



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0600HRS TUESDAY 23 JUNE, 2009

1 in 7 CONSERVATION AREAS AT RISK

– English Heritage Launches Campaign to Save Nation's
Neighbourhood Heritage–

- Awards Given to Local Authorities Which Have Done Best Work
on Conservation Areas -

England has some 9,300 conservation areas, places designated by local councils to protect their special character and appearance, but the latest edition of English Heritage's annual *Heritage at Risk* register, launched today (Tuesday 23 June, 2009) reveals that 1 in 7 is at risk of neglect, decay or damaging change and many more give cause for concern.

The results of English Heritage's first ever survey of the condition of conservation areas shows the top threats to be:

- plastic windows and doors (83% of conservation areas affected)
- poorly maintained roads and pavements (60%)
- street clutter (45%)
- loss of front garden walls, fences and hedges (43%)
- unsightly satellite dishes (38%)
- the effects of traffic calming or traffic management (36%)
- alterations to the fronts, roofs and chimneys of buildings (34%)
- unsympathetic extensions (31%)

- impact of advertisements (23%)
- neglected green spaces (18%).

Based on the findings of the survey, English Heritage is launching a *Conservation Areas at Risk* campaign to get residents, local groups and councils working together to improve these special places before it is too late.

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said: “To find out for the first time ever what condition the nation’s conservation areas are in, we asked every local authority to complete questionnaires for each of its conservation areas. We are delighted that 75% responded, a heroic effort on behalf of council conservation teams.

“Analysing the results it is clear the problems fall into two main areas: what owners do to their properties and what councils do or fail to do to the streets, pavements, parks and public spaces.

“So, we are asking for three things. First, we want councils to make more use of Article 4 Directions – only 13% of conservation areas currently have one - to protect small but important original details such as windows, doors and front gardens. Lose these and slowly but inevitably you lose the character and the history that made the area special in the first place. And where there are neglected or derelict buildings, councils should use their powers to encourage owners to repair or sell them.

“Secondly, we want council departments to work together to take better care of the public areas. Highways and Environmental Services teams, even Health and Education departments whose buildings often dominate a conservation area, they all need to co-operate to save the public parts of conservation areas from decay. Conservation areas should not just be the responsibility of the council’s Conservation Officer.

“Thirdly, we want local people to get involved. Our survey shows that conservation areas with community support are more than twice as likely to have improved over the last three years as those without. And there are countless instances where civic

societies and residents groups are helping councils by finding out what local people value, by doing street clutter audits, commenting on planning applications or helping to prepare local lists of historic buildings.”

There are also financial reasons why caring for your conservation area makes sense. An English Heritage poll of estate agents reveals that 82% think original features add value to a property and 75% think being in a well-kept conservation area enhances house prices.

Dr Thurley continued: “Millions of us live in, work in, pass through or visit conservation areas. They are the centres of historic towns and villages, 1930s suburbs, rural idylls or estates of industrial workers’ cottages: the local heritage which gives England its distinctiveness.

“These are difficult economic times but our research shows that conservation areas do not need time-consuming or costly measures, just prioritising as places people cherish, the commitment of the whole council and good-management by residents and councils alike. Well-cared for they encourage good neighbourliness, give a boost to the local economy and will continue to be a source of national pride and joy for generations to come.”

LOCAL AUTHORITY AWARDS

English Heritage announced one national and eight regional awards today for the local authorities which have done most to improve their conservation areas.

National winner

Stockton, North East

Regional winners

King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, East of England

South Derbyshire, East Midlands

Islington, London

Stockton, North East

West Lancashire, North West

Southampton, South East

tbc, South West

Wolverhampton, West Midlands

Richmondshire, Yorkshire and Humberside

HERITAGE AT RISK REGISTER 2009

The *Heritage at Risk* register 2009 gives details of 5,094 nationally designated sites that are at risk of neglect, decay or inappropriate change. It also lists the 727 conservation areas at risk discussed above. The 2009 register contains full details for the first time of all scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens at risk and reveals that approximately:

- 1 in 30 Grade I and II* buildings is at risk
- 1 in 40 Grade II listed buildings in London is at risk
- 1 in 5 scheduled monuments is at risk
- 1 in 15 registered parks and gardens is at risk
- 1 in 6 registered battlefields is at risk
- 1 in 5 protected wreck sites is at risk.

While the condition of the nation's Grade I and II* listed buildings has improved, this year's register shows that England's other nationally important heritage treasures face much greater levels of risk and highlights the challenges, particularly in the current economic climate, of saving sites that do not generate an income.

Heritage At Risk is sponsored by heritage insurer, Ecclesiastical. Ecclesiastical has been working with English Heritage for more than 20 years across various initiatives and will be working to see where shared research and data can give greater depth to the Heritage At Risk project.

Steve Wood, Managing Director of Ecclesiastical's insurance business in the UK & Ireland said: "As a leading heritage insurer we are very aware of the threats our historic sites face. We are delighted therefore to be helping English Heritage in their campaign to save conservation areas, which enrich the lives of so many people who visit or live within them."

For more information on the Conservation Areas at Risk campaign, please visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/conservationareas For a free copy of the campaign booklet please either register on the website or contact English Heritage Customer Services: 0870 3331181 customers@english-heritage.org.uk

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Notes to Editors

1. For a full list of *Conservation Areas at Risk*, details of the campaign, an interactive street and an A-Z and set of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/conservationareas (LIVE FROM TUESDAY 23 JUNE)
2. For case studies and photographs of conservation areas all over England, please contact English Heritage Corporate Communications as below.
3. The *Heritage at Risk* register 2009 gives details of 5,094 nationally designated sites that are at risk of neglect, decay or inappropriate change. For more information on the Grade I and II* buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wreck sites included, please visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk (LIVE FROM TUESDAY 23 JUNE)

For further press information, please contact: Rhiannon Tracy or Ellie Hughes at English Heritage Corporate Communications 020 7973 3250 rhiannon.tracy@english-heritage.org.uk or ellie.hughes@english-heritage.org.uk

Images are available on www.picselect.com in an English Heritage folder called Heritage at Risk 2009.

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact
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