

HERITAGE COUNTS 2008

WEST MIDLANDS

1 JW EVANS AND SONS IN THE ▲ JEWELLERY QUARTER, BIRMINGHAM.

The cover image shows one of the many rooms of JW Evans and Sons in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham. In March 2008, this family silverware and plate manufactory at the heart of the Quarter, which is itself an area of international importance, was bought by English Heritage to keep the building and its irreplaceable contents intact. Run by the same family since the 1880s, the premises are complete with equipment, tools, dies, pattern books, wage books, inventories, and accounts. Purchase of the site was just the first step in a long

and difficult process involving major repair, detailed research, cataloguing and sympathetic adaptation to enable public access and enjoyment. Ultimately, this unique historic place will form part of a heritage trail in the Jewellery Quarter Museum, Pen Museum, the historic cemeteries at Key Hill and Warstone Lane and the Newman Brothers Coffin Works, plans for which are currently being prepared by the Birmingham Conservation Trust to develop the site as a visitor attraction supported by office use.



Heritage Counts 2008 is the seventh annual survey of the state of England's historic environment. This report is one of nine separate regional reports and has been prepared by English Heritage on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum. It should be read in conjunction with the national *Heritage Counts 2008* report, available at www.heritagecounts.org.uk where a full set of statistics relating to the historic environment in the West Midlands region can also be found.



REGIONAL INDICATORS

UNDERSTANDING THE ASSETS

▼ See figure below

- The West Midlands covers an area of just under 13,000 sq km and has a population of 5.4m (based on figures in mid 2006) equating to about 10% of the population and area of England.
- In 2002, only 29% of the West Midlands had been mapped through landscape characterisation projects. In 2008, this figure is 85%. Overall, 76% of England has been mapped.
- There are 13 Historic Environment Records (HERs) managed by local authorities in the region with 23% – Shropshire, Warwickshire and Herefordshire – accessible on-line, compared with about 25% nationally. English Heritage has a target for 50% of HERs to be online by 2010.

HERITAGE AT RISK

► Case 2

- English Heritage published its first national *Register of Buildings at Risk* (BAR) in 1998, with the 1999 Register establishing a baseline against which

trends could be measured. In July 2008, English Heritage published its first *Heritage at Risk* (HAR) Register bringing together the Grade I and II* listed building entries, scheduled monuments, parks and gardens and battlefields at risk.

- The number of Grade I and II* buildings and structures deemed by English Heritage to be at risk in the West Midlands has seen a net decrease for the second year running falling by a further seven to 172 entries. Staffordshire has seen a steady decline in its number and now has 13 fewer entries than it did in 2002. On the other hand, Birmingham has seen an overall increase of nine entries.
- In the West Midlands, 50% of the assets included since the Register's inception have been removed as their futures have been secured.
- Worcester with Powick Bridge Battlefield is at high risk as a consequence of the development pressures it is facing.
- 29% of the region's scheduled monuments are at high risk and 34% are considered to be at medium risk. This is slightly higher than the national average, with 23% at high and 31% at medium risk.

- The West Midlands has the highest proportion of registered parks and gardens at risk; 13% have been estimated to be at high risk and 30% at medium risk, compared with 7% and 26% nationally. The North East and London regions have the lowest proportions identified in both categories.
- Although not included in the *Heritage at Risk* survey, World Heritage Sites are not free from threats. The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site is experiencing major land instability problems. Telford and Wrekin Council have estimated that in excess of £80m will be required to address the problem and protect the long term future of the site.

MANAGING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- In 2007/08, decisions were made on 49,961 planning applications in the West Midlands region compared with 50,709 in the previous year. Since reaching a peak in 2004/05, there has been a gradual decline in the number of planning applications. This is replicated in all regions.
- There were 2,630 Listed Building Consent (LBC) applications in 2007/08 in the region, a modest fall on last year. The West Midlands typically deals with 8% of the national total of LBC decisions.

