

HERITAGE COUNTS 2011

WEST MIDLANDS

Heritage Counts 2011 is the tenth annual survey of the state of England's historic environment. It is prepared by English Heritage on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum. This year the theme for Heritage Counts is the role of the historic environment in strengthening civil society. Visitors to the Heritage Counts website can download the complete research projects commissioned to support this year's report and access the full set of local statistics and maps detailing the historic environment for the West Midlands, including asset data, funding information, employment numbers and visitor figures. www.heritagecounts.org.uk

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT AND BIG SOCIETY

New research shows that the historic environment can provide the context and means for people to get involved in their local areas. Heritage groups are an important source for community input into shaping areas, with 85% of civic societies responding to planning applications. They also provide opportunities for people to take part in their community, with 50% of The Heritage Alliance members offering volunteering opportunities. To encourage more people to play a part in their local heritage, Heritage Counts presents a checklist which local heritage groups can use to widen and strengthen community involvement in their projects and groups. Please see the national Heritage Counts report for more detail. www.heritagecounts.org.uk

YARPOLE COMMUNITY SHOP, ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

Volunteers and communities coming together to preserve the things they value is at the heart of the Government's Big Society agenda. Yarpole Community Shop is an excellent example of this agenda being put into action.

Yarpole, a small rural village with only 700 residents, is home to St Leonard's – a simple, single aisle grade II* church dating from the early fourteenth century which was restored and extended by George Gilbert Scott in the 1860s. The adjacent thirteenth century bell tower is listed at grade I.

With a pressing need for a permanent home for the village shop, the opportunity to put the underused St Leonard's at the heart of the community was seized.

The community was keen to find a sustainable solution using energy efficient technologies, without sacrificing the building's historic significance. Accordingly, plans were drawn up for a 'box' to be slotted into the west end of the nave with a shop on the ground floor; and a gallery level with café and kitchen above. The toilets and vestry are located in a less historically significant side aisle, and a wood pellet boiler was installed to power

the under-floor heating – much needed to produce a welcoming space.

All the hard work paid off and in 2011 Yarpole St Leonard's was awarded 'Best Village Shop in Britain' by the Countryside Alliance. The role played by such a vibrant and active community was cited as a key element in the project's success.

The scheme had to overcome a number of challenges, and lessons learned included that the time taken to raise funds was significant; and a dedicated fundraiser would have been beneficial. Not getting bogged down in detail when making decisions was also considered important.

Buoyed by their success, the community at Yarpole wish to further improve their new facility. There are plans to extend the under-floor heating to the chancel, and install an energy efficient glazed porch.



Yarpole Community Shop, St Leonard's Church.
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HERITAGE COUNTS: INDICATOR DATA

www.heritagecounts.org.uk provides a comprehensive set of statistics on the historic environment in the West Midlands. The key changes for 2010/11 are highlighted below.

UNDERSTANDING THE ASSETS

The number of designated assets has increased and more of the historic landscape has been mapped than ever before – increasing our knowledge of what is important and why.

Regional Assets	2003	2011
World Heritage Sites	1	2
Scheduled Monuments	1,388	1,423
Listed Buildings Grade I	600	615
Listed Buildings Grade II*	2,119	2,144
Listed Buildings Grade II	31,124	31,481
Registered Parks and Gardens	145	150
Registered Battlefields	6	6
Conservation Areas	734	773
Designated Collections	n/a	20
Accredited Museums	n/a	146

Area	Listed buildings I & II*	Listed buildings II	Scheduled Monuments	Registered Parks & Gardens	Conservation Areas
Shropshire	668	7,008	470	39	126
Staffordshire	435	4,804	288	23	168
Worcestershire	427	5,923	181	17	136
Warwickshire	465	5,523	182	32	138
Herefordshire	483	5,408	266	24	64
West Midlands (met county)	282	2,831	67	34	141

The sub-regional totals include some buildings or monuments which go over local authority boundaries. Therefore these totals will not add up to the regional total.

