We consider that there is a need to move rapidly to a solution where

- there is a network of HERs covering the country, without overlap or duplication
- all local authorities with planning responsibility have access to a HER
- all HERs are available online and searchable together via a unified searching mechanism
- there is an outreach programme for every HER, encouraging interest in and enjoyment of heritage. This should reach all elements of the population, including greater use in each tier of education
- there are sustainable resources to bring all HERs up to at least the minimum benchmark standard
- there are resources for the ongoing development of HERs, so that records never slip back below the benchmark standard.

We consider the main strategic issues for HERs to be

- standards: these are absolutely essential for improvement and sustainability
- statutory status: English Heritage urges government to make it a statutory requirement of local authorities to maintain or ensure they have access to a HER that conforms to at least the minimum benchmark standard
- funding: English Heritage urges government to take the lead in discussions on options to secure funding to help maintain and develop HERs, particularly those departments with a planning function that benefit from the use of HER data.

In addition, we consider there is a need to provide seamless access to national and local records on a local, regional and national level and that the best way to achieve this is through a Historic Environment Portal with appropriate mediation and interpretative material for both specialists and more popular access.

### Heritage Counts 2003

Of course, HERs are sources of data that are key to our understanding of the historic environment. *Heritage Counts 2003*, the second State of the Historic Environment Report, was published in



November 2003. *Heritage Counts* is an annual audit of the state of England's historic and archaeological assets, the threats facing them, and their contribution to society, the economy, and people's quality of life.

It is produced by English Heritage on behalf of the wider heritage sector, which is represented on the national Historic Environment Review Steering Group (members include CBA, Heritage Lottery Fund, National Trust, and ALGAO). It comes in the forms of an overall summary document, a more detailed data document, and nine separate regional reports.

Key messages to note from *Heritage Counts 2003* include

- threats to the historic environment, for instance from piecemeal unregulated development in conservation areas and the neglect or development of historic parks and gardens
- evidence of the practicality and sustainability of old buildings. For example, research has shown that a Victorian terraced house is cheaper to maintain over the long-run than a house built in the 1980s
- the economic benefits of heritage tourism
- lack of resources in local authorities to protect the historic environment
- heritage volunteering contributes an estimated £25 million per year to the economy
- evidence about the barriers that prevent people from participating in heritage activities
- evidence about archaeology at risk through agricultural practices.

For the first time, nine separate *Heritage Counts* documents were prepared by Historic Environment Forums in the Government Office regions, each highlighting issues of particular regional significance.

Future editions of *Heritage Counts* will be based around agreed indicators. *Heritage Counts 2003* launches a consultation on how these indicators might best be defined and measured.

For more information on the report visit the website at [www.historicenvironment.org.uk](http://www.historicenvironment.org.uk) or phone Ben Cowell on 020 7973 3730. Printed copies of all the *Heritage Counts* documents can be ordered from 0870 333 1181.

## Training

To protect the past we must ensure an adequate standard of professional practice. English Heritage welcomes the work that IFA is undertaking to develop a qualification for archaeological practice based on the recently agreed National Occupational Standards devised for the Archaeology Training Forum.

Delivery of high professional standards is dependent upon adequate training provision, and we appreciate



the close cooperation we have with IFA and other partners in ATF in provision of training for the sector. Investment in the skills of the workforce is fundamental to the maintenance of good working practices, and English Heritage is committed in its support. We are pleased to be working closely with an innovative European-funded *Leonardo* project which will establish guidance in the delivery of practical training in field skills. We also welcome IFA's initiative in promoting Continuing Professional Development among its membership, particularly as a means of entry for junior staff.

Archaeology does not stand alone in its stewardship of the historic environment, and it is heartening to see the closer links evolving between IFA and IHBC in promoting the case for the intelligent conversation of our past based on the understanding that the professions deliver.

The protection of the historic environment also lies with local politicians and planning professionals. To ensure that our message speaks to them we are initiating an 18-month capacity building programme, Historic Environment Training for Local Authorities, supported by the ODPM. This is a welcome development and emphasises English Heritage's conviction that to protect, understand and enjoy the historic environment we must all work together.

SIMON THURLEY MIFA  
Chief Executive  
English Heritage

