

HERITAGE COUNTS 2015 WEST MIDLANDS

Heritage Counts West Midlands 2015 is the fourteenth annual survey of the state of the West Midlands' historic environment, and has been prepared by Historic England on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum. This year, Heritage Counts examines caring and managing heritage at the local level. Visitors to the Heritage Counts website may download

download the full national report, the complete research projects commissioned to support this year's national 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 #heritagecounts

CARING FOR THE LOCAL HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

This year, Heritage Counts investigates the views and experiences of those responsible for looking after the local historic environment. Owners play an important role in the preservation of our built heritage. Uncertainty about the future ability of local authorities to provide services is of great concern to the historic environment sector; especially the impact this might have on the protection of heritage assets.

A survey of listed residential building owners was carried out for *Heritage Counts 2015* – the first ever detailed review of listed home owners in England. It showed that listed building owners see themselves as custodians of history, taking pleasure in living in a unique, architecturally significant property that contributes to the character of the local area. Motivated by a sense of pride, they recognise the need to conserve heritage for future generations and many are actively involved in the repair and maintenance of their properties. Other results include:

- More than half of listed building owners (55%) have lived in their property for over ten years and have invested significant amounts of time and money in maintaining their property;
- For the majority of owners (89%) their property was listed when they bought it, while a few (8%) saw their property listed during their ownership;
- Nearly nine out of ten (88%) of listed building owners recognise the importance of listed building consent, when it comes to protecting the special architectural and historic character of their property;
- Over three quarters (78%) of listed building owners are always or sometimes clear about the kind of work that requires listed building consent;
- Repairs (29%) and alterations (22%) are the largest categories of work that owners have cited when applying for listed building consent.

Respondents in the West Midlands summed up the benefits – and pitfalls – of owning a listed property:

“It's a wonderful feeling of owning a property that has been around for [a] hundred plus years before we became custodians and also interesting to think that it will hopefully be around for hundreds after we have gone. It's also nice to know that we will in some way be part of the history of the property.”

Grade II listed property owner

“As newcomers (27 years ago) to Hereford, owning a listed building in the city centre has made us feel like we are stakeholders in the city's historic heritage.”

Grade II* listed property owner

“It can be quite a burden when trying to make alterations, particularly for disabled access. There are lots of constraints which make both alterations and repairs more difficult and more expensive.”

Grade II* listed property owner

“Somewhere between a privilege and a millstone!”

Grade I listed property owner

THE LOCAL HERO – SAVING THE HAMSTEAD ROAD GEORGIAN TERRACE AND SECRET GARDENS

Handsworth, in inner-city Birmingham, suffered greatly as traditional local industries began closing down in the late 1960s. The established, middle-class residents moved away to leafier, more suburban neighbourhoods and riots in the 1980s cemented the area's undesirable image. Much residential property in the area was owned by absentee landlords, left empty or used as short-term business premises.

Colin Simms first moved to Birmingham as a university student in the 1960s. In the 1970s, he attended a party in a flat in Handsworth and noticed a terrace row of handsome, but severely dilapidated, Georgian houses on the other side of the street – one of which had been for sale for some time. A few days later, Colin purchased 42 Hamstead Road. Colin painstakingly renovated the house and, over a number of years, purchased the houses in the row one by one as they came onto the market. The grade II listed houses, in the Lozells & Soho Hill conservation area, were built between 1794 and 1824. In 2010 Colin purchased number 30 – the last house in the row – in which he is currently living while restoring it. The other, refurbished houses are in use mostly as student accommodation for Birmingham City University's acting school – the rental income has gone back into the conservation work making the project largely self-funding. The gardens behind the terrace have also been transformed. Now interconnected, they are known locally as the 'Secret Gardens,' and may be visited without charge by prior arrangement.

Colin has largely accomplished this project single-handedly since he bought the first house in 1979, with support and advice from the conservation team at Birmingham City Council over the years. Some financial support from a Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative in the early 2000s paid for external work on windows and doors. Without Colin's perseverance and dedication to the houses, it is probable the row would have declined to the point of necessary demolition some years ago.

Colin's years of hard work are now being recognised – the houses and gardens feature in the Legacy West Midlands Heritage Trail of Handsworth & Lozells (<http://www.legacy-wm.org/projects/heritage-trail.html>) and attract visitors from far and wide. At the same time, Handsworth is slowly improving its reputation and regaining its popularity as a vibrant place to live, close to the centre of Birmingham and with a local community keen to restore pride in their neighbourhood and celebrate its heritage.