Of the 13 Historic Environment Records in the West Midlands, four are currently available online. Those for Herefordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire are fully accessible online while Staffordshire's is available via the Heritage Gateway web site. 10% of the region is classified as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Of the nearly 13,000 sq km the West Midlands covers, 94% has been mapped through historic landscape characterisation projects (compared to 29% in 2002). This compares favourably with the national total – where 90% of England has now been characterised.

CARING AND SHARING

With understanding our historic environment, comes the need to look after it. The economic climate means that creative solutions are more important than ever.

A net total of 18 scheduled monuments were removed from the Heritage at Risk Register between 2010 and 2011. This is due to a number of factors including the strategic use of management agreements between owners and English Heritage, grants and work carried out under Environmental Stewardship.

Support from grants is crucial to the continuing survival of the historic environment. In 2010/11 English Heritage spent £2.8m in the West Midlands to support historic buildings, monuments & designed landscapes; conservation areas; places of worship; and capacity building in the community/voluntary sector.

The Heritage Lottery Fund made awards worth £12.8m in 2010/11, bringing the total spend on grants since 1995/96 to £339.7m. Natural England gave £10.7m in Environmental Stewardship awards between 2005 and 2011 (including £3.4m for historic building restoration; £2.5m

to take archaeological features out of cultivation and £1.1m for historical & archaeological feature protection).

The sector's workforce has been dealt a severe blow by the current economic situation. The number of local authority staff working within the historic environment has fallen by almost 30% since 2006. In the West Midlands, the number of local authority staff working on conservation has shrunk from 79.6 in 2006 to 45.3 in 2011. Over the same period, local authority archaeological staff has fallen from 50.1 to 46.4. At the start of the financial year, there were 21 local authorities in the West Midlands (from a total of 33) with a Heritage Champion.

Planning applications may be a measure of how much construction activity is occurring. There has been a slight increase on last year's low, with 35,710 planning application decisions made in 2010/11 (an increase of 3% on the previous year). While this may be developers seeking extensions on permissions until the economy picks up, the slight increase is discernible across the spectrum of planning applications: with 2,209 listed building consents decisions (up from 2,015 last year) and 188 conservation area consents (up from 169). Scheduled monument consents have, however, dropped slightly from 153 in 2009/10 to 133 in 2010/11 as have parks and gardens applications (64 in 2010/11 from 68 in 2009/10). All applications and consents are still significantly lower than in 2002/03 when this data was first collected in Heritage Counts.

USING AND BENEFITING

The historic environment contributes to the wellbeing of individuals and communities and is not limited to simply visiting heritage attractions.

Visits remain steady – English Heritage staffed sites in the West Midlands attracted 310,472 visitors in 200/11 and National Trust staffed properties had more than 1.5m through the gates. 58 Historic Houses Association member houses are open to the public and the number of visits to museums classified as Renaissance in the Regions 'hubs' was 2.3m in 2009/10. Meanwhile, educational visits to English Heritage properties have remained stable since 2006/07 and now stand at 28,500.

Offering good value for money during difficult financial times, membership of historic environment bodies keeps growing. English Heritage membership in the region has risen, for the fifth consecutive year – and now stands at 68,000 (up by nearly a third since 2006/07). The National Trust has also reported increasing membership – with 662,840 members in the English Midlands¹ in 2010/11, compared with 656,429 the previous year.

Heritage Counts 2011 has been produced by English Heritage on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum:

Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, Association of Preservation Trusts, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery, British Waterways, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Churches Conservation Trust, Council for British Archaeology, Country Land & Business Association, English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Houses Association, Institute of Field Archaeology, Institute of Historic Building Conservation, National Trust, Natural England, West Midlands Amenity Societies Association.

¹ In 2010, the National Trust merged their West Midlands and East Midlands operations into a single English Midlands region

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