

Introduction



The West Midlands Region: a profile

The West Midlands covers 13,004 sq km and is the only land-locked English administrative region. It is home to 5.3 million people. The landscape of the region is diverse, to some extent reflecting the intensive use of land that has typified the post-medieval history of the West Midlands; through agriculture, heavy industry and mining. The western half of the region is predominantly rural and along the Welsh border it is relatively isolated. 12% of districts are defined ² as 'remote rural' compared with 41% 'accessible rural' and 47% 'urban'. The eastern part of the region is heavily urbanised and includes the major industrial cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton as well as the Black Country (Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall). The West Midlands has 202 sq km of the total 9,934 sq km of National Park in England, covering 2% of the total region, below the average for England at 8%. The region also has 1,269 sq km designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty covering 10% of the region compared to the average coverage for England which is 16%.

England's historic environment is 'one of our greatest national resources' according to a Government report published in 2001. ¹ It is the physical evidence that helps us to understand who we are and is the context within which we make decisions about our future. The wonderfully diverse historic environment of the West Midlands defines the places and communities where we live and work and which we visit.

The stately homes of Stoneleigh and Shugborough, the Shropshire Hills, Birmingham and urban communities like Dudley, Burslem and Telford, each have their own identity, character and sense of place and each tells a story of human development.

This report is one of nine regional documents that are being published alongside the national document *Heritage Counts 2003: The State of the Historic Environment*. The suite of *Heritage Counts* documents builds on the first State of the Historic Environment Report (SHER), which was published in 2002 in response to the Government's statement *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future* (2001). This regional report has been prepared by English Heritage on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum. It aims to quantify and monitor the condition of the historic environment in the region, the pressures it faces and its contribution to economic and social well being. The report focuses on the collection and synthesis of key data relating to the region's historic environment, and should be viewed as an evolving document in its second year of development.

¹ Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), *A Force for Our Future*, 2001.

² Countryside Agency district definitions 1993.

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Why is the Historic Environment Important?

1 West Midlands Life. Regional Cultural Consortium. *The Regional Cultural Strategy 2001-2006*.

2 Figures from MLA West Midlands at March 2003.

3 Figures from The Waterways Trust.

4 Figures from The Civic Trust (West Midlands).

5 Latest available figures from the Historic Houses Association.



Community Volunteers from HART

History of Atherstone Research Team (HART)

Fifty volunteers from Atherstone in Warwickshire are surveying, drawing and photographing the vernacular buildings at the historic core of their town and tracing the history of the people who lived and worked there through old inventories, deeds and tax returns. This Atherstone Civic Society project, which is supported by Local Heritage Initiative funding, will produce the research material necessary to inform a design guide and conservation area appraisal. The research will also be published as a book, a series of community newsletters, and the fresh understanding of Atherstone's history will be brought to life in a series of sketches performed by local community theatrical groups in the summer of 2004. Academic research into the historic fabric of the town will benefit decision-making on conservation, planning, tourism and economic development and it also provides a valuable and accessible community focus. Details of similar Local Heritage Initiative projects can be found at www.lhi.org.uk

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CONTRIBUTES TO QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE REGION

The unique local character of a place and a high quality historic environment can make a positive contribution to the quality of life for those living and working there. Rural landscapes, parks and gardens offer leisure activities, which promote relaxation and reduce stress. Historic buildings foster a sense of belonging amongst communities. People value and care about historic places and want to safeguard their future. In the West Midlands a large number of private owners and volunteers take on responsibility for the management, maintenance and protection of the historic environment for the benefit of future generations. The historic environment is a factor in attracting investment to the region and contributes to the West Midlands' prosperity.

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Regional Cultural Strategy links the way we conserve and use our historic environment 'with education at all levels; with children's play and youth services; with voluntary and community activities, with faith communities and with healthy living and informal recreation. **1**

The National Trust has 1,900 volunteers in the West Midlands, there are circa 3,500 volunteers working in the region's registered museums **2** and there are an estimated 500 volunteers actively helping to restore and conserve the region's waterways. **3** There are around 35 canal societies, trusts and projects spread throughout all five counties and the metropolitan boroughs. There are 71 civic societies registered with the Civic Trust with 18,282 members **4** who promote the preservation of the local historic character of their towns and villages and encourage civic pride in the built environment.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, Countryside Agency and the Nationwide Building Society have funded 96 recent or current Local Heritage Initiatives in the West Midlands. These community projects range from exploring the history of a town to interpreting wildlife trails in an urban nature reserve. These figures by no means tell the whole story about the number of volunteer groups and individuals involved in the preservation and development of the region's heritage. They do, however, offer insight into the value ascribed to the historic environment by those who live and work in it.

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

The historic environment has many educational benefits, from local learning initiatives to formal programmes offered at the larger historic sites and properties across the region. For example, there were 60,000 free educational visits to National Trust sites and properties and 36,460 to those managed by English Heritage in the West Midlands in 2002/03. Three of the region's privately owned historic houses also ran educational programmes in 1998, attracting more than 7,500 visitors. **5**

Back-to-Back Housing Restoration Project, Birmingham

On the corner of Inge and Hurst Streets in the middle of inner-city Birmingham is the last surviving courtyard of back-to-back houses in the city. Back-to-back houses date from the mid-eighteenth century and were once very common in Britain's industrial towns. They were built in order to accommodate a rapidly increasing working population. In Birmingham, the rows of houses were literally built 'back to back' (i.e. terraces also sharing a rear wall) around a central courtyard. In this court, each house had just one room per storey, and as well as accommodating extended families of up to ten there was often a workshop for the family trade. These houses became associated with squalor, disease and poverty, and almost all were condemned and pulled down before the Second World War.

