

HERITAGE COUNTS 2013

WEST MIDLANDS

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 West Midlands 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 West Midlands, 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.

Practical skills workshop for beginners and professionals alike

Since 2004, the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage has run a part time, post-graduate course in Historic Environment Conservation – with teaching sessions held on Fridays and Saturdays to maximise participation by allowing students to participate while continuing working. Appealing to a wide range of professionals - including architects, archaeologists, surveyors, planners, conservation officers and engineers. Going beyond simply training in the traditional skills of the sector, the course also aims to teach more modern techniques, such as the conservation of twentieth century buildings. While it remains popular, and funding has been secured for 2014, the long term future for the course is uncertain.

Many of the elective, two-day practical workshops offered at Ironbridge, are suitable for crafts people undertaking continuing professional development and reflect the different needs for skills within the historic environment sector. The Lime course, held at Llanymynech Limeworks in Shropshire, for example explains why knowledge of lime and

lime mixes are vital in understanding most pre-First World War buildings, and is popular with plasterers and builders. The workshop on Timber includes a visit to Ludlow and the Treasure & Sons joinery shop with demonstrations on how to use the side axe and the adze in squaring up timbers for framing and how to repair infill panels. For the session on Metal, students travel to Blists Hill Victorian Town and work in the ironworks using the forge and anvil, and learn the difference between cast and wrought iron.

A specific workshop focusing on Twentieth Century Materials investigates how repairs can be made to reinforced concrete structures, while the Ceramic course practises using terracotta moulding and repairs, brick laying and conservation of wall and floor tiles. For the seminar on Stone, different methods of repair are demonstrated by stonemasons.

www.ironbridge.org.uk/assets/Uploads/170913CPDTrainingCourses2.pdf



A student on the Ironbridge Institute's Metals course using a blacksmith's forge © Ironbridge Institute

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT INDICATORS FOR 2013

Area	Listed Buildings Grade I	Listed Buildings Grade II*	Listed Buildings Grade II	Scheduled Monuments	Registered Parks & Gardens	Conservation Areas
Herefordshire	127	356	5405	263	24	64
Shropshire	131	536	7006	465	32	129
Staffordshire	78	361	4794	279	20	185
Warwickshire	112	354	5519	117	31	138
West Midlands (Met County)	63	224	3126	64	30	145
Worcestershire	107	322	6354	172	15	137

Note: these sub-regional totals may include heritage assets which are located across local authority boundaries.

West Midlands Assets	2002	2013
World Heritage Sites	1	2
Scheduled Monuments	1407	1420
Listed Buildings Grade I	600	618
Listed Buildings Grade II*	2119	2153
Listed Buildings Grade II	31124	31487
Registered Parks and Gardens	145	152
Registered Battlefields	6	6
Conservation Areas	731	779
Designated Collections	n/a	22
Accredited Museums	n/a	143

Understanding the Assets

For a comprehensive set of statistics on the historic environment for the West Midlands, and for local authority areas, visit www.heritagecounts.org.uk. Key changes and trends are highlighted in this report.

Caring and Sharing

Planning applications in the West Midlands have continued to decline – falling another 3% between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The situation for Conservation Area Consent and Listed Building Consent decisions, however, is more complex. Taken together they have declined more slowly, as the graph below illustrates. When Conservation

Area Consent decisions are examined alone, they show an increase in activity of around 20%, in the last 12 months. This may be an indication that activity is focusing on conservation and repair of existing assets, rather than on new building activity and some areas have seen more activity than others. In Stratford-on-Avon, for example, Conservation Area Consents rose from 12 in 2011/12 to 29 in 2012/13; and in Birmingham they rose from 17 to 26 over the same period.

