

State of the
Historic
Environment
Report 2002

**WEST
MIDLANDS**

The State of the Historic Environment in the **West Midlands** Region 2002

COVER IMAGE:
Whittington Castle, Whittington, near Oswestry. The remains of this castle, begun around 1221, on the site of an earlier motte and bailey are a scheduled monument. Some emergency works have been carried out but the building remains in a poor condition and is on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk List. Whittington Castle Preservation Trust is taking on the management of the site and English Heritage has funded the preparation of a conservation plan to guide future activity.

The publication of the first annual State of the Historic Environment Report (SHER), of which this regional factsheet forms a part, offers the opportunity to collate relevant information and begin to analyse the condition of the historic environment in England. SHER 2002 is a pilot and the Historic Environment Review Steering Group is inviting comment on the format and content of the national and regional documents to improve future SHERs.

For this first year it has only been possible to produce a summary of basic information for the West Midlands. In future years it is envisaged that this document will be more comprehensive. The Regional Historic Environment Forum will play a key role in guiding regional content and analysis. It will add to the basic content that will be available from the national SHER data collection process. However, views on the usefulness of this document and what should be included in the future regional SHERs are welcomed. All documents can be viewed at www.historicenvironment.org.uk

Please make your response by 28 February 2003 to:
Mary King, Regional Director, English Heritage,
112 Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 3AG

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

- The Board of the Government Office for the West Midlands, which includes English Heritage in its membership, is considering the framework for regional government as set out in the Government's White Paper of May 2002. The Board expects that as the Regional Assembly gains increased power and responsibility, there will be more demand for an elected and accountable Assembly. However the pressure for West Midlands devolution is expected to be slower than that for the NE of England.
- The West Midlands' Historic Environment Forum met for the first time on October 11th 2002. It is anticipated that the group will establish itself as a consultative body within the regional political framework and develop a dialogue with other relevant agencies, and groups, including those which have traditionally had a limited involvement with the heritage sector.
- The Public Inquiry into the Regional Planning Guidance was completed this summer. In common with other environmental agencies, English Heritage is opposing a number of policies proposed in the Regional Planning Guidance, in particular policies on housing and transport where the contention is that the stated aims of RPG have not always been translated into its policies.
- Transport is a major issue for the region, which is at the heart of the country's road and rail networks and affected by any proposals for upgrading or controlling the use of them. These could potentially have a significant impact on the historic environment, as could the proposals for airport provision in the region. The current airport consultation document suggests either the further extension of Birmingham Airport or the construction of a new major airport, larger than Heathrow, to the north of Rugby in East Warwickshire. The extension of Birmingham Airport would result in the loss of Bickenhall Conservation area, while the new airport would mean the loss of two conservation areas, the adjacent historic landscape and significant numbers of listed buildings and scheduled monuments.
- English Heritage is a member of the Regional Cultural Consortium (West Midlands Life) and the Regional Cultural Forum, and is committed to both the development and implementation of the Regional Cultural Strategy.

- The impact of Foot and Mouth Disease helped draw attention to a whole host of rural issues, which are becoming increasingly important public topics in the context of a declining agricultural economy. These will have a significant impact for the West Midlands, especially in Herefordshire, the most rural of the six counties, where unemployment levels are above average and diversification has not been achieved as successfully as is the case in the neighbouring counties of Worcestershire and Shropshire.
- The region has 16 Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes (HERS) in operation with a total allocation of £1.15M and covering a wide range of conservation areas. The Birmingham Jewellery Quarter is of particular interest, where the local authority, English Heritage and other organisations are working in partnership to develop an overall conservation plan for the area. A further eight schemes have been allocated provisional total funding of £439,000 to commence in April 2003.
- In 2001/02 English Heritage offered £490,000 under the Joint Scheme for Places of Worship (£100,000 of which came from the Heritage Lottery Fund). An additional £511,000 was allocated to the region from the 2002/03 budget to help with the backlog of cases, making the total offer budget about £1M. This is set against a total regional demand of £2.1M.
- The West Midlands has the second largest conservation deficit and the second largest number of Buildings at Risk in the country. Although 11 buildings and monuments were added to the Register this year, 12 buildings have been removed. One such building is St Mary the Virgin, Bromfield, a Grade I listed parish church with some unusual and important ceiling paintings. A three-phased programme of urgent repairs to the roof structure, roof coverings and masonry has recently been completed with grant-aid of £430,000 from English Heritage.
- The ILO Unemployment Rate in Spring 2000 for the West Midlands was 6.3%, above the UK average of 5.6% and the third highest of the English regions. There are a number of unemployment blackspots and average incomes are less than elsewhere. A recent survey shows that Stoke-on-Trent North has fewer people earning more than £60,000 per annum than anywhere else in the UK.
- The landscape of the region is diverse, to some extent reflecting the intensive use of land that has typified the post medieval history of the West Midlands; through agriculture, heavy industry and mining. This is underpinned by an enduring tradition of innovation and scientific development, which puts the region at the historical and contemporary heart of industry and technology.
- The eastern half of the region is heavily urbanised and includes the major industrial cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton as well as the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall). Manufacturing accounts for 30% of the region's GDP and a similar proportion of the region's labour force. The West Midlands accounts for 25% of the country's manufacturing base but the economic contribution of heavy industry and engineering is becoming marginal. As the once dominant automotive industry has lost its competitive edge, reliance on the sector has declined and a sophisticated service economy has developed, and at a faster rate than in any other English region. Industries such as e-commerce, finance, ICT, leisure, conferencing and tourism are integral to the region's prosperity.
- The Gross Domestic Product of the West Midlands in 1999 was £63,495m compared to the average for English regions of £73,300m and a total for England of £660,200m.
- The Western half of the region is predominantly rural and, along the Welsh borders is relatively isolated. The down turn in the agricultural economy, a cycle accelerated by the Foot and Mouth epidemic has created high unemployment in rural areas. Themes of exclusion through a lack of transferable skills, poor education, inadequate public transport as well as a lack of affordable housing have intensified the need for rural communities to diversify their economies.
- The West Midlands has 202 sq.km. of the total 9934 sq.km. of National Park in England covering 2% of the total region, well below the average for England at 8%. The West Midlands has 1269 sq.km of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covering 10% of the region compared to the average coverage for England which was 16%.

