

ENGLISH HERITAGE

HERITAGE AT RISK



WEST MIDLANDS

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Since it was launched in 1998 our Buildings at Risk Register has been extremely successful in coordinating action to save some of the nation's most important structures from decay and destruction. As a result, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields, protected wreck sites and conservation areas have all been added to what is now called the Heritage at Risk Register.

This year, we undertook a pioneering 15% sample survey of England's 14,500 listed places of worship to help us understand the condition of the thousands of designated churches, chapels, synagogues, mosques and temples and other faith buildings that are the spiritual focus for our communities. They face many different kinds of challenges and we need to help congregations ensure their future.

As the effects of the financial crisis become apparent, ensuring a sustainable future for England's heritage will be challenging. It is nevertheless clear that success will depend on a close partnership between public sector organisations, charities, communities and owners. At Croome Court in Worcestershire, for example, we are working with the National Trust and Natural England to conserve one of the country's most outstanding 18th century parkland landscapes and its listed buildings.

In the West Midlands a number of buildings have been on the Register since its inception, especially in urban and industrial areas. The economic downturn makes finding solutions for these particularly difficult as their potential to attract investment is low. In other cases, promised investment has been withdrawn – the Newman Brothers Coffin Furniture Works in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter is an example of this. Withdrawal of support by Advantage West Midlands threatened the project, and the Birmingham Conservation Trust is now working hard to restructure the scheme.

Despite this, 2009 saw a reduction in buildings at risk being added to the Register. Among the 11 removed were the Cathedral Barn in Hereford, Weoley Castle in Birmingham and the Chillington Park dovecote. Repairs are currently underway on a further 8 buildings and we expect another 15 schemes to start within the year.

The number of conservation areas at risk in the West Midlands is now 51 out of a total of 613 surveyed. We already have four conservation area partnership schemes running in association with local authorities with two new schemes starting in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme during 2010.

While these schemes can tackle building repair, many of the changes that put conservation areas at risk relate to planning activities. As a result of public spending cuts, the Region is seeing a decline in the provision of specialist conservation advisers in local authorities. This does not bode well for the quality and timeliness of advice to owners and decision-makers and could have an impact on the number of conservation areas at risk.

Our partnerships with owners, local authorities, Natural England and charities have achieved notable success in tackling scheduled monuments at risk. Examples include the industrial site of Snailbeach and Hopton Castle, both in Shropshire, and Polesworth Abbey Gatehouse in Warwickshire. We now have management agreements in place for 125 at risk monuments, of which 96 are in partnership with Natural England. During the past year this has helped reduce the number of monuments at risk by 38, although many others face long-standing issues in terms of land management and agriculture.

Around 7% of the Region's 150 registered parks and gardens are at risk from changes of use, fragmented ownership, intensive farming and other pressures. Encouraging landowners to work together to conserve their landscapes is a challenge, particularly when this may be less financially beneficial than the current, inappropriate, management regimes.



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ANGEL CROFT HOTEL, LICHFIELD

Occupying a prime location opposite the Cathedral, this fine red brick Georgian town house was built in 1750 and is listed grade II*. It has been on the Register for more than 10 years and today lies empty and in a very poor state of repair. The owners were keen to refurbish it as an extension to their existing hotel business but in the present economic climate they cannot risk the investment required. The property is now for sale again and so remains at very great risk of further deterioration, decay and vandalism.

LISTED BUILDINGS

- 1 in 32 (3.1%) grade I and II* listed buildings are at risk across the country. In the West Midlands this rises to 4.4% (120 sites).
- 11 sites were removed from the 2009 regional Register during the year, but 6 new sites were added.
- Since publication of the 1999 baseline Register 48.1% of the region's buildings at risk (91) have been removed from the regional Register as their futures have been secured, compared to the national figure of 50.7% (724).
- Nationally, £6.2m was offered to 76 sites on the Register during 2009/10. In the West Midlands we awarded grants totalling £312k to 10 sites.

