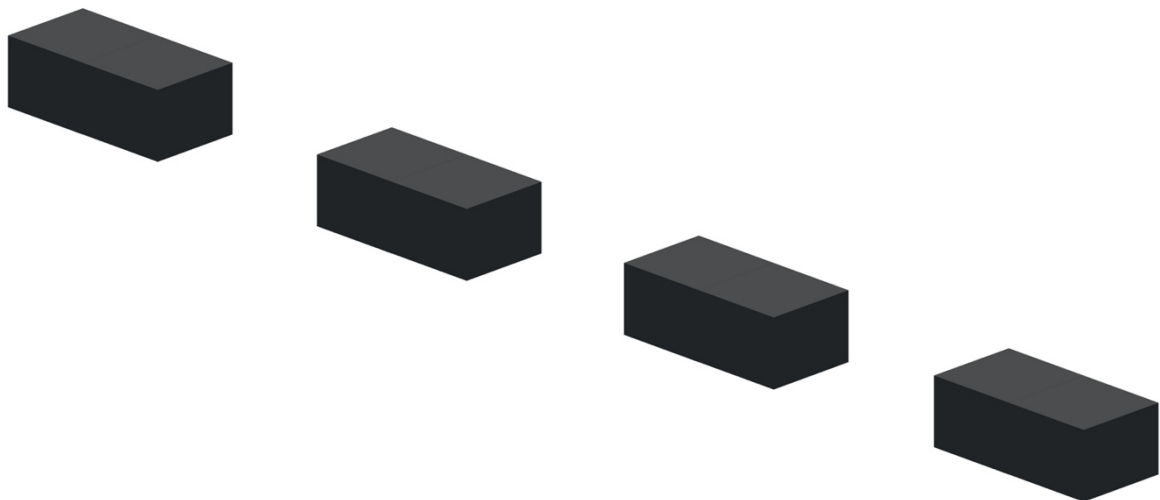




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BUILDING · CONSERVATION

# Communications and Outreach Strategy 2021-2024

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# Foreword

It is indeed timely that this strategy has been prepared as we come out of a prolonged pandemic. Covid 19 has profoundly changed the way we communicate with each other. In some cases, such as virtual meetings it has merely brought forward changes which were already slowly taking place, but in others, such as the balance between home and office working, it has radically altered our perceptions of work patterns.

In the last few years at the IHBC, before the pandemic, we were already reviewing and improving the ways in which we communicate with our members and others. Our twice-weekly emailed 'Newsblog' is an excellent method of disseminating a wide range of news and information affecting the historic environment sector. The formation of our All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) dealing with Conservation, Places and People is an example of our advocacy and outreach activity. It's early days, but is already being noticed and influencing attitudes to conservation and planning.

The pandemic had a direct effect on our communications in 2020, particularly in respect of our Annual School, which had to be changed from an in-person event in Brighton to a virtual conference. Not only did that transition enable more people to attend, but it allowed us to have speakers from across the globe. That positive experience was able to be transferred to a successful online AGM. Again, the virtual event enabled greater attendance than normal.

This new Communications and Outreach Strategy takes into account the valuable lessons which have been learned over the past year and sets out a comprehensive list of aims and actions which build upon our past successes. Key to this approach will be making sure that we both maintain and enhance our communication with members, and also reach out further to other stakeholders and audiences. In doing this we will be looking at ways in which we can develop our digital and social media skills and at the same time promote diversity and take into account climate change and sustainability. It's a big ask, but this Strategy provides and clear direction and guidance to enable the IHBC to strengthen its professional future.

David McDonald  
IHBC Chair



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

Effective communications and outreach are key to the IHBC's activities. The way the Institute interacts with its own membership and the outside world is central to its effectiveness as a professional body.

This communications and outreach strategy builds on the previous strategy (2016-19) and relates to various areas of the Institute's work, including member support, external influencing, promoting conservation professional practice and skills and Parliamentary activities.

The strategy is led by the IHBC's Board and will be delivered through the IHBC's Council, national activities and branch-led activities.

The strategy is in three parts. Chapter 2 includes strategic aims for communications and outreach. Chapter 3 contains actions to achieve the strategic aims. Chapter 4 deals with parliamentary activities.

The Communications and Outreach Committee will monitor progress on fulfilling the aims and achieving the actions in this strategy.