The Birmingham Conservation Trust and the National Trust recently formed a partnership to restore Birmingham's last remaining Back to Backs, and open them to the public. The houses are Grade II listed, and have been on the city council's Buildings at Risk register. The Birmingham Conservation Trust is restoring and refurbishing the houses with a budget of £1.89 million, just under half of which came from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Additional support came from Birmingham City Council, The Edward Cadbury Trust, The Pilgrim Trust, The Esme Fairbairn Foundation, and The Manifold Trust amongst others.

The project will not just save a unique part of Birmingham's history but create new jobs, and will contribute to the regeneration of the area. Local contractors with specialist conservation skills will do the work. The development will also add to the local economy by bringing in tourist revenue, and by providing accommodation for visitors to the city: three of the houses will be transformed into National Trust holiday homes, decorated in Georgian, Victorian and Art Deco styles.

Space within the houses will be set aside for education and interpretation; these facilities will be available for school children, teenagers and adult learners. Special features will allow people with disabilities to experience areas that would not otherwise be accessible.

One of the aims of the project is to attract new audiences. For example, work placements for young adults will be available, and a partnership is planned with a local college to provide an innovative training programme for volunteer guides. Through these and other initiatives, the project to restore the Back to Backs will show how even tiny historic places can have a huge impact on the communities that surround them.

Mill Lane Nature Reserve, Walsall

This 8 hectare conservation site is richly diverse in habitats and species of plants and wildlife. Visitors can now be guided through it on an interpreted nature trail researched and developed by local residents in conjunction with Walsall Deaf People's Centre. A Local Heritage Initiative grant of £13,623 was awarded to the project in 2002 by the Heritage Lottery Fund who worked in partnership with the Countryside Agency and Nationwide Building Society to enable local volunteers to produce interpreted leaflets, boards and a video, and stage events signed in British Sign Language. This historically rich open green space which was the site of a working mill (dating back to before 1086), a dog pound, an iron and brass foundry and later a railway siding before it lay derelict and was reclaimed by the council in 1988. It is now a thriving and important wildlife reserve and an important historic site managed by Walsall Countryside Services for the local community and visitors to enjoy.

For further details contact Diana Miles, Walsall Countryside Services on 01922 459813.

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BM&AG) addressing social exclusion

In 2002/03 women from central Birmingham were invited to participate in a pilot scheme run by BM&AG and partners to investigate ways in which the heritage of diverse community groups might be interpreted and represented within the Museum's collections. Nine learners were recruited through a women only event at the Jacobean mansion of Aston Hall. The six-month lifelong learning initiative entitled 'Invisible Women?' gave these women the opportunity to develop their own projects by interpreting objects using media skills such as web design (www.invisiblewomen.org.uk), sound and radio production. The project provides an excellent example of the work which can be done within museums and galleries to address social exclusion and to raise awareness about the multicultural heritage of the West Midlands.

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The Importance of the Historic Environment to the West Midlands' Economy

1 Figures from the Heart of England Tourist Board www.hetb.co.uk

2 Figures from Visit Heart of England, the Regional Tourist Board.

3 The owners of these houses are members of the Historic Houses Association.

4 Figures supplied by National Trust (estimated) and English Heritage, respectively. Figures for local authorities and other charitable trusts are based on historic properties submitting visitor numbers to the British Tourist Authority 2003. Figures published in *Visits to Visitor Attractions 2002*.

5 Most up to date figures available from Heart of England Tourist Board at time of publication.

6 The National Trust. *Valuing our Environment – Key Messages*, 2001.

7 Forest, Ray and Kearns, Ade. *Joined-up places? Social cohesion and neighbourhood regeneration*. Further information about the four neighbourhood studies which contribute to this research reports can be found at www.jrf.org.uk

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IS VITAL TO THE TOURIST ECONOMY

Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to the West Midlands' economy and it is growing. The Foot and Mouth epidemic of 2001 demonstrated tourism's value to the national and regional economy. Attractive and distinctive landscapes, villages, towns and cities normally underpin a successful tourist economy, and the historic environment plays an important role in supporting it.

In 2002 UK residents visiting the region spent £1,524 million (1999: £954 million) and a further £480 million (1999: £525 million) was brought in by overseas visitors. **1** Amongst the top heritage attractions charging admission in the region are Shakespeare's Birthplace (373,654 visitors in 2002), the Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley (236,665 in 2002) and the World Heritage Site at Ironbridge (230,743 in 2000). Many places associated with the historic environment are free for everyone to enjoy. In 2002 there were 5,701,421 visits to the 149 registered museums in the region. An estimated 250,000 people visited the heathered moorland terrain of Long Mynd in Shropshire (National Trust). Sutton Park (north Birmingham), the majority of which is scheduled as a site of archaeological importance, is amongst the top ten most visited free attractions in England, visited by an estimated 3.5m people in 2001. **2**

In 2002 there were almost 802,000 visits to privately owned small historic houses in the West Midlands. **3** 96% of the estimated £4.01 million generated went directly back into the rural economy. In some depressed rural areas, the local economy is dependent on the income from visits to historic houses, parks and gardens, for example Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire is vital to the prosperity of the local community.

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT STIMULATES AND CREATES EMPLOYMENT THROUGH TOURISM

In the West Midlands almost 2.5 million visits were made to historic properties in the West Midlands during 2002 in the ownership of the National Trust (37 properties, 1,350,000 visits), English Heritage (10 properties, 283,610 visits), local authorities (8 properties, 157,392 visits) and other charitable trusts (7 properties, 694,761). **4** There are significant knock-on effects to the local economies.

