

# Historic Environment Forum

The Historic Environment Forum (HEF) is a collaborative initiative that brings together senior representatives from organisations working across the historic environment sector in England.

This statement sets out the Forum's common-ground support for key future policy measures relating to the historic environment.



**Enable the historic environment to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public by building resilience in places, organisations, and structures.**

The historic environment is for everyone: it provides valuable benefits to the economy, society, and wellbeing at both community and individual level. Structural investment and innovation will ensure we can maximise these benefits and ensure they are accessible to everyone. Approaches should empower communities to capitalise on what their local historic environment has to offer, whilst also strengthening the workforce and organisations that underpin successful delivery of management and funding. **Priorities for Government should include policies that:**

- Provide long-term funding for targeted, place-based investment schemes that address spatial inequalities, recognise local heritage assets as valuable community resources, spring-boards for regeneration and sources of civic pride.
- Develop and invest in the Culture and Heritage Capital approach to support greater understanding of the societal value of heritage, enable effective resource allocation and management, and provide better welfare outcomes for the public.
- Provide operational strength to sector organisations by reviewing resource funding and improve structural funding for core sector organisations at both national and regional level, including improvements to skills, training and governance capacity. This includes ensuring that conservation and archaeological services at local authority level are appropriately skilled and resourced.
- Broaden and provide subsidy for the range of opportunities for people to develop sustainable career pathways in heritage skills in a flexible manner, and communicate these effectively. This could include extending the use of the apprenticeship levy to apply to other vocational qualification routes, and targeted access for SMEs.
- Safeguard the research value of archaeological finds and address the capacity issues in local museum archive services through the creation of a National Centre for Archaeological Archives.

## **Enhance the historic environment's contribution to reaching Net Zero goals through the implementation of a National Retrofit Strategy.**

Heritage is a force for good in the nation's journey to Net Zero. Vital carbon savings can be found through maintaining, reusing and appropriately adapting our existing historic built environment. A national approach would maximise these results, support people to make suitable, climate friendly and energy efficient adaptations to older homes and community assets, whilst bridging retrofit and green skills gaps. **Priorities for Government should include a comprehensive strategy that:**

- Reforms and equalises the tax regime for works to existing buildings to that of new build construction, thereby promoting and incentivising the reuse, repair and maintenance of older building stock.
- Avoids emissions attributable to unnecessary building loss by removing permitted development rights for the demolition of non-designated heritage assets.
- Ensures that funding programmes to support organisations to invest in sustainable technology take account of the specific needs of historic buildings. This will include the specialist advice historic buildings require, and the additional development and capital costs often involved with heritage assets.
- Reforms EPCs to ensure assessments of traditional buildings (and associated recommendations) are fit-for-purpose.
- Introduces a comprehensive skills plan that will increase the skills supply chain, efficiently support and advise building owners on obtaining professional retrofit services, and increase capacity within Local Authority conservation teams.



## **Maximise environmental benefits by ensuring the natural and historic elements of our landscapes are considered and managed holistically.**

The historic and natural environment are closely interwoven: the rural landscape that inspires, engages and promotes wellbeing is the product of thousands of years of historic human activity and, as a result, our countryside is rich in heritage assets that in turn support wildlife habitats and landscape biodiversity. These interconnections also exist in our historic towns, villages and cities. This important and inextricable relationship must be recognised in nature recovery, land management and environmental policies to ensure an integrated and sustainable approach. **Priorities for Government should include policies that:**

- Embed heritage considerations, interests and outcomes in natural environment policy, such as Environmental Outcome Reports (EORs).
- Support cross-sector delivery by fostering and maintaining close collaboration between departments and agencies with an interest in, or impact on, historic environment issues.
- Secure long-term investment in the rural historic environment through environmental land management schemes (ELMS).