Image: The Georgian terrace (Historic England)



Image: Colin Simms in the hidden gardens (Legacy West Midlands)



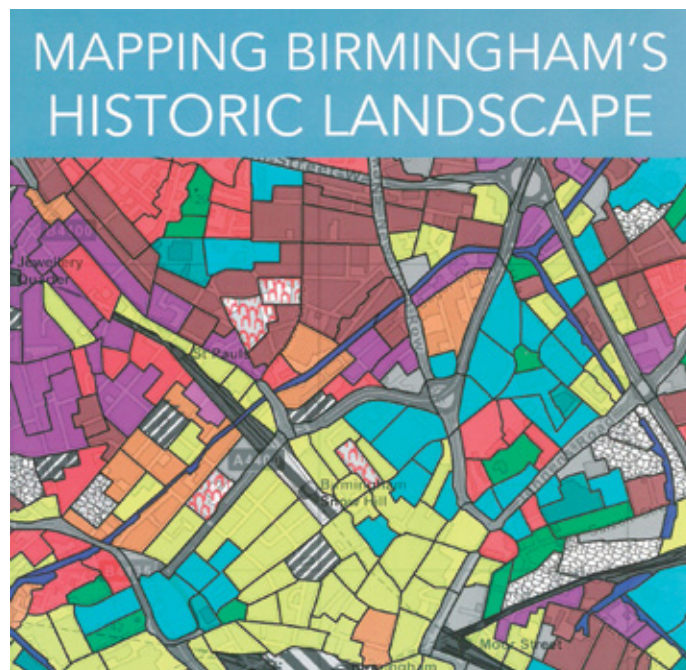
Image: Front door to one of the Georgian houses (Legacy West Midlands)

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN THE WEST MIDLANDS IN 2015

Visit www.heritagecounts.org.uk for a comprehensive set of statistics on the historic environment in the West Midlands. Some key trends in 2015 are set out below.

Discovery, identification and understanding

	2002	2015
World Heritage Sites	1	2
Scheduled monuments	1407	1416
Listed Buildings Grade I	600	620
Listed Buildings Grade II*	2119	2167
Listed Buildings Grade II	31124	31521
Registered Parks & Gardens	145	152
Registered Battlefields	6	6
Conservation Areas	731	775
Designated Collections	2010 20	22
Accredited Museums	2010 143	138



Area	Listed Buildings Grade I	Listed Buildings Grade II*	Listed Buildings Grade II	Scheduled Monuments	Registered Parks & Gardens	Conservation Areas
Shropshire	132	536	7,014	471	32	126
Staffordshire	78	366	4,807	286	20	167
Worcestershire	107	326	5,924	180	15	134
Warwickshire	112	358	5,518	183	31	139
Herefordshire	127	357	5,406	265	24	64
West Midlands (Met County)	64	224	2,852	67	30	145

Back in 2002, less than a third of the West Midlands had been covered for historic landscape characterisation. In 2015, with the completion of the Birmingham Landscape Historic Landscape Characterisation project (a partnership between Historic England and Birmingham City Council), 100% of the region has been mapped. The project has mapped, described and dated all past and present uses

of every piece of land in Birmingham as far back as the available sources allow. Covering some 26,798 hectares, the data collated can support a wide range of uses from planning, regeneration and development to the teaching and researching of local history and is available, free of charge, on Birmingham City Council's web site <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/hlc>

Constructive conservation

For the fifth consecutive year, planning applications in the region have fallen – this time by 2% on the previous year. In 2014/15, 32,903 applications were made in the West Midlands, which is 8% less than in 2010/11. Listed building consents were, however, up by 4% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 indicating that owners may be prioritising conservation and repair of existing assets, rather than focusing on new building activity.

Public engagement

Visiting historic sites continues to be popular. Between 2013/14 and 2014/15 visits to English Heritage Trust sites in the West Midlands rose by 17% to 353,972 while visits to National Trust properties in the Midlands were up 10% to just over 3.6 million. In 2014, a total of 384 Heritage Open Days were held in the West Midlands.

Helping things happen

Building preservation trusts are at the forefront of rescuing historic buildings at risk. They help to ensure a sustainable future for historic buildings – listed and unlisted – that mean a great deal to local communities. Since 2012/13, 28 projects by building preservation trusts have been completed in England – three of these have been in the West Midlands. The Birmingham Conservation Trust has been widely recognised for the outstanding work it has done in saving and regenerating the Newman Bros Coffin Works – one of those three projects. In 2015 the Trust won the RICS West Midlands Awards for Building Conservation, and Tourism & Leisure, as well as the People's Favourite at the annual Heritage Angel Awards, a Birmingham Civic Society Renaissance Award and the Institute of Conservation Award for Conservation in the Community.

Capacity building

Staffing levels in local authority historic environment departments in the West Midlands continue to be of grave concern. There has been a fall of 41%, since the highpoint in 2006, from 130 staff working on conservation and archaeology to 77 in 2015. Some local authorities have no historic environment staff at all, which seriously impedes their ability to deal with their statutory responsibilities and to process planning applications which have an impact on heritage assets.



Image: Elizabeth Perkins and Simon Buteux of the Birmingham Conservation Trust, are presented with the People's Favourite Award by Dame Esther Rantzen, at the Historic England Angel Awards in 2015 (Geoff Caddick/PA Wire)

This Heritage Counts 2015 West Midlands Report was edited by Louisa Moore and produced by Historic England on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum (West Midlands HEF). The West Midlands HEF comprises the following organisations: Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers; Association of Preservation Trusts; Birmingham Museums Trust; Canal & River Trust; Campaign to Protect Rural England; Chartered Institute of Field Archaeology; Churches Conservation Trust; Conservation Course Directors Forum; Council for British Archaeology; Country Land & Business Association; Forestry Commission; Heritage Lottery Fund; Historic England; Historic Houses Association; Institute of Historic Building Conservation; Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust; Legacy West Midlands; National Trust; Natural England; Royal Institute of British Architects; and West Midlands Amenity Societies Association.