The comparison, between planning applications and decisions relating to the historic environment, is even more marked when examining the national trend. Between 2002/03 and 2012/13, the number of planning application

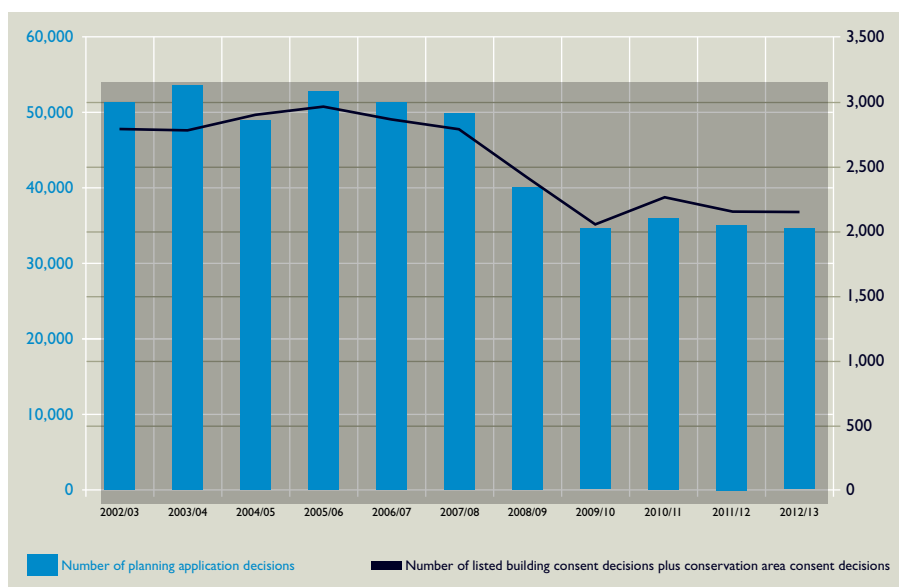
decisions in England fell by 33%. Listed building plus conservation area consents, however, declined by just 5%.

If this trend continues, the need for qualified and experienced local authority historic environment staff will be crucial. While the rate of staffing has stabilised in the past 12 months, there is nearly a third less capacity in the sector in 2013 than in 2006.

There is a risk, therefore, that local authorities with reduced historic environment staffing capacity will not be able to keep up with the workload generated by planning applications relating to heritage assets.

The availability of grant aid has continued to support the historic environment. English Heritage's grant expenditure has fallen by around a third since 2002/03 – to £1.5million for 36 projects in 2012/13. The level of funding available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, however, has remained buoyant. In 2012/13 alone, £31.5million has been given out in grants in the region. Since 1994/95, 70 grants worth £642,400 have gone to community heritage projects; 554 awards worth £351.2million to historic buildings & monuments; 46 projects totalling £50.3 million have supported industrial, maritime & transport heritage; 1,907 schemes worth £51.5million have focused on intangible heritage; 215 grants around land & biodiversity have attracted £139.4million; and museums, libraries, archives & collections have received £430.4million for 522 projects.

Comparison of planning work over ten years to 2012/13



Using and Benefitting

Enjoyment of the historic environment continues to be an important activity for many communities. The popularity of local heritage, and the way people engage with it, is demonstrated in the growth of Heritage Open Day events. In the West Midlands, this annual festival staged 394 events in 2012; marking a steady increase in the number of events over the past five years.

The appeal of heritage remains high. Visit England figures show that, in the West Midlands, the number of visitors to historic attractions rose by 47%

between 2000 and 2012. Factors behind this boom are likely to include the cost-effectiveness of membership of organisations like National Trust and English Heritage and in more recent years the appeal of holidaying at home. With increased interest has come a wider range of places to visit. The number of Historic Houses Association member houses that are available to visit in the West Midlands, for example, has risen from 62 in 2007 (50% of member properties at that time) to 79 in 2012 (or, 60% of member properties).

Educational visits have suffered somewhat from the on-going economic

situation, although free schools visits to English Heritage properties have increased by nearly 20% between 2011/12 and 2012/13 to 32,401. This may be due to the central location of key sites such as Kenilworth Castle, where the recent investment in recreating the Elizabethan garden has proved to be a significant draw.

Getting involved in the historic environment remains popular with 8,683 people volunteering 721,713 hours of their time for the National Trust in the Midlands in 2012/13.