CONSERVATION AREAS

- 272 local authorities (81%) have taken part in our national survey of conservation areas, 24 of which were in the West Midlands region.
- We now have information for 7,388 of England's 9,300 designated conservation areas, of which 613 are in the West Midlands.
- 549 (7.4%) of the conservation areas for which we have information are at risk, 51 (8.3%) of them in our region.

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

- Approximately 1 in 6 (17.2%) of England's 19,731 scheduled monuments are at risk, compared with 17.4% (248 sites) in the West Midlands.
- The total at risk has reduced by 140 (4.0%) since 2009, 38 of which (13.3%) were in the West Midlands.
- Arable ploughing and unrestricted plant, scrub or tree growth account for nearly two thirds of sites at risk. Ploughing is a particularly serious problem in the West Midlands, where erosion of sites by cultivation is a major issue.
- Nationally, 82% of scheduled monuments at risk are in private ownership, rising to 89% in the West Midlands.
- Of the £450k offered to owners of scheduled monuments at risk in 2009/10, £6k was awarded to 2 sites our region.

REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS

- 1 in 16 of England's 1,606 registered parks and gardens are at risk, an increase from 6.0% (96) in 2009 to 6.2% (99) this year. In the West Midlands, 10 of our 150 sites are at risk (6.7%).
- Nationally, 5 sites have been added and 2 removed from the Register. One site in our region has been removed.

REGISTERED BATTLEFIELDS

- Of the 43 registered battlefields in England, 6 are at risk, 1 less than in 2009.
- None of the West Midlands' 6 registered battlefields are at risk.

PROTECTED SHIP WRECKS

- Of the 46 protected wreck sites around England's coast, 8 are considered to be at risk, a reduction of 1 on 2009.



HOPTON CASTLE, SHROPSHIRE

After years of neglect this important medieval borderland castle was in imminent danger of collapse. English Heritage recently negotiated its transfer to a local charitable Trust, which will display it to the public once a £1 million repair project, co-funded by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, is complete.

THERE ARE

2,752

GRADE I AND II*
LISTED
BUILDINGS IN
THE WEST MIDLANDS

6.7% OF
150 REGISTERED
PARKS AND
GARDENS
ARE AT RISK
IN THE REGION

17.4%
OF THE REGION'S
SCHEDULED
MONUMENTS
ARE AT RISK

8.3% OF
CONSERVATION
AREAS SURVEYED
IN THE REGION ARE
AT RISK

CARING FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

Places of worship make a huge contribution to our towns and villages. They sit at the heart of communities, dominating skylines and landscapes. They are the product of centuries of invested skill and philanthropy. Most remain as places of prayer and spirituality but others have acquired new social uses that benefit a much wider cross-section of urban and rural society.

Like all buildings, they require regular maintenance to keep them in good condition. They also need to adapt to the evolving needs of their congregations and the wider community. Responsibility for their care falls almost entirely on the shoulders of volunteers, and for many smaller congregations the burden can be heavy.

We have therefore undertaken a series of consultation events with congregations, user groups and local authorities to identify the biggest concerns of those who manage these very special places. Places of Worship are particularly close to the heart of local communities, but in practice it is often just a handful of dedicated individuals who maintain them. They face unique challenges, which are illustrated in an accompanying report.