¹ Regional profile figures from *Regional Trends 2001*.

REGIONAL PROFILE

- The West Midlands, at 13,004 sq km, is smaller than the 14,500 sq km average for an English region.¹ It is the only land-locked region and is home to 5.3m people. The metropolitan area has a population of approximately 2.5m, making it the largest conurbation after London.
- There is an average of 410 people per sq.km. In the West Midlands, the 4th highest of all the English Regions. The average density in England is 381 people per sq km.

² All figures from English Heritage, except where noted.

³ As some monuments will have more than one application in a year and scheduled monument consent is not always applied for, this figure should be treated with caution and is one indicator of relative pressure for change.

⁴ As above.

⁵ Regulations require that planning applications in or affecting the setting of conservation areas that cover more than 1000sq.m. or where a proposal is more than 20m high should be referred to English Heritage.

⁶ Local Authority Conservation Provision by Oxford Brookes University for the IHBC and EH, 2002.

⁷ Local Authority Conservation Provision, 2002.

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ASSETS OF THE WEST MIDLANDS²

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

- In July 2002 there were 1432 scheduled monuments in the West Midlands, a little below the average for a typical region (2204).
- 94 applications for Scheduled Monument Consent were made in the West Midlands in 2001/2 compared to a national average of 88 per region.
- One indicator of the degree of pressure on the stock of monuments is the number of Scheduled Monument Consent cases as a proportion of all Scheduled Monuments. In the West Midlands this was 6.6% compared to a national figure of 4%³.

LISTED BUILDINGS

- In August 2002 the West Midlands had 35,660 entries on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest which was 9.5% of the national total.
- 5.2% of Grade I and II* listed buildings in the region were considered to be 'at Risk' in 2002. It was significantly above the national average of 3.7% even though it has fallen from 5.8% in the base year of 1999 and from 5.4% in 2001.
- 12.6% of the entries in the West Midlands on the 2002 English Heritage BAR Register were capable of economic repair (i.e. unlikely to require some public subsidy to make re-use viable). The national figure is 12.8% but the latter is inflated by the large number of buildings in London capable of economic repair.
- In 2001/2 the West Midlands region of English Heritage was notified of 628 listed building consent applications: an average of 1 application for every 57 listed buildings (the figure for all regions except London was 1 for every 64 listed buildings). In 2000/01 there was a total of 2364 listed building consent applications made to local authorities in the region, an average of 1 application for every 15 listed buildings. The national average was 1 in 13 listed buildings⁴.

CONSERVATION AREAS

- In June 2002 the West Midlands had 731 conservation areas. The average number of conservation areas per English Region was 1003 in 2001/2.
- During 2001/2 English Heritage was notified of 447 substantial applications in conservation⁵. This equates to around 0.6 major applications per conservation in a year, the same as the national average.
- An average of seven Conservation Area Appraisals per local authority had been adopted by June 2002 in the region, compared to a national average of 8.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

- The West Midlands has one of England's fourteen World Heritage sites: Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire which was designated in 1986. One of the twelve sites in England on the UK Government's Tentative list is in the West Midlands: Shakespeare's Stratford.

REGISTERED BATTLEFIELDS AND HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

- In October 2002 there were 143 entries on the Historic Parks and Gardens Register in the West Midlands, compared to an average per region of 170. Eight sites have been added to the Register since 2000.
- Six of England's 43 Registered Historic Battlefields are in the West Midlands Region.

RESOURCES

- In 2001/2, English Heritage offered £2,345,000 in the West Midlands region (9% of the total for England) which included £831,000 on secular grants, £391,000 on church grants, £1,123,000 on area grants (HERS).
- The LACP survey⁶ reported that 58% of local authorities in the region had a historic building grant programme, compared with 51% nationally. The average grant budget for historic buildings for West Midlands local authorities, at £21,560, was above the national average of £19,779.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund offered grants during 2001/2 of £14,990,000 in the West Midlands region (6.3% of the total for England).
- The LACP report⁷ found that in the West Midlands the average level of staffing for historic building conservation per local authority was 1.9 compared to a national average of 1.7.



ENGLISH HERITAGE