More than 6,600 jobs in Shropshire (1998/99) and over 11,300 jobs in Worcestershire (1997/98) were supported directly by tourism. The knock-on effects of consumer spending and the indirect advantages delivered to related industries meant that an additional 6,300 full time equivalent jobs were supported in the two counties. **5** Of course, not all of these jobs were directly related to the historic environment but research carried out by the National Trust indicates that 40% of future employment in tourism will be related to the historic environment, rising to 60-70% in rural areas. **6**

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO REGENERATION

A high quality built environment has a positive impact on the economic and social vibrancy of an area. Unfortunately this is often realised after buildings have been neglected and vacated, businesses have moved away, the confidence of those living and working there has diminished, and crime levels have increased. A research study which analysed the views of residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods found that the physical deterioration of 'landmark' historic buildings had led to a loss in pride and status and that there was a 'yearning for the collective sense of identity which such older, historically and socially important buildings could provide'. **7**

The positive impact of heritage investment in the West Midlands in recent years can be seen in a number of conservation areas across the region which are benefiting from public investment to repair, restore and regenerate the region's architectural heritage. Reinstating the lost or decayed features of locally distinctive properties and bringing them back into use through grant-aided projects between local authorities and English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund contributes to the economic growth of an area. These funding programmes can enhance the quality of life of those living there, and encourages others to invest in the area's future. Investment can lead to environmental improvements such as new street paving, lighting, street furniture, parks and gardens. These have a positive effect as they increase safety, boost local morale and confidence and contribute to the 'sense of place' that an attractive townscape can deliver.

In Walsall in 2002/03, as a response to heritage-led regeneration schemes at Darlaston (Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme) and Bloxwich (Townscape Heritage Initiative), the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, invested £200,000 in match funding to restore and improve the landscapes which includes two historic gardens.

Heritage Dividend 2002 ⁸ states that for every £10,000 of heritage investment £46,000 of match funding is levered from private and public sources, which delivers on average sq metres of improved commercial floor space, one new job, one safeguarded job, one improved home and 103 sq metres of environmental improvements. Historic buildings in the West Midlands provide the stimulus for further economic and social regeneration.

Since the launch of English Heritage's Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) in 1999 £2,928,000 of grant aid has been matched by local authorities across the West Midlands, including Dudley (see feature). HERS has proved equally beneficial to smaller towns and settlements.

Nine HERS have received their full funding allocation, the remaining 19 schemes are ongoing for up to a further three years. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and Wolverhampton City Council are amongst the 15 local authorities to implement this type of conservation-led regeneration scheme in the region.

The Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) scheme has supported nine projects across the West Midlands to the value of £4.87 million since the scheme was launched in 1998. THI projects focus on community-led schemes and try to re-vitalise streets and stimulate small-scale regeneration by repairing historic properties with special architectural character which are derelict or under-used. Successful THI schemes create and nourish a framework for viable community and commercial investment. A THI award in Bilston in the Black Country will aim to secure the repair of eight Grade II listed buildings which have suffered from inappropriate alterations and neglect within the Town Centre Conservation Area.

The Countryside Agency's Market Towns Initiative has invested £9 million over the last two years to revitalise 20 market towns across the West Midlands in order to create a more diverse and sustainable rural economy. Historic buildings lie at the heart of these towns and contribute to a sense of place.

Smethwick Regeneration Partnership

The Smethwick Regeneration Partnership (SRP) was formed in 1997 as a public, private, voluntary and community partnership, to co-ordinate regeneration projects within Smethwick in the Black Country. It oversees a Single Regeneration Budget of £10.75 million. The canal network is a prized asset of the historic town and can play a crucial role in regeneration. In June 2003 the SRP invited thousands of local residents and businesses to participate in consultations over the North Smethwick Canalside project. The ambitious proposals aim to bring the historic canal network back into use through a mix of business, leisure and housing developments. The canals, engineered by Brindley, Telford and Smeaton in the late 1700s, lie at the industrial heart of the town and boast remarkable feats of engineering such as the 70ft man-made Galton Valley, Telford's Grade I listed Galton Bridge, and the collision of nineteenth and twentieth-century engineering where the canal passes under the M5 viaduct. Historic canalside buildings housed Chance's glassworks, where the glass for Crystal Palace was made in 1851 and which provided lighthouses for numerous locations around the world, and Soho Foundry (1796) which exported steam engines worldwide. The area's rich heritage will be key to attracting much needed inward investment to Smethwick.

The front cover features the Galton Valley, Telford's Galton Bridge and in the forefront, Nirmla Devi, Smethwick Regeneration Partnership Manager.

A further 14 towns will benefit from additional funding secured by Advantage West Midlands over the next few years.

The region's historic waterways are also a big stimulus for regeneration. At Brindleyplace in the centre of Birmingham almost 3,500 jobs have been created since 1993 as a result of the £275.3 million investment into luxury apartments, office and retail space and leisure and recreation facilities surrounding and lining the canal network. These include the Mailbox development, National Sealife Centre, a host of bars and clubs and 118,040m² of office, retail and restaurant space. Part of the success of this mixed-use urban regeneration scheme is the 'excellence in design and landscaping to create a high quality environment.' ⁹

⁸ English Heritage, *Heritage Dividend 2002*.

⁹ Figures and quote from Research Report for British Property Federation. *Mixed Use Urban Regeneration at Brindleyplace, Birmingham and Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth. An Assessment of the impact on Local and National Economics*, May 2003.

10 Advantage West Midlands. *Delivering Advantage West Midlands Economic Strategy and Action Plan – Update, 2004-2010.* CONSULTATION DRAFT.



19-21 Stone Street before HERS



19-21 Stone Street in 2003

Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme – Priory Street Conservation Area, Dudley

The Priory Street Conservation Area HERS was completed in 2003. It included the repair and refurbishment of five significant buildings, four of which are listed Grade II or Grade II*. The combined £123,000 English Heritage and Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council grant-aid initiative, which offered 50% grants to private owners wishing to restore and breathe new life into their properties, levered in excess of £345,000 of private investment to the conservation area. In year one, 22 Stone Street, an imposing nineteenth-century, three-storey Georgian red brick and Welsh slate building was restored. The owner now runs a mortgage advisory business from the premises, creating jobs and contributing to the much needed economic regeneration of the area. As a result of this success, Focus Housing Group bought the empty properties at 19-21 Stone Street, dating from the late eighteenth century, and have converted them, with listed building consent, to create three self-contained commercial units and three two-storey units for social housing. The future of these three buildings in Stone Street has been secured, living accommodation provided, and 257m² of improved commercial floor space brought back into use. There was also significant job creation in the construction industry. The £69,000 public sector heritage investment for the refurbishment of these three significant historic buildings alone has been quadrupled by private investment, leveraging almost £277,000 towards the regeneration of the area.

THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IS A KEY FACTOR FOR ATTRACTING INVESTMENT

Advantage West Midlands' vision is for the West Midlands to be 'recognised as a world class region in which to invest, work, study, visit and live and the most successful in creating wealth to benefit everyone which lives in the region.' 10 A world class environment is essential for a world class region. The historic environment is an essential component contributing to the distinctive character of the region and the quality of its urban areas and wider countryside. It helps to strengthen the region's identity and positive image and so can contribute to its competitive advantage in attracting investment.

The most architecturally and historically outstanding buildings, monuments, parks and gardens, battlefields and historic (conservation) areas are designated according to national criteria.

Other sources of funding available in the region for heritage-led regeneration:

- Advantage West Midlands can support the conversion of redundant historic buildings into office, retail, industrial or residential uses
- Various European Funding streams can support a variety of projects that contribute to economic development and in turn have indirect and direct benefits for the historic environment
- The Rural Enterprise Scheme supports projects that can sustain, support and nurture isolated communities and protect and conserve the rural heritage
- A number of trusts give grants to heritage and regeneration projects which benefit the historic environment

The Historic Environment in the West Midlands: An Audit

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In addition to conventional designation, historic landscape characterisation helps us to understand wider historic landscapes and townscapes.

Characterising landscapes and townscapes provides a tool which helps us understand why our environment is the way it is, and provides frameworks and contexts for managing its change. In the West Midlands, Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has been completed by Herefordshire Council and in 2003 the first urban characterisation study in the region was completed in Dudley Borough.

HLC interprets maps of the present day landscape to identify blocks of historic landscape types like ancient or Parliamentary enclosed landscape as well as features of the landscape which result from its long interaction with humans.

Counties in the West Midlands region are at different stages of their characterisation projects. Shropshire aims to be complete in 2003 and Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the Black Country in 2004/05. Coventry is at present creating a new character map of the city combining characterisation with a survey of sites and monuments.

IN THE WEST MIDLANDS THERE ARE

- 33,843 listed buildings: 600 Grade I (2%), 2,119 Grade II* (6%) and 31,124 Grade II (92%)
- 1388 scheduled ancient monuments (7.4% of England's total)
- 145 registered historic parks and gardens (7% of England's total)
- 6 registered battlefields: Evesham (1265), Shrewsbury (1403), Blore Heath (1459), Edgehill (1642), Hopton Heath (1643), and Worcester (1651) (14% of England's total)
- One World Heritage Site (Ironbridge) and
- 734 conservation areas ■

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) in Herefordshire

A comprehensive HLC of Herefordshire's countryside was completed in 2000. While many HLCs comprise a field by field assessment, Herefordshire Council developed a methodology that took an archaeological perspective to looking at the landscape, and attempted to recognise landscape attributes that signify continuity and discontinuity between broad landscape areas. As a result Herefordshire has 800 HLC areas compared with the 15,000 identified in Somerset.

Building on the characterisation project Herefordshire Archaeology is currently working with the Arrow Valley Farmers Group on the Arrow Valley Archaeology Landscape Change and Conservation Project, which is supported by LEADER+ and English Heritage (running from February to October 2003). Local communities can get involved and find out about the historical development of the Arrow Valley by assisting in the surveying of ancient landscapes and learning conservation techniques, as well as enjoying many varied events, such as walks, talks and management workshops.

The HLC has increased the Council's awareness of the landscape and the development of the region and has contributed to a number of key planning decisions. A report on the methodology will be available at the end of 2003. Contact Herefordshire Archaeology on 01432 383353 for details.

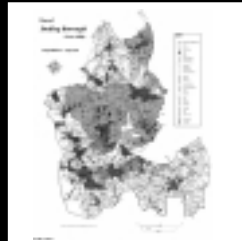
Historic Herefordshire Online

A £99,458 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled Herefordshire Council to fund a website for the county's Sites and Monuments Record (www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk). In its first month (September 2002) the website received 869 visitors and in its tenth month 8,456. The number of visits rises as the website is promoted through seminars, demonstrations and lectures, Herefordshire Archaeology Week, educational networks and by word of mouth. The Sites and Monument Record database which can be searched by type, parish or grid reference, and pages on Herefordshire castles are proving the most popular. Online records are widely accessible and can be tailored for different audiences. Education pages aimed at Key Stage 3 have also been developed as part of the project.

■ A more detailed audit of heritage assets across the region and related statistics is available at www.historicenvironmentforum-westmids.org.



Dudley Borough in 1750



Dudley Borough in 1885

Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study

Local distinctiveness is determined by a combination of different features and not just characterised by isolated buildings and places that have been designated as outstanding and special. The aim of this character study was to provide a context within which planning and development decisions could be made to ensure that the local distinctiveness of particular landscapes in the Borough are conserved.

This study identifies six character areas and twenty landscape and townscape character types within the Borough. The character areas which divide the Borough are defined in relation to the 'natural landscape' using knowledge of the Borough's geology, hydrology, ecology and topography and the 'socio-economic' landscape which is based upon documentary and archaeological research and historic map analysis. It examines the changing land use and demographics over the centuries. This traces the pre-industrial landscape characterised by agriculture to the post-industrial landscape of the 1950s in which three-quarters of the Borough's industrial activity and mineral extraction had been abandoned. Settlement patterns have changed in correlation with land use and two-thirds of the Borough is now urban. The evolving townscape of the Borough is visually demonstrated by the succession of character maps dating from 1703 to 1885 which have been produced as part of this exercise. Character types, which are divided into urban and rural areas, include the principal settlements of medieval origin with buildings dating from the fifteenth-century, and feature typical landmarks such as a market place and civic buildings. The next step of the project is to interpret a map from the 1950s.

The Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study underpins historic environment and development control policies and is being used by built environment professionals to ensure local character and historic integrity are consolidated or enhanced in planning decisions. It has been published as supplementary planning guidance.

For further details contact the Historic Environment Team at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council on 01384 814190.

Birmingham Canal Navigations (BCN) Heritage Recording Project

Construction of the BCN began in 1769. Until the construction and expansion of the railway network the BCN was the main industrial transport network through the heart of the West Midlands and is now an important feature of the historic landscape. The Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting British Waterways with a £68,700 grant to comprehensively record each heritage feature along the BCN's 109 mile length. It is not only the listed structures and conservation areas which are being identified and recorded, but all features including those currently without statutory protection and yet significant in the history of the canal. Oral histories of those who worked on the canals are also being edited into a CD-Rom to ensure that memories and experiences of the historic waterways are not lost. 25 local schools and five community groups are involved in this recording project and the project will create five heritage canalside trails, interpretation panels and rubbings booklets. The project, which will be completed in July 2004, aims to reach new audiences through education and to promote a continued interest in the future of the waterways.

For further details contact Anne Jeffery, British Waterways Heritage Recording Officer on 0121 506 1300.

Assessing the Condition of the Historic Environment in the West Midlands

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We know how many listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields, conservation areas, historic churches and historic farm buildings we have in the region. What we don't know is exactly what condition they are in, how we assess their change and what makes them vulnerable or at risk. Extensive research and analysis is crucial, as are the additional resources that will make this possible.

At present the main established indicators we have are for Grade I and II* listed buildings and built structures that are scheduled ancient monuments. Since 1998 a national *Buildings at Risk Register (BAR)* has been produced by English Heritage to focus attention on the neglected and decaying parts of our most significant built heritage. The buildings are determined to be at risk by combining characteristics of occupancy and management as well as structural condition. The register does not include Grade II listed buildings or structures. Seventeen local authorities of the region's 34 maintain their own local BAR registers which often include these. The picture, however, is fragmented across the region.

In the West Midlands in 2003 there were 183 buildings at risk on the English Heritage register. The region has the second highest number of buildings at risk in England and the highest number of buildings in the priority categories A (65) and B (21) (most at risk). Sixteen buildings were removed from the 2002 register, 16 were added to the 2003 register.

The region's conservation deficit for grant-aid to remove all buildings from the register has been estimated at £62.7 million, with a £41.5 million and £20.2 million urban/rural split. English Heritage was able to give grants to 13 buildings on the register during 2002/03 to the value of £582,709. This equates to 9% of the estimated total required. Some 91% of local planning authorities in the West Midlands have at least one building at risk on the English Heritage register within their area, 43% have more than five. Nationally, local and central government own 17.3% of buildings on the register. 82.7% are in private ownership. The opportunities to receive grant-aid for this majority are limited. Evidence suggests that a building is put at risk by a combination of social and economic factors and trends.

In 2003 a Scheduled Monuments at Risk Survey was piloted in the East Midlands region. A national survey will be published by the end of 2005. This will be the

equivalent of the buildings at risk register for below ground archaeology. It will enable us to monitor change and make informed decisions about the protection of monuments.

There are 76,294 entries on Historic Environment Records held by local authorities. ■ However, there is no comprehensive measure of their condition.

Development work has been carried out since the *State of the Historic Environment Report (SHER) 2002* on a gardens at risk survey. A methodology to measure the vulnerability of historic parks and gardens will be established following a pilot survey in the Yorkshire region in 2003.

There is no information available about the condition of registered battlefields in the region.

Conservation areas are designated places of historic or architectural significance. Development pressure means they are continuously evolving. conservation area appraisals are a way for local authorities to manage character, but they do not measure what actually happens. In the West Midlands 192 Appraisals have been completed. There are 734 conservation areas in the region.

Places of worship are a significant part of our historic built landscape. However, the cost of essential repairs and maintenance is often beyond the financial means of small communities. A mandatory quinquennial inspection of Anglican churches provides each parish and diocese with the information they need to assess the condition of their buildings. At present no systematic study has been carried out to inform regional and national policy makers of the structural condition of all our historic churches.

Historic farm buildings also make a significant contribution to the rural landscape. Research by English Heritage and the Countryside Agency shows that there are 7,911 agricultural listed buildings in the West Midlands, 10% of which are Grade I and II*. There are nine farm buildings on the BAR register, but there is insufficient information on the condition of the region's other historic farm buildings. The report outlines a national photographic survey which matched 403 pairs of photographs of the same listed farmstead 15 years apart. It provides a methodology to measure the change affecting the historic farm building stock. This sample represents 0.6% of England's listed agricultural buildings.

■ This figure does not include Coventry Metropolitan Borough, as they are currently re-surveying. Nor does it include those sites and monuments in The Peak District National Park area belonging to the West Midlands. The figures are not a true reflection of the number of sites and monuments in the region; some records are still to be computerised and there is also a large backlog of material to be added to some county records. Also, the total figure will be less because some records (linear features) may span two or more districts in some instances or are multiple-site types. In this case they will be counted twice.

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Ways in which we can Manage Change to the Historic Environment in the West Midlands

■ A SWOT analysis of the historic environment in the West Midlands was carried out in March 2003. 66% of conservation officers in the West Midlands responded. This unpublished survey, conducted on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum, is available to view at www.historicenvironmentforum-west.mids.org



Speedwell Castle, Brewood Conservation Area

Brewood Conservation Area

Brewood is a small village in South Staffordshire about ten miles north west of Wolverhampton. The parish contains 166 listed buildings, many within Brewood itself, and they form a fine and important historic core to this attractive village centre. The conservation area was designated in November 1969 – one of the earliest designations – and since then its importance has been recognised in many ways.

