



National Heritage Protection Plan

An initial response by Civic Voice to English Heritage
July 2010

1. Civic Voice welcomes this opportunity to shape English Heritage's emerging proposals for a National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP). These address issues of central interest to the civic movement across England.
2. Civic Voice is the new national charity for the civic movement. We work to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive. We promote civic pride and we talk civic sense. Civic Voice speaks up for civic societies and local communities across England. We believe everyone has the right to live somewhere they can be proud of. We know how people feel about places because we feel the same way. Civic Voice has been joined by over 250 civic societies in its first few months, with over 60,000 members between them. We have invited views on the NHPP from the civic movement and have a number of initial thoughts and suggestions.
3. Civic Voice welcomes the intent behind the NHPP for a more synoptic and shared understanding of heritage priorities. This should contribute significantly to civic pride and people's sense of place.
4. We urge English Heritage to consider the following issues in developing the NHPP further:
 - ☞ The paper describes the ambition to encourage a "*new culture of partnership*" and yet the NHPP is framed in terms of providing a "*national framework for English Heritage's contribution to the protection of the historic environment*". This is unfortunate and it would be helpful to see the development of a more shared approach, establishing a very different model of partnership across the heritage movement than hitherto
 - ☞ The concept of a "*national*" plan is understandable but this language might also hinder the initiative and convey a sense of an expert, top-down approach that will deter more local engagement – it would be preferable to envisage the result as the culmination of a series of "*local*" plans
 - ☞ We would encourage much greater emphasis on community knowledge and participation in identifying what is and is not significant, complementing the undoubted expertise of English Heritage and other heritage professionals which otherwise risks dominating the approach
 - ☞ We would encourage the development of a "heritage bellwether" which helps anticipate shifting perceptions of what people view as important and looks

ahead to identify those issues which society is likely to value even more highly in the future – this should combine a range of foresight and deliberative research tools. This would complement the analysis of “threat” by helping anticipate what people will “value” as well as what is at risk. It would also provide a further criterion for assessing resource priorities

- The current list of draft priorities is of interest but it is difficult to confirm its value without the evidence and input that would come from more local community involvement and a clearer anticipation of the heritage that will be valued in the future. It provides a helpful stimulus for this vital next stage but otherwise feels disengaged and some of the selection of categories or their ranking is uncertain
- On the detail we would assert that attention to the “*celebration and protection of heritage assets of local significance*” should be ranked more highly and local communities identified as the focus of support rather than local authorities.

We hope this is helpful and should be happy to contribute to further discussions.