

Heritage at Risk



Historic England

South East Summary 2017



In anyone's eyes, making a 6% improvement in a single year looks like success, and I'm particularly pleased that this year saw the 2016 Heritage at Risk Register in the South East reduced by this percentage overall. The greatest part of the credit for this must go to the indefatigable fundraisers who rise to the ever-increasing challenge of raising the match-funding needed to get repairs projects going, but I am also proud of the part that Historic England has played in guiding and supporting local grass-roots efforts. The year saw 22 additions to and 32 removals from the South East Register. We spent £612,000 in grant over the year, with the Hammerhead Crane in Cowes on the Isle of Wight being the largest single award. Places of worship and coastal forts of various kinds now loom large on the Register in the South East. There is still much to be done.

Andy Brown Planning Director, South East



Welcome to our report on Heritage at Risk in the South East for 2017. The Historic England Heritage at Risk team here continues to work tirelessly to improve the state of the South East's rich built heritage, and the good news is that

this year we have removed more sites from our Register than we have added. We are pleased that in the year that conservation areas celebrate their 50th year anniversary, six conservation areas in the South East are no longer at risk, and we have also removed our only battlefield from the Register, the important Civil War site at Newbury, which is no longer immediately threatened by development pressures in the area.

This year, we have spent more Historic England grant funding in the South East than ever before. Those who have followed our work in previous years will be pleased to see that repairs to the at risk scheduled small defensive structures at the former RAF Bicester (page 3) are progressing well with our assistance. Even where we have not been able to contribute financially, advice from our technical experts has had a positive impact, as at Argos Hill Windmill (cover) which is being removed from our Register this time.

Increasingly, our grant money can be used to greatest effect as a 'pump primer' to unlock solutions for a site that then draws in support and investment. Historic landscapes can often benefit from this sort of work – looking at re-use options for these important and fragile historic assets and giving owners a clear idea of what a site's history will allow it to become, before proposals are drawn up. The Royal Pavilion Gardens (page 4) in Brighton are well on their way to a brighter future through this sort of approach.

Places of worship are our biggest success story this year, with half of the removals from the South East Register being churches. Much of this success was achieved through our partnership working providing expert technical advice for the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Grants for Places of Worship' scheme. This scheme has now closed, but we will continue to work with both the HLF and the communities who care for these important assets, to improve the buildings' condition and seek new and innovative ways by which they can serve local communities. Keep an eye on all our media channels over the next twelve months to see how we do with this, and all our projects!

Clare Charlesworth Principal Adviser, Heritage at Risk

Cover image: Argos Hill Windmill is a post mill, clad with weather-boarding with a brick round house. Its fan and the shutters of its sweeps were missing and the building was suffering from lack of maintenance. A volunteer group called the Argos Hill Windmill Trust leased the windmill with a view to saving it, and launched a fundraising campaign for its restoration. Advice from Historic England, and successful funding bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Architectural Heritage Fund, have resulted in its repair and removal from our South East Heritage at Risk Register this year.

Designated assets on the 2017 **South East Register**



There are **490** assets on the **South East Register**, **16** fewer than in 2016

Former RAF Bicester **Launton, Oxfordshire**



The former RAF Bicester site appeared on our South East Heritage at Risk Register cover in 2015. The site, now Bicester Heritage, is the most complete example of a RAF bomber airfield from the interwar expansion period in the UK, and contains a great number of protected buildings including

bomb stores and defensive structures such as pillboxes, shelters and trenches.

Since 2015, Historic England has worked with the owners giving advice and grant aid to help them repair some of the small defensive structures that had fallen into disrepair across the site. This has enabled them to be seen by visitors to the site as a reminder of the vital role that the site once served in the defence of the nation.

One of the structures that we have been working together to save was something of a mystery and no one could say what it had been built for; vegetation removal works revealed a roofless structure with central plinth of engineering bricks and external tanking. With the help of local press, TV and radio, Historic England put out an appeal to see if anyone could help us with this 'Bic-stery'! Many former RAF employees came forward and eventually we were able to identify the building as a gun emplacement which would have been used to fire on enemy parachutists should they have landed on the airstrip. The tanking would have kept ammunition dry.

Knowing the structure's purpose will make it easier to ensure that the repairs, which are due to take place during the next twelve months, will conserve and reveal all that is important about it and secure its contribution to the story of the site.

The Royal Pavilion Gardens Brighton

The Gardens which surround the iconic Royal Pavilion at Brighton were designed by John Nash, and are a picturesque layout of serpentine walks and drives, with sinuous flowery shrubberies and trees dotted casually over open lawns. The Gardens were subject to a landscape restoration in the late 1980s, but since then they have become a victim of their own success, and they have begun visibly to suffer from the high levels of visitor use and recreational development pressure. In addition, there has been an erosion of character caused by a disparate range of fencing, litter bins, signage and lighting units, all of which combine to weaken the sense of the Gardens' rich history for visitors.



By adding the Gardens to our South East Heritage at Risk Register this year we aim to focus attention on the need for some improvement to return them again to their former glory as a perfect foil for the magnificent Royal

Pavilion. We will be working with Brighton and Hove City Council to develop a Conservation Management Plan which will identify how to redress the balance and develop a strategy for keeping the Gardens in good condition for many years to come.

Caring for Conservation Areas

This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of conservation areas. These come in all forms, from the quintessential English village to the urban heartland. They are united by a common theme – they are special places full of character and history, much loved by those who live and work in them. Because of their unique character they are also engines for economic regeneration and this is the key to tackling risk in many conservation areas.

This year we have added more conservation areas to the Register than have been removed. But it's also the year we launched Heritage Action Zones, many of which include conservation areas at risk where we will unlock economic potential with our partners over the coming years.

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