Harnessing community spirit to revive lost skills

Sarehole Mill – one of only two surviving watermills in Birmingham – dates from the mid eighteenth century and is thought to be an inspiration for the author JRR Tolkien who grew up nearby. The grade II listed building is now in the care of Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT) who have established a project to develop traditional skills, harnessing the enthusiasm of local volunteers, on the back of a major conservation project.

A £425,000 scheme, funded by Birmingham City Council, Arts Council England and the Birmingham Museums Development Trust, included the dredging of the mill pool, replacement of the leaking roof, the repair of mill machinery and the restoration of the Victorian-era bake house.

Repair of the machinery, and the availability of water from the mill pool, meant that the flour milling capacity was restored to working order. A call for volunteers – using local newspapers and social media – gained such an overwhelming response there is a growing waiting list. Ten volunteers were trained and flour is now milled twice a week on site. The local community has enthusiastically supported the project, taking great pride in the fact the old mill is working again.

There are plans to sell the flour produced at the mill, and the BMT is working to bring the site up to the required environmental health standard to make this possible. The volunteers, the majority of whom are in full time work, meet every other month to

compare notes, discuss milling and keep a written log, as well as an online blog at www.sareholemillers.wordpress.com. An account of the project has also been added to the Birmingham Archives & Heritage blog at www.theironroom.wordpress.com.

Sarehole Mill and its mill pond, in Birmingham © Birmingham Museums Trust



Above and below: volunteers at work at Sarehole Mill in Birmingham © Birmingham Museums Trust



Integrating skills training into large scale conservation projects

Ditherington Flax Mill Maltings in Shrewsbury are the most important industrial buildings at risk in England. Built in the late eighteenth century, the purpose built flax mill was the world's first building with an iron frame – making it fire proof and an ancestor to the modern skyscraper. The now grade I listed building had a second life as a maltings before falling into disuse and disrepair, eventually being acquired by English Heritage, as the owner of last resort to save the building for the nation. The project to conserve and re-use it has so far successfully attracted £12.8million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £3.55million from English Heritage. The project partnership – led by Shropshire Council – has selected a contractor who has maximised the opportunities for skills training in their project tender.

Wates Construction have committed to providing a minimum of 20 heritage craft apprenticeship places, for students at the local Arts & Technology College. In addition, they plan to provide at least 50 training opportunities – for staff and

sub-contractor staff – to develop their heritage craft skills. A key partner in this element of the scheme is Acton Scott Working Farm. Shropshire Council and Wates Construction will also work together to deliver 100 professional development opportunities – for senior contractor staff, design professionals and a number of other conservation staff – to include a number of on-site visits during the course of the construction project. Additional partners in the educational aspect of the work will include local universities and colleges, Royal Institute for Building Architects, Society Protection Ancient Buildings, the Ironbridge Institute and Shropshire Construction Excellence.

Other elements of the successful tender include community engagement, volunteering and learning opportunities for unemployed local people, and the staging of open days showcasing expertise in a number of heritage craft skills (such as ironwork, masonry, timber & cast iron window framing and roof slating) have ensured the project has a strong local link.

The project is also supported by the active Friends of the Flax Mill, which provides opportunities for local volunteers to gain new skills and experience. Since forming in 2010 the Friends, who meet monthly, have conducted guided tours, open days, lectures, local community liaison and programmes for schools and colleges.

www.ditheringtonhlf.info/
www.flaxmill-maltings.co.uk



Ditherington Flax Mill in Shrewsbury
© English Heritage

Ditherington Flax Mill in Shrewsbury © English Heritage



Heritage Counts 2013 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 Trust

Canal & River Trust

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Churches Conservation Trust

Council for British Archaeology

Country Land & Business Association

English Heritage

Forestry Commission

Heritage Lottery Fund

Historic Houses Association

Institute of Field Archaeology

Institute of Historic Building Conservation

Ironbridge Institute

National Trust

Natural England

West Midlands Amenity Societies Association

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