 34,151
 1,425
 148
 6
 1



ASSET	REGIONAL TOTALS		CHANGE ON 2002	AVERAGE % CHANGE FOR ENGLAND ON 2002	ENGLAND TOTAL 2008	PROPORTION OF ENGLAND TOTAL
	2002	2008				
LISTED BUILDINGS	33,881	34,151	+270 (+0.8%)	+0.7%	373,315	9.2%
SCHEDULED MONUMENTS	1,390	1,425	+35 (+2.5%)	2.3%	19,720	7.2%
REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS	143	148	+5 (+3.5%)	+7%	1,595	9.3%
REGISTERED BATTLEFIELDS	6	6	0%	0%	43	14%
WORLD HERITAGE SITES	1	1	0%	21%	17	5.9%

2 ASTLEY CASTLE, WARWICKSHIRE ▶ The Castle, originally a fortified manor house within a moated site, dates from the Thirteenth Century. Its significance is reflected in the Grade II* listed status of the standing structure and the scheduled status of the moated site. The building was last used as a hotel until devastated by a fire in 1978. Being roofless since then it has fallen into a ruinous state and has been one of the most seriously at risk buildings in the West Midlands over the last 30 years.

A strategy for its rescue, however, is now in place. The Landmark Trust have acquired a long lease on the building and have put forward a scheme which involves consolidation of the remaining structure and the construction of a modern 'landmark' property within the restored shell. An architectural competition was held to come up with a suitable design, and the winning scheme by Witherford Watson Mann Architects has received widespread support. The remaining main walls of the castle will be tied together to create a

holiday let for eight people. Most of the existing profile of the castle will remain intact, and the new structure within it will be barely visible. Clever use is made of glass to give impressive views out to the surrounding parkland. This scheme has secured support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. With this backing, the initial stabilisation and repair work is expected to commence in autumn 2008, the next major step in providing this important site with a sustainable future.

- The West Midlands has also seen a small drop in the number of Conservation Area Consent decisions since 2006/07, falling from 237 to 211 in 2007/08 compared with a rise of 5.7% nationally.
- There was little change in the number of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) decisions made in the West Midlands. Numbers rose from 99 in 2006/07 to 102 in 2007/08, compared with a drop of 4.2% nationally. This figure has remained around the hundred mark since 2001, accounting for approximately 10% of the national total.
- There were 87 planning applications in the West Midlands affecting Registered Parks and Gardens, which were referred to the Garden History Society (GHS). The number, which represents an increase of 16% on 2006/07, includes 42 applications relating to Grade I and II* landscapes.

FUNDING, CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

- In the financial year 2007/08, English Heritage offered a total of almost £5m across the six main grant schemes administered in the West Midlands region, including the Heritage Lottery Fund/English Heritage jointly-funded Repair Grants for Places of Worship. This compares to a total offer through the same schemes of £5.3m in the previous year. Although overall the amount of money available in the region continues to decline, some schemes saw a slight upturn; over £1m was offered through the Historic Buildings, Monuments and Designed Landscapes scheme, as opposed to £900k last year, including major grants of £200k to Soho Foundry, Smethwick, and £140k for Weoley Castle, Birmingham. Over £500k was offered to Cathedrals in the year 2007/08, twice as much as last year.
- In addition to the offers made from the regional budget, over £550k has been distributed through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF) and the Historic Environment Enabling Programme (HEEP) to a wide range of West Midlands' projects, including Historic Landscape Characterisation projects in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, the Black Country and for the Birmingham and Sandwell Pathfinder.
- From 1995 to 2008, the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded just under £301m in grant aid to the West Midlands through 2,981 individual awards. This represents 8.8% of the total awards within England. As of 2007/08, there has been a high success rate for applications with over 70% of applications from the region receiving awards. This is second only to the 74% success rate seen in the North East.
- The 2008 *Survey of Building Contractors' Views on Traditional Building Craft Skills and Training Needs in the West Midlands* showed a sharp decline in skills shortages since 2004/05. Although a skills gap is still evident, with one firm in ten forced to turn down work on pre-1919 buildings because of skills gaps in its workforce, only 5% of the contractors questioned reported long-term outstanding vacancies in 2007/08 compared with 29% in 2004/05. Furthermore, only 15% of contractors reported recruiting craftspeople as 'difficult', which is a marked improvement compared to 60% rating this as 'very difficult' in the 2005 report.
- Of the 38 authorities in the West Midlands, 24 (63%) have an Historic Environment Champion. This proportion is in line with most other regions.