In the early 1990s, the Brewood Town Scheme was a very successful initiative which resulted in numerous buildings being repaired to high standards with grant aid from English Heritage and the district and county councils. At the same time, phased environmental improvements programmes resulted in a series of highways and landscape schemes to 'preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest' of the conservation area.

One of the most important elements of successful conservation is the careful control of development – ensuring that new buildings make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Extensive, detailed negotiations with landowners and developers have resulted in high standards of design and several buildings in the village have been successful in South Staffordshire Council's Conservation and Design Awards.

Recognition of Brewood's special qualities is shared by the most important stakeholders – the residents of the village. An active community with numerous local groups, Brewood has taken a proactive role on many issues of common interest. Leaflets and guide books are produced for visitors, many of whom arrive on the Shropshire Union Canal which runs through the village.

Of particular significance is the recently published 'Brewood Village Design Statement' which is intended to be formally adopted as supplementary planning guidance by South Staffordshire Council. This is very much a local guide, produced by the village to encourage and stimulate the design process.

This reflects a concerted approach to conservation in Brewood which has consistently paid dividends. Change has been embraced and welcomed and the application of careful control of new buildings has ensured that the character of the area has been preserved and enhanced.

The historic environment is a finite resource which is constantly evolving and needs to be conserved and enhanced for economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits today and in the future. Managing its change requires resources and inevitably has costs, but the benefits of a high quality historic environment in the region will outweigh these.

We can manage change to the historic environment in a variety of ways:

- through evaluating its condition and examining and understanding the causes of change
- through statutory processes related to the designation, planning and development control and through advice and guidance
- through equipping our region's workforce with the adequate skills to conserve, repair and maintain our heritage assets
- through enhancing the historic environment with good design
- through grant-aid and financial incentives
- through raising awareness about how we can manage change

MANAGING CHANGE TO THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT WITH STATUTORY PROCESSES, CONSERVATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

By the time the next Heritage Counts is published in 2004, changes to planning processes, enforcement and the way we manage change to the historic environment will have been proposed.

Currently there are statutory processes in place to conserve local character within conservation areas, a recent survey ■ of West Midlands conservation officers suggested that enforcement of the regulations is difficult because the procedure can be time consuming and it is often not a priority for local authorities. Article 4 Directions offer some additional control in conservation areas but the perceived costs in terms of staff resources often deter local authorities from implementing them. There are 84 Article 4 Directions in force in the West Midlands.

Thirteen of the 34 local authorities in the region have their own lists of locally important historic buildings and seek to protect them through normal development control procedures. Local lists play a valuable role in maintaining local distinctiveness and involve the community in decision-making about their heritage. Local lists have a degree of statutory recognition and can be valuable aids both to the understanding and the protection of the real historic environment resource of a place.

INCREASING THE TRADITIONAL BUILDING, HERITAGE CRAFT AND CONSERVATION SKILLS BASE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The decline of traditional building skills is one of a number of threats to the future of the historic environment, particularly relevant in 2003. Amongst these diminishing skills are the use of lime mortars and plasters, thatching, leadworking, and stonemasonry. Skills such as walling, hedging, ditch maintenance and habitat management affect both the historic and the natural heritage. A shortage of architects (with conservation accreditation) and the underfunded pressures facing over-worked conservation officers mean those skill sectors are also vulnerable.

It will not be possible to maintain the high standard of craftsmanship essential for the retention of the local and historic distinctiveness of the West Midlands built and natural heritage if we do not reverse the trend of a declining skills base within the region.

72% of specialist respondents to a British Waterways survey ² carried out in the West Midlands stated they were dissatisfied with the general quality of conservation work, and only 9% said there were sufficient numbers of specialist crafts people working in their area. Practical building conservation training is available: the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) have been running week long repair courses since 1951. These are held mainly in the London area. SPAB works in partnership with other construction based training companies. Yet factors such as cost, location and the need to take time off work can make these courses inaccessible to smaller building companies within the region.

- 2,401 listed building consents were granted in the West Midlands in 2001/02. English Heritage was notified of 20% of these (484), including 37 referrals from the Secretary of State
- 0.3% of all planning decisions made in the region during 2002/03 were to grant conservation area consents
- 11% of the region's conservation areas are covered in part by an Article 4 Direction
- 38% of the region's local authorities have a local list
- 56% of the region's local authorities have a full or partial buildings at risk register
- 27% of conservation areas have had a conservation area appraisal completed since 1997
- There are approximately 25 local authority archaeologists working in the West Midlands

² British Waterways. Pilot Research Study Conservation Skills Training – West Midlands 2000. The survey was circulated to the IHBC membership of the region and Chartered Surveyors, conservation contractors, architects accredited in building conservation and general builders advertising an interest in historic building refurbishment in the West Midlands. 32% response rate.

INCREASING FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Grant aid to protect and conserve the fabric of the historic built environment is currently available in the following forms:

Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England

This scheme is run by English Heritage in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The HLF made additional funding available in 2002/03.

Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme

The growing recognition that heritage-led regeneration is a sustainable approach that yields great economic and social benefits is reflected in the gradual increase in grant aid available over the last 3 years. This increase is still not proportionate of need, however. Local authorities in partnership with English Heritage administer these grants.



