

HERITAGE COUNTS 2017

Chairman's Message

Heritage Counts 2017 is the sixteenth annual audit of England's historic environment. It reports on major heritage sector developments and trends and presents findings from new research. Heritage Counts is produced on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum, the cross-sector committee of chief executives and senior officers from public and non-government heritage bodies.

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of conservation areas which were introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Along with most of the heritage sector, **Heritage Counts** celebrates this landmark. The research undertaken in 2017 has led to a much deeper understanding of the positive benefits of conservation area designation, but also of the challenges they face today.

The research strongly demonstrates the enthusiasm for conservation areas amongst residents, heritage professionals and the wider public. All these groups are clear that the designation has helped protect the character and appearance of these areas.

The new research shows that residents of conservation areas see their property as integral to the character of the local area as a whole. We now have a better understanding of property prices in England's conservation areas. Prices were higher than in comparable non-conservation areas but this is due to the inherent character of the buildings rather than the designation by itself. This year's Heritage Counts clearly demonstrates that conservation areas are not barriers to growth. Socio-economic conditions in conservation areas are improving and a large number of conservation areas are outperforming matched non-conservation areas across social and economic growth indicators.

In other research Heritage Counts reports that more people than ever are visiting historic properties and again we see an increase in the numbers of heritage volunteers. These figures demonstrate the public's continued interest in, and support for, the nation's heritage.

The heritage sector in England ranks amongst the best in terms of the quality and innovation of its work and in the wide range of organisations engaged in conservation activity. Statistics show that this past year has been no exception and it is encouraging to see that the overall number of sites on the Heritage at Risk register continues to fall.

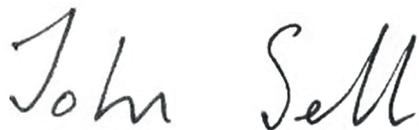
However, 2017 has not delivered entirely good news. The number of historic environment specialists advising local authorities has continued to decline which will impact on their ability to manage and encourage positive change. Looking further ahead, there has been a significant reduction in students enrolling on archaeology and planning degrees, and a decade-long decline in the number of students enrolling on heritage-related vocational construction courses. This will exacerbate the existing skills gap as the current workforce ages just at the point where big infrastructure and other development projects increases demand for such skills.

Thankfully these issues are among those that the Heritage 2020 project is tackling; providing opportunities for collaboration and problem solving. Similarly, as the country faces the many challenges which will result from Brexit it has been encouraging to see how the sector has worked together to be prepared.

All of the information presented within this year's **Heritage Counts** and further evidence from this year's research can be found online at: www.heritagecounts.org.uk. Documents online include:

- **Historic Environment in 2017 Overview** which audits key heritage developments and policies over the past twelve months.
- **Heritage and Society 2017** which presents evidence of how heritage enhances our wellbeing and quality of life.
- **Heritage and the Economy 2017** which illustrates the economic contribution of heritage and provides data and findings from the **Heritage Economic Impact Indicator Workbook 2017**, which estimates the economic impact of heritage on a variety of levels, including Gross Value Added to the UK economy, jobs, the property market, and tourism income.
- **Heritage Indicators 2017** presents information and analysis to provide an insight into the state of the historic environment.
- The **Regional Reports** and the **Local Authority Profiles 2017** compare local level indicators.

Heritage Counts continues to be a critical and wide-ranging source of information for those who are involved with the heritage sector, wish to research it, or seek to demonstrate the value and impact of the historic environment. Its publication is only made possible through collaborative work and spirit of the heritage sector. Thanks to all those involved in its creation for their continued help and support. I hope you find it a useful and enjoyable read.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Sell". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large 'J' and 'S'.

John Sell CBE

Chairman, Historic Environment Forum