

Heritage at Risk



Historic England

East of England Summary 2016



Historic England has again reduced the number of historic assets on the Heritage at Risk Register, with **412** assets removed for positive reasons nationally. We have seen similar success locally, achieved by offering repair grants, providing advice in respect of other grant streams and of proposals to bring places back into use. We continue to support local authorities in the use of their statutory powers to secure the repair of threatened buildings. Challenges remain. The percentage of buildings at risk which are capable of beneficial use, for example, has risen to its highest ever – 45.7%. This suggests that more usable buildings are beyond economic repair. Skills shortages may be in part to blame, but causes for the shift remain to be fully explored. This trend reinforces the importance of grant aid and of building the confidence of owners and other partners in order to achieve continued success.

John Neale Acting Planning Director, East of England



In the East of England the statistics reflect the national success with an overall reduction of **22** assets and the largest grant spend of any region, with over £1.9m tackling heritage at risk. This has resulted in improvements in condition, removals

from the Register or the development of projects which will ultimately lead to an efficient and successful repair phase in the future.

The region has seen an overall reduction of **9** scheduled monuments, **12** listed buildings and **4** places of worship. These figures take into account additions to the Register over the previous year, so the true number of assets removed is far higher, with **13** scheduled monuments removed, **15** listed buildings and **21** places of worship. We are on target to achieve our objective of 60 entries removed from the 2015 baseline Register by 2018.

In order to achieve this we are increasing our use of funding for capacity building. This year we funded a Project Officer post at **Coalhouse Fort** to oversee the actions set out in a Historic England funded Conservation Management Plan, and to apply for alternative and additional funding sources for the repair phases. This project is a prime example of successful collaborative

working with a local authority partner. We also work in partnership with local authorities to support and underwrite statutory notices on ‘at risk’ sites using the ‘**Stopping the Rot**’ process.

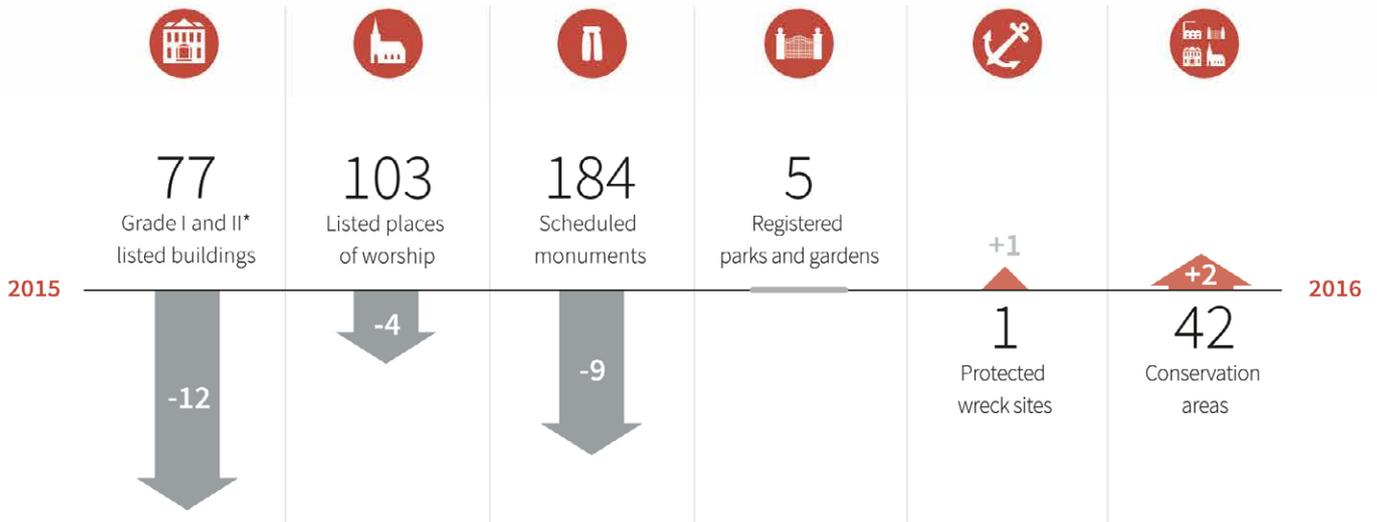
A particular challenge for the year ahead will be **Priory House** in Dunstable. This former priory guesthouse complete with a medieval undercroft, is facing multiple structural issues caused by excess moisture and inappropriate materials used during modern repairs. Work on this site, and others, encompasses new research into the availability, use and effectiveness of **clunch** (a white cretaceous limestone) as a building material.