Wattle and Daub training wall



Rural Carpentry Skills Training



Marston's Mill

British Waterways Heritage Skills Centre, Hatton Yard

The British Waterways Heritage Skills Centre is located on the Grand Union Canal near Warwick. Its fully equipped workshops opened in March 2001 to raise the standard of conservation skills in British Waterways' own workforce. It has become a model training facility which offers short courses on the repair, maintenance and management of the waterways and their associated historic features. The skills for which back-to-basic training is offered are transferable across the historic built environment. In the two years since it opened 114 courses including basic masonry repairs, brick repairs and repointing, cleaning and surface treatments, historic metalwork, rural carpentry, lime mortars and painting historic structures have been run. 123 trainees from British Waterways have attended. 138 employees also attended less practical courses which cover the principles of heritage conservation, archaeology, legislation, engineering and supervising conservation projects. Courses leading to a customised City & Guilds certificate in Heritage Skills are also offered to British Waterways supervisors and engineers. 101 staff are currently working through five out of the eight modules this two year course offers. 187 external clients have also attended basic conservation skills training or tailor-made courses up to March 2003. Courses have been run for the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), several colleges and universities, local authorities, building contractors and homeowners. The five qualified conservation skills trainers also deliver courses outside Hatton.

British Waterways works in conjunction with Warwickshire LEA and local schools for a fortnight over the summer. Students can attend heritage-orientated courses which raise awareness about conservation. The students participate in on-site activities like mixing mortar. Training for volunteers has included courses run for the Waterway Recovery Group, for people on New Deal schemes and for young offenders. These groups have attended basic repointing and masonry and brick repairs courses using conservation-friendly methods and materials. The aim is to improve their basic skills.

Marston's Mill, Ludlow

This robust industrial building which was used to store flour was built in 1891. Today it provides low cost rented accommodation for fifteen 16-25 year olds as part of the Foyer project supported by South Shropshire Housing Association. This unlisted building has been converted into flats, a training centre for the residents and the local community, and additional space is rented out to community agencies. This conversion is the result of good conservation practice and high quality new design which does not compromise the historic fabric of the existing building or the aesthetics of the evolving townscape. Locally quarried clay was used to produce the new brickwork which is indistinguishable from the original, exterior paint was removed using the JOS system and interior industrial supporting features have been retained. Attention to detail was so fine in the planning stages that four types of window were rejected before the most suitable was found. The combination of appropriate materials, good quality design and contractors who understood what was being achieved in terms of conservation makes Marston's a good example of how the modern conversion and sustainable reuse of an historic building can be achieved without the loss of local historical characteristics.

English Heritage Grants for the Repair and Conservation of Historic Buildings, Monuments, Parks and Gardens

The amount available to secular buildings, monuments and landscapes from English Heritage's grants scheme has reduced over the last 3 years even though there is a significant conservation deficit in the West Midlands. 60% of registered parks and gardens are privately owned and these are not eligible for additional HLF funding.

£4,448,826 was administered through the three schemes above in the West Midlands between 2000-03.

THE COST OF MANAGING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

1

PUBLICLY OWNED HISTORIC PROPERTIES

The National Trust's Hanbury Hall, Worcestershire ¹

	£
INCOME IN 2002/03	£304,000
MAINTENANCE EXPENDITURE	£400,000
DEFICIT IN 2002/2003	-£96,000
PLUS BACKLOG OF URGENT REPAIRS	£800,000

English Heritage's Shropshire Abbeys: Wenlock, Haughmond and Buildwas ²

	VISITORS	£
VISITORS IN 2002/03	27,400	
INCOME		£64,700
EXPENDITURE		£102,300
DEFICIT ON VISITOR ACTIVITIES		-£37,600
MAINTENANCE ETC...		£41,600
OVERALL DEFICIT IN 2002/03		-£79,200

¹ Figures supplied by the National Trust, West Midlands.

² Figures supplied by English Heritage, West Midlands.

2

PLACES OF WORSHIP



St Michael's Church, Onibury



Falling ceiling plaster

St Michael's Church, Onibury, Shropshire. Population 232.

St Michael's church in Onibury is a distinctive fourteenth century grade II* church built with local sandstone. Typical of many churches in the region St Michael's has a dwindling congregation, shares its capacity to fund raise with the local school and village hall and has a backlog of repairs (£35,000 of essential repairs were identified in 1999), the cost of which are beyond the means of the parish. Although the church has not fallen into a state of disrepair yet, the fabric of the building is weathering and its historic quality is vulnerable.

3

PRIVATELY OWNED HISTORIC HOUSES

The estimated average cost of maintaining a small to medium sized historic house is £40,000 per year. Average capital repair costs over a five year period are approximately £215,000

Private owners are not eligible for grant assistance on routine repairs. Grant aid only accounts for 10% of major reconstruction

26% of capital repairs are funded by the sale of contents or property

The average backlog of repairs to a small-medium privately owned historic house is estimated at £162,000

Owners spend 31% of their taxed income (not derived from the house or the Estate) on routine maintenance

On average only 4% of revenue created by visitors to a house which trades will go towards its upkeep

