

Heritage Link response to Annexe to PPS1 on Planning and Climate Change

Heritage Link brings together 81 voluntary organisations concerned with heritage in England representing interests from specialist advisers, practitioners and managers, volunteers and owners, to national funding bodies and local building preservation trusts. Much of the historic environment is cared for - supported, managed or owned - by these organisations and thus they and their members - from local civic societies to the national amenity societies with statutory consultee status - have firsthand and longstanding experience of the planning system.

Several of our members are already active in mitigating and adapting to climate change, while others have expressed a wish for further information and advice. We see it as the biggest challenge that the historic environment sector has ever faced.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft Supplement to Planning Policy Guidance 1 on Planning and Climate Change. Some of our members commenting from their specialist viewpoints but Heritage Link makes three general points.

1. With increasing community involvement in the planning process, there is a need to communicate highly technical issues without either blinding with science or dumbing down or. Communities as they play a stronger role in place making for the future will need to understand change and participate in adaptation and mitigation measures that affect the historic environment. They may have to be prepared for visually intrusive measures on much loved buildings. For Government, the specialist heritage bodies and the media, this is going to be an enormous challenge.

2. Throughout Annex 1 the emphasis is on new build development when

- nearly 40% of domestic stock was built before 1930s
- 30% non domestic was built before 1940 and
- 77% non domestic stock was built before 1985 when Building Regulations introduced conservation of fuel and power

The existing building stock makes up such a large part of our environment that although English Heritage, BRE, the Centre for Sustainable Heritage and others are active in this field, further and swift research on comparative environmental performance is needed. This might take into account evidence on embodied energy, the energy required for demolition and replacement materials, the relative costs of refurbishment and new build to name just some areas are needed to provide a sound evidence base for valid assessment and to avoid any preconceptions.

When considering climate considerations in Regional Spatial Strategies, a region's vulnerability should always include the implications on the historic environment – both landscapes and assets - from impacts such as coastal erosion, flooding and storm damage.

3. A holistic approach is also needed to demonstrate the part that the historic environment plays in wider environmental sustainability. Energy efficiency issues go far beyond buildings and structures alone. Weighing up transport costs for visitors to a historic site and the impact that site has on the local economy in revenue, procurement, employment and quality of life is just one example of the complex balance of social and economic factors.

Heritage Link is keen to develop the understanding of the voluntary heritage sector on this subject and is currently considering a webpage to signpost members and others to research and other initiatives on climate change and the historic environment. The 2008 issue of Heritage Counts, the annual sector-wide audit of the historic environment, is expected to take this subject as its theme.

Heritage Link
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