PARTICIPATION

▶ Case 3

- The *Taking Part* survey, which measures engagement with the historic environment in its widest sense, showed that 67.1% of those living in the West Midlands had visited an historic site in the last 12 months, compared with a national average of 69.3% (2006/07).
- The analysis also showed that over the last two survey periods, 2005/06 to 2006/07, 91.2% of those living in the West Midlands agreed that it was important to save historic features and 69.5% were interested in the history of the place they lived.
- The Historic Houses Association (HHA) represents 124 historic houses in the West Midlands region, with half of these regularly open to the public. They welcomed 506,000 visitors in 2007/08, accounting for 4% of the total 12.7m who visit HHA properties. Houses in the South East had the highest number through their doors receiving over 4.1m visitors.
- A survey carried out on behalf of the HHA in 2007 estimated that there had been 4,700 educational visits to their West Midlands' houses, equating to 77 educational visitors per open property.
- In 2008 in the West Midlands, 1,018 people were employed either in full-time, part-time or seasonal capacity through the HHA. This accounts for 8.5% of the total number working across England in HHA properties.
- National Trust membership for the region has seen a 5.9% increase since 2006/07 from 319,000 to 338,000 in 2007/08, accounting for 9.8% of total membership for the English regions.



- In 2007/08, National Trust educational visitors in the West Midlands reached over 43,000, almost 10% of the national total. This is over 1,000 more than 2006/07 and continues the steady increase since 2002/03 when 30,000 visits were recorded. The West Midlands also saw the highest year-on-year percentage increase in National Trust visitor numbers, from just over 1m in 2006/07 to 1.15m in 2007/08, an increase of 14%.
- The number of people volunteering for the National Trust at sites in the West Midlands has increased from 1,990, recorded in 2002, to over 3,300 volunteers in 2008.
- Since 2001, there has been a steady decline in educational visits to English Heritage sites in the West Midlands. Visitor numbers have fallen from 37,700 in 2001/02 to just over 30,000 in 2007/08 representing a drop of 20% regionally as opposed to a small fall nationally of 2%. Educational visits in the West Midlands account for approximately 7.5% of the national figure.
- The West Midlands, with approximately 57,000 English Heritage members, accounts for 8.6% of the total English Heritage membership of 665,000.
- English Heritage received 285,000 visitors to its West Midlands staffed properties in 2007/08, representing 5.4% of English Heritage national visitors. Kenilworth Castle accounted for a large proportion with just under 100,000 visitors.

IN THE REGION

► Case 4

Heritage Protection Review

Heritage Protection Reform continues apace. On 2 April 2008, the government published the draft Heritage Protection Bill which is undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill aims to bring greater accountability, effectiveness and efficiency to procedures for the identification and subsequent management of historic sites.

Heritage Partnership Agreements (HPA)

Two pilot HPA, for Wroxeter Roman Town, Shropshire, and Sutton Park, Birmingham, are currently being negotiated.

Wroxeter Roman Town was among the largest cities in Roman Britain. Remarkably, it survives with little later development and is, understandably, a scheduled monument, but also contains listed buildings and historic farm buildings. The majority of the monument was taken into guardianship and is now managed by English Heritage with the remainder of the site in multiple ownership including the National Trust. The land uses include farmland, public highways, a vineyard, gardens and a churchyard. Scoping work will inform the preparation of a conservation management plan which will then form the basis for an HPA to manage the complex issues presented by the site.

Sutton Park provides a similar challenge: it is the largest park in Birmingham, registered Grade II on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens with much of the area scheduled and containing a listed building. A large part of the park is a National Nature Reserve and much of the land is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The HPA will ensure heritage issues are dovetailed into the development of the new Management Plan being developed for the park by Birmingham City Council.

Farmstead Characterisation

Working with local authority partners, significant progress has been made on taking forward a region-wide mapping programme of historic farmsteads across the West Midlands. The aim of the project is to develop a thorough understanding of farmstead character, survival and current use within their landscape and settlement. This will help provide a better understanding of how historic farmsteads contribute to local distinctiveness and landscape character. It will also provide the evidence base to inform the development of policy and guidance on the sustainable management of historic farmsteads at a regional and local level.

Historic Environment Strategy

In Spring 2008 the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum appointed Atkins Consultants to develop a Historic Environment Strategy for the West Midlands. The input of a wide range of partners via workshops, interviews and written comments has been invaluable to the development of the Strategy and its regional ownership. Due to be launched early in 2009, the Strategy will offer a shared vision for the region's historic environment and set out an action plan for the sector to 'put the historic environment to work' for the benefit of the environment, economy and communities in the West Midlands.

Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES), *Connecting to Success*, was launched at the end of 2007 by Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency. The heritage sector welcomes the commitment in the overarching vision to valuing the region's natural, historic and cultural assets, and the emphasis the Strategy gives to the importance of a high quality environment to the regional economy. **Continues on back page ►**



3 WITLEY COURT NATURAL HERITAGE PROJECT ◀

Thirty-seven young people from Wyre Forest LAFS (Laugh, Achieve, Socialise, Fun) and Worcester-based Lifelinks took part in a natural heritage project at Witley Court and Gardens during 2007. Working together, alongside staff and local experts, the young people were successful in creating a stunning new sculpture and wildlife garden that can now be enjoyed by all visitors to Witley Court.

The project began with the young people, who have learning difficulties, taking part in surveying, monitoring, photographing, documenting and learning about the natural heritage of Witley Court. The participants used this inspiration to design and make a 22 metre willow serpent, which gives the illusion of weaving through Witley Court's Wilderness Garden.

By taking part in the project the young people developed knowledge, skills and attitudes to equip them for work and adult life. The project also demonstrated

the abilities of the young people, showing what they can offer rather than just what they need, and some of the participants have had job opportunities since the project has ended.

The project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council's Adult Learning Disabilities Service and Countryside Service. It has won a Positive Practice award from the Care Services Improvement Partnership for the 'Innovative Partnerships' that it created.

4 KNOTTON VILLAGE, NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE ▶

English Heritage's position statement in *Low Demand Housing and the Historic Environment* (2005) affirmed that it would favour repair and refurbishment as an alternative to new build in areas where the historic housing is distinctive, retains its coherence and is valued by the community. This was the starting point for a study undertaken on the Nineteenth Century terraces of Knutton Village, Staffordshire, to identify a typology of the housing in the area.

The Knutton study was initiated at the request of Renew, the Housing Market Pathfinder agency for North Staffordshire, and funded by English Heritage. The information collated on the character of the area provided the basis for a programme of repair and reinstatement, funded by Renew in partnership with Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and other stakeholders.

The houses were built for workers at a nearby brickworks and were characterised by liberal use of decorative brick of two foliate patterns.

Working closely with the residents and home owners within the area, and with modest financial investment, the area was enhanced through the appropriate restoration of the historic architectural character of the terraced street frontages. Even though the level of replacement of original details was high, this helped to retain a high degree of coherence. As a consequence, the identity of the area has been enhanced, demonstrating how townscape integrity can be restored and local distinctiveness built into the renewal process.



A supporting Delivery Plan was published earlier this year with the Historic Environment Forum named as a contributing organisation to the delivery of certain identified actions. This offers a valuable platform for the heritage sector to demonstrate further how the historic environment can support urban and rural regeneration and sustainable economic growth.

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

Further work on looking at options which could deliver higher housing numbers in the region has delayed the timetable for the Phase Two Review. Over the coming months and into next year the heritage sector will continue to champion the role of the historic environment in creating sustainable communities. Notwithstanding the delay in the Phase Two timetable, technical work has commenced on the review of the

Quality of Environment Policies, the final phase of the review. Working with cultural and environmental partners, the priority will be to develop a regionally distinct and robust policy basis for the sustainable management of the West Midlands' historic environment. A future challenge for the sector will be taking this work forward as part of the Single Integrated Regional Strategy (SIRS) (combining the RES and RSS and other regional strategies) announced by the Government's Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration.

Traditional Skills

The lack of traditional building craft skills was highlighted in last year's Heritage Counts. Since then a West Midlands Regional Heritage Skills Action Group has been established and, with funding from the Learning and Skills Council, additional region-specific research

was undertaken. This survey of a representative sample of contractors established their views on traditional buildings skills and training needs and will help to target skills and training development in the region. Hard copies of the full and summary reports are available through www.constructionskills.net/research and www.nhtg.org.uk. In January 2009, a major stakeholder seminar will be held to disseminate the results of the survey and promote the regional skills action plan, the Heritage Lottery Fund supported Traditional Building Skills Bursary Scheme and other initiatives.

This document has been produced on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum:

- Advantage West Midlands
- Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
- Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
- British Waterways
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Council for British Archaeology
- Country Land and Business Association
- English Heritage
- Government Office for the West Midlands
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Historic Houses Association
- Institute of Field Archaeologists
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation
- Ironbridge World Heritage Site
- Museums Libraries and Archives West Midlands
- National Trust
- Natural England
- West Midlands Amenity Societies Association
- West Midlands Regional Assembly

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