4 THE REGION'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT BY LOCAL AUTHORITY

LOCAL AUTHORITY	NUMBER OF ENTRIES ON THE LISTED B'DINGS REGISTER (GRADES III* AND II)	NUMBER OF LISTED BUILDING CONSENT DECISIONS 2002/03 (% GRANTED)	NUMBER OF REGISTERED PARKS & GARDENS (ALL GRADES)	NUMBER OF SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS	NUMBER OF CONSERVATION AREAS	NUMBER OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS	NUMBER OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OR CONSERVATION AREA COMMITTEES	NUMBER OF ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS	LOCAL LIST?	LOCAL BUILDINGS AT RISK REGISTER?	BUILDINGS ON EH BAR REGISTER	CONSERVATION OFFICERS	ARCHAEOLOGY STAFF
HEREFORDSHIRE													
HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL	5,866	338 (90%)	19	262	63	1	1	2	Y	PARTIAL	33	6	4
SHROPSHIRE													
BRIDGNORTH	1,130	97 (91%)	8	39	34	12	1	1	N	Y	6	2	0
NORTH SHROPSHIRE	1,203	64 (95%)	3	49	11	5	0	1	N	Y	6	1	0
OSWESTRY	534	23 (83%)	2	48	4	2	0	1	N	N	3	1	0
SHREWSBURY & ATCHAM	1,877	152 (96%)	6	87	17	5	0	6	N	Y	15	3	0
SOUTH SHROPSHIRE	2,084	130 (98%)	8	201	44	16	6	0	N	Y	8	1	0
TELFORD & WREKIN	794	43 (84%)	3	28	7	3	0	1	Y	Y	2	3	0
COUNTY TOTAL	7,622	509	30	452	117	43	7	10	1	5	40	11	0
STAFFORDSHIRE													
CANNOCK CHASE	61	5 (100%)	0	4	7	2	0	0	N	N	0	1	0
EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	877	69 (95.5%)	1	57	26	0	1	2	N	Y	2	1	0
LICHFIELD	748	62 (87%)	1	15	23	0	0	4	N	N	6	2	0
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME	364	24 (83%)	2	13	17	0	2	0	N	Y	5	1	0
SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	650	44 (86%)	5	23	19	0	0	0	N	N	8	1.5	0
STAFFORD	800	51 (80%)	3	43	29	1	0	2	N	Y	7	1	0
STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS ¹	1,320	35 (94%)	2	115	14	2	1	2	N	Y	8	1	0
STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY	192	16 (100%)	4	5	23	6	0	17	Y	Y	9	4	1
TAMWORTH	138	10 (90%)	0	3	7	0	1	6	Y	N	1	1	0
COUNTY TOTAL	5,150	316	18	278	165	11	5	33	2	5	46	13	1

¹ Includes two buildings in the Peak District National Park

LOCAL AUTHORITY	NUMBER OF ENTRIES ON THE LISTED B'DNGS REGISTER (GRADES III* AND II)	NUMBER OF LISTED BUILDING CONSENT DECISIONS 2002/03 (% GRANTED)	NUMBER OF REGISTERED PARKS & GARDENS (ALL GRADES)	NUMBER OF SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS	NUMBER OF CONSERVATION AREAS	NUMBER OF CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS	NUMBER OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS OR CONSERVATION AREA COMMITTEES	NUMBER OF ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS	LOCAL LIST?	LOCAL BUILDINGS AT RISK REGISTER?	BUILDINGS ON EH BAR REGISTER	CONSERVATION OFFICERS	ARCHAEOLOGY STAFF
WARWICKSHIRE													
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE	585	42 (93%)	3	28	10	0	0	3	N	N	9	1 SHARE	0
NUNEATON & BEDWORTH	92	4 (75%)	2	2	5	5	0	3	Y	N	3	3	0
RUGBY	492	50 (98%)	5	26	20	0	0	0	Y	Y	1	1	0
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON	3,324	284 (90%)	11	84	75	31	1	0	N	N	2	2	0
WARWICK	1,468	181 (87%)	11	40	19	16	1	5	N	N	3	2	0
COUNTY TOTAL	5,961	561	32	180	129	52	2	11	2	1	18	7	0
WEST MIDLANDS													
BIRMINGHAM CITY	1,356	142 (85%)	14	13	25	4	1	6	Y	Y	13	4	1
COVENTRY CITY	271	17 (100%)	2	10	13	0	0	1	Y	Y	7	1	0
DUDLEY	250	17 (94%)	3	9	20	6	0	3	N	N	4	1	0
SANDWELL	185	22 (91%)	2	5	6	2	0	1	N	N	2	1	0
SOLIHULL	360	38 (81.5%)	1	15	20	6	1	5	Y	N	0	1	0
WALSALL	139	22 (95%)	3	5	18	4	1	2	Y	Y	1	1	0
WOLVERHAMPTON CITY	373	31 (77%)	2	4	27	10	0	7	Y	N	3	4	1
COUNTY TOTAL	2,934	289	27	61	129	32	3	25	5	3	30	13	2
WORCESTERSHIRE													
BROMSGROVE	463	48 (85%)	2	13	10	0	0	0	N	N	2	2	0
MALVERN HILLS	1,868	146 (90%)	9.5	50	21	7	0	1	N	Y	3	2	0
REDDITCH	160	17 (94%)	0	8	2	0	0	0	N	N	0	1 SHARE	0
WORCESTER CITY	702	77 (93.5%)	0	21	16	1	2	2	Y	Y	2	3	1
WYCHAVON	2,430	186 (89%)	6.5	73	65	4	0	0	Y	N	5	1	0
WYRE FOREST	687	67 (88%)	1	9	16	5	0	0	N	Y	4	1	0
COUNTY TOTAL	6,310	541	19	174	130	17	2	3	2	3	16	10	1
REGIONAL TOTALS	33,843	2,554	145	1,407	733	156	20	84	13 YES	17 YES	183	60.5	8

In addition the four regional county councils have a complement of conservation staff
 Worcestershire (3), Warwickshire (7), Shropshire (1) and Staffordshire (4) each have their own archaeological service. Shropshire County Council also employs a conservation officer.
 The Peak District National Park Authority includes 19 conservation areas (5 of which have Conservation Area Appraisals). The PDNPA employs 2 conservation officers.

Heritage Counts 2003 sets out the importance of the historic environment of the West Midlands in social and environmental terms and has underlined its key role in the region's economy. We know that the historic environment contributes to regeneration, to tourism and to our quality of life in a number of ways. We also know that the historic environment is not static. It evolves as people and cultures evolve. *Heritage Counts* is the framework within which we try to understand that evolution.

This 2003 report is not an end in itself but one stage in a process. It is a snapshot which, as *Heritage Counts* develops over the next few years, will build up into a picture of change and development. By understanding this process better through *Heritage Counts*, change in the historic environment can be more effectively managed. The resources represented by the region's past can be better conserved so as to contribute to a high quality environment and quality of life for the West Midlands in the coming years.

The West Midlands Historic Environment Forum welcomes your views:
www.historicenvironmentforum_westmidlands.org