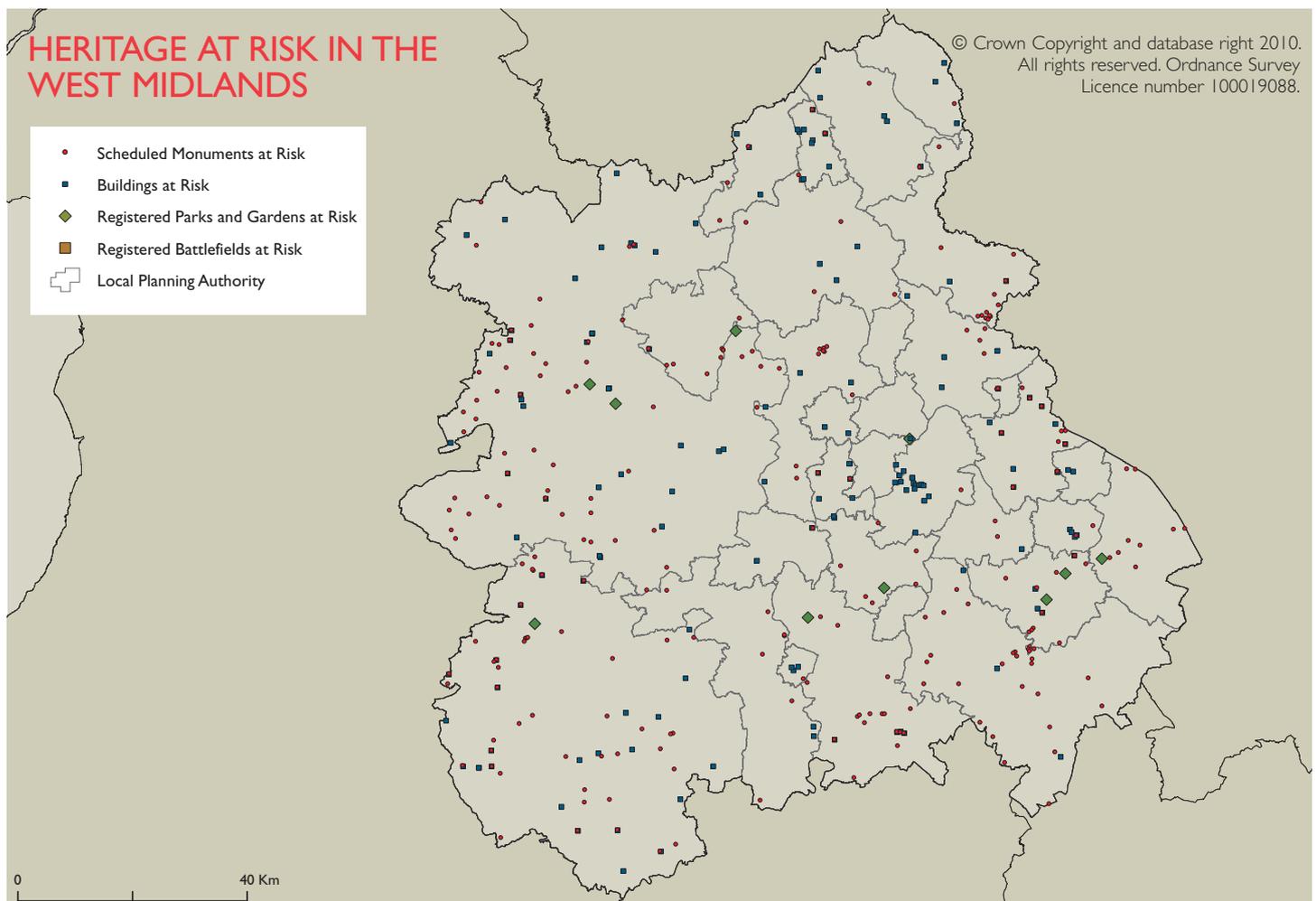
What we know

- 45% of all grade I buildings are places of worship.
- 85% of listed places of worship belong to the Church of England.
- Up to 1 in 10 could be at risk from leaking roofs, faulty gutters or eroding stonework.
- 1,850 repair projects at 1,567 buildings have shared £171m of English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund grant aid since 2002/3.

What congregations want to understand better

- Why their building has been listed and what that means.
- How to get permission to make changes and find expert help.
- How to raise money for one-off projects and day-to-day maintenance.
- Who will look after their buildings in the future.

All of these are considered in our booklet *Caring for Places of Worship*, sent to every listed place of worship.



For more information, see
www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk
or contact your English Heritage regional office.

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact our customer services department on telephone: 0870 333 1181
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