Our work on archaeological and structural scheduled monuments has once again been successful this year. Particular success has derived from Countryside Stewardship funding in partnership with **Natural England**. Advances in our understanding of arable regimes have allowed the removal of some scheduled monuments from ploughing and arable activity altogether. Successes to be celebrated include repair projects at **Stansted Castle, a substantial Norman ringwork and bailey**, and at Thorney, where a stewardship agreement has seen a **Bronze Age barrow** removed from the plough, ensuring the continued survival of the remaining upstanding 30cm.

Gary Griffin Business Manager

Cover image: Sawston Tannery Drying Shed, grade II*. Built in the mid-19th century, the shed survives as an exceptional example of its type due to its scale and unaltered form. The tannery, still active today, has been on site since at least the 17th century. The arcaded brick ground floor would formerly have housed steeping tanks and the three upper storeys with adjustable louvered ventilators and unencumbered floor space were for skin drying. The shed has long been redundant, but Historic England is seeking a secure future in partnership with the owners and local authority.

Designated assets on the 2016 **East of England Register**



There are **412** assets on the **East of England Register**, **22** fewer than in 2015

Kersey Mill **Ipswich, Suffolk**



Kersey Mill is a grade II* building which was added to the Heritage at Risk Register in 2014, after being in a deteriorating condition for many decades. New owners acquired the building in 2012 and immediately sought for a positive and sustainable solution to the structural issues and overall condition faced by the mill.

John Whitmore and Sons built the original section of the mill in 1810. It was later enlarged in 1868 with the introduction of a steam engine, large bolters (or sieve) and an elevator. This sophisticated array of equipment minimised the need for manual handling and produced fine white flour. The mill has over time been adapted to three main sources and phases of power: water, steam

and then gas. The milling machinery is still virtually complete and capable of sensitive repair and restoration to enable milling once again. The mill also has a fine iron waterwheel and the wheel pit has already been carefully repaired and rebuilt by the current owners.

The building is still substantially original, despite being subject to repairs and renewal over the years. However, a structural survey in summer 2015 discovered that two full-height principal posts, one axial beam and substantial areas of flooring were severely rotted and at risk of collapse. A leaky valley gutter and poor roof covering contributed to the rate of decay. The mill required urgent repair and replacement of these structural elements in order to reinstate structural integrity. A grant of £80,000 towards eligible costs of £101,760 was offered and accepted. The main elements of structural work were completed this summer to a high standard, resulting in a nomination for a Historic England Angel Award. The mill is now open to the public on selected open days.

Coalhouse Fort **Tilbury, Essex**

Coalhouse Fort is a scheduled monument owned by Thurrock Borough Council. Built on the north side of the Thames estuary in 1861-74, it was part of the defences against the potential threat of French invasion. Successive modifications to the fort demonstrate the evolution of defence history and its technologies of ordinance, detection and monitoring from 1861 to 1945 all on one site. These include the installation of gun batteries, observation points, and searchlight and radar installations. A glacis or earth bank was added to the walls facing the river to reduce the prominence and vulnerability of the fort to heavy calibre shell fire.

The various structures on site are suffering increasingly from water ingress and resulting repairs and maintenance have accumulated. The dangerous condition of many areas impedes access and use of the site, while the risk of loss to historic fabric increases.

Now Historic England grant aid will fund a management strategy and emergency repairs. This includes thorough investigation of the causes of deterioration and the



strategies needed to realise the full potential of the site. A Project Officer will be responsible for overseeing immediate repairs, developing funding applications for future repairs to bring areas back into use and strategies to secure a sustainable future for the fort.

50th Anniversary of Conservation Areas

In 2017, Historic England will celebrate the 50th anniversary of conservation areas. These precious historic areas, from urban and industrial to rural and remote, create a strong sense of place and are likely to be what you think of when you think of special local character.

We'll carry out research into people's attitudes towards conservation areas and the challenges they

face in protecting them. We also plan to analyse local authorities' conservation area survey data to better understand what puts conservation areas up and down the country at risk. Finally, at a time when local authority resources are under pressure, we'll ask how local civic groups and organisations can become more involved to help safeguard conservation areas.

For more information contact:

Gary Griffin, Historic England East of England
Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue,
Cambridge, CB2 8BU
Telephone: 01223 582 749
Email: eastofengland@HistoricEngland.org.uk
Twitter: @HE_EoE

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