

HERITAGE COUNTS 2013

SOUTH EAST

Heritage Counts 2013 is the twelfth annual survey of the state of England's historic environment. It is prepared by English Heritage on behalf of the South East Historic Environment Forum. This year the theme for Heritage Counts is skills in the historic environment. 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 South East, including asset data, funding information, employment numbers and visitor figures. Please see www.heritagecounts.org.uk.

SKILLS IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

This year, Heritage Counts focuses on skills; since the beginning of the financial crisis many parts of the sector have seen significant reductions in budgets and staffing numbers, causing concerns that specialist knowledge is being lost. For the 2013 report, a number of research projects were undertaken to assess these skills provisions, including a survey of the whole cultural heritage sector in the UK. One of the key findings from this study was that the majority of respondents (60%) indicated that they did not have a training budget, which means that initiatives like those outlined in the case studies below are essential for developing skills across the sector. Please see the national Heritage Counts 2013 report for more analysis and further details.

THE OXFORD CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT AND THE OXFORD HERITAGE ASSETS REGISTER – SKILLS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Oxford City Council has embraced the Localism Act's provisions encouraging local communities to play a greater role in managing their own areas. In particular, they have been pioneers in developing training and tools to help local people engage more effectively in managing their historic environment through two key projects.

The Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit was developed to improve the robustness of assessments of local character prepared by the council, developers or communities that inform planning decisions. In particular, it has enhanced community understanding of local character and the articulation of opinions on development and conservation and has significantly improved the relationship of the Council's planners with local community groups. The Toolkit has now provided the basis for more than thirty training workshops with local communities (engaging over 100 participants) and other stakeholders, helping to deliver five detailed conservation area appraisals for Oxford.

The development of a local register of heritage assets has specifically aimed to pilot a process that helps local people contribute to the robust designation of locally valued heritage. It is also based on a characterisation approach to help set this in a broader framework of



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understanding and provides assistance in assessing heritage interest, value and significance. Twenty workshops and training events were held, reaching over 170 people overall, including 'kitchen table' consultation with residents' associations, and training on using record office resources as well as on-the-street training in assessing heritage significance.

These tools are helping local communities to reveal how they value their place, to define how change can contribute to enhancement - including informing Neighbourhood plans - and to contribute more constructively to the planning process. Oxford City Council has disseminated their tools and experiences widely, helping other

local planning authorities learn how the Oxford tools can help them use their communities in managing local heritage. This has included directly providing training for communities in four other areas and by contributing to many national and regional conferences and workshops.

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS FOR 2013

South East Assets	2013 totals
World Heritage Sites	2
Scheduled Monuments	2,641
Listed Buildings Grade I	1,732
Listed Buildings Grade II*	3,874
Listed Buildings Grade II	70,686
All listed buildings	76,295
Number of local planning authorities with local lists of heritage assets	27 out of 69
Registered Parks and Gardens	369
Registered Battlefields	6
Protected Ship Wrecks	20
Conservation Areas	2,135
Land in South East Designated as National Park or AONB	37%
Online Historic Environment Records	13

2012 was the first year listed places of worship (LPoWs) were separated from secular listed buildings on the Heritage at Risk Register and this is the first time they have been reported in Heritage Counts. Of those LPoWs that have so far been surveyed, 21.8% in the South East are considered to be at risk (62 in total).

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has played a huge part in supporting the South East's heritage since 1994, having invested a total of £556 million. In the last year alone they have awarded £54.3 million, an increase of 38.6% on the previous year. However the success rate of applicants applying for grants has been reduced. Since 1994 the average success rate has been 63.2% but this year it fell to 48.3%. With other sources of public sector heritage funding reducing year on year, it is not surprising that despite the

budget increases at the HLF the level of competition for their funding is increasing.

Local government remains at the forefront of managing change to heritage. Annual surveys of the number of historic environment staff in local authorities continue to reveal a growing decrease in capacity, with numbers of conservation officers down by a quarter since 2006 and by 6% in the last year alone.

Heritage Open Days (HODs), held every September, is the historic environment sectors flagship initiative for increasing participation. In 2012 the number of HODs events in the South East reached an all time high of 1,162 sites participating, representing 25% of all HODs activity across the country. Similarly, rates of membership of heritage organisations like the National Trust, Historic Houses Association and English Heritage continued to rise in 2012/13. Although there has been a decrease in the number of visitors to heritage sites in 2012/13 compared to the previous year.

The Changing Face of the South East Heritage Sector

Both nationally and locally, how we manage our historic environment is evolving rapidly. From the changes brought about by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to the reality of the long term funding issues affecting our sector, heritage organisations are finding new ways to make things happen for heritage. For example, national designation is becoming more user-friendly, web-based and responsive, allowing more people than ever before to engage in the process. Similarly, local designation is also proving more popular than ever, with local community groups and volunteers using local listing as a means to achieve their own aspirations in their cherished local areas.

Civic Voice published new research in 2013 called Protect Our Place, which looked into the types of people who contribute to the civic movement and the reasons why. It also highlighted that

there are still significant training and support needs for volunteers: especially if they are to be more proactive rather than reactive to local issues. The sector is therefore working ever harder both to engage our passionate supporters, and most importantly to equip them with the skills they need to be effective in their endeavours. Alongside the Oxford example in the case study, initiatives have included:

- a Historic Landscape Project, which increased the capacity of County Gardens Trusts to engage with the local planning system by providing training in local listing and in commenting on planning applications;
- the Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) programme is piloting training in the South East on engaging community groups in characterisation of their local areas, which will help feed their work effectively into local planning policy;
- and, the Heritage Alliance is developing a project on philanthropy in the voluntary heritage sector, which will in part look at training needs associated with fundraising in voluntary organisations.

The sector is proving its commitment to maximising the role local people can play in historic environment management. With the shortage of state resources this is the only way we will ensure our heritage remains a central feature to the quality of the South East as a place to live and work.

Heritage Counts 2013 is produced by English Heritage on behalf of the South East Historic Environment Forum.

For more information on the Forum see www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/rhefs/

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