## 1.2 Stakeholders and Audiences

The strategy guides the IHBC in the way it deals with a range of stakeholders and audiences, including:

**Members and Potential Members:** IHBC is a multi-disciplinary professional body, providing support to members across public, private and 3<sup>rd</sup> sectors, ensuring professional standards, developing skills and promoting the interests of the profession.

**UK and National Governments:** A key part of the IHBC's work is in seeking to influence legislation, policy, and programmes.

**Local Government:** Raising awareness of the importance of professional officers and teams with conservation and heritage skills is a key part of IHBC's work. This includes awareness of legal compliance issues in decision-making.

**National Organisations:** IHBC works with numerous other UK bodies and national bodies within the UK to promote common interests, including other professional bodies and membership organisations and umbrella bodies such as Built Environment Forum Scotland and The Heritage Alliance.

**Community Groups:** Community organisations are increasingly involved in planning for their area, including policy development and also directly delivering heritage projects and taking on heritage assets. Heritage professionals are often brought in to support

such bodies and help them to achieve positive outcomes. Obviously many members of the public also have an interest in heritage.

**Developers and Property Owners:** Understanding the role of heritage specialists helps developers and property owners to employ the necessary professional skills to achieve their desired outcomes.

**Heritage Bodies:** Part of the IHBC's role is explaining to national and local bodies the scope and nature of building conservation professional practice as a multi-disciplinary activity.





## 2. Strategic Aims

### 2.1 Scope of Professional Practice

**Aim 1: Promote understanding of professional and specialist practice as a multi-disciplinary, cross-sector activity, taking place against a wide social, economic and environmental context.**

This includes promoting understanding of conservation practice, advice and judgements, which involves reconciling heritage protection with a complex range of factors, including utility, legal compliance, viability, climate change and other social, economic and environmental considerations.

### 2.2 Value of the IHBC as a Professional Body

**Aim 2: Promote the IHBC as a respected professional body, based on its membership competences and professional practice standards.**

IHBC has a rigorous process for accrediting membership, based on its competences, which are groups under Areas of Competence. This is key to maintaining the reputation and effectiveness of the Institute.

### 2.3 Values and Benefits of Heritage

**Aim 3: Challenge misconceptions of heritage as a barrier to growth and promote understanding of the social, economic and environmental values of heritage, as an essential part of professional practice.**

This includes highlighting how conservation supports sustainable development and growth and healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

### 2.4 Conservation Skills

**Aim 4: Promote awareness of the importance of conservation skills and practice standards, and the benefits of employing skilled heritage specialists from the right professional disciplines for conservation work.**

**Encourage local authorities and private sector bodies to maintain appropriately skilled individuals and teams.**

IHBC delivers resources, programmes and events to improve conservation skills for IHBC members and among wider built environment professions and others involved with heritage.



## 2.5 Influencing Policy, Legislation and Programmes

**Aim 5: Promote recognition of the values of heritage and principles of good conservation to UK, national and local governments, national bodies and others involved in building conservation.**

This includes a range of news and information services, practice guidance such as the Toolbox; high-level training programmes, and identifying, promoting or undertaking research on the social, economic and environmental values of heritage.



## **3. Actions and Delivery**

### **3.1 Achieving the Strategic Aims**

The strategic principles above will be achieved by the following actions:

### **3.2 Professional Membership**

#### **IHBC Competences**

IHBC's professional membership competences define the value of membership. There is no need to revise the competencies in any substantial way; they remain fit-for purpose. However, the explanatory text supporting each competency should be updated from time-to-time, to recognise changes in the nature of professional practice (for example by recognising the relevance of heritage to delivering economic development, supporting healthy lifestyles, environmental sustainability and other community benefits).

This includes considering the implications for professional practice and skills development arising from climate change, post COVID-19 economic conditions, town-centre recovery, and changes in live-work patterns.

### **3.3 Supporting Diversity**

#### **Monitoring**

IHBC will monitor its membership in terms of diversity, including gender, ethnicity, LGBT+ status, disability and other characteristics. This will create an understanding of how representative the membership is of the wider population.

#### **Promoting Diversity**

IHBC will promote diversity in the following ways:

- IHBC will examine ways of targeting under-represented groups as potential members;
- A future Council+ will focus on diversity and inclusion;
- A diversity and inclusion working group has been established and will make recommendations for actions to increase diversity to the Board;
- Training for staff, trustees and members should include awareness of diversity, including unconscious bias.

## 3.4 Member Support

### Member feedback

The IHBC consults its members on key issues; involves members through its national and regional structures, and uses feedback forms from national and regional conferences and events as a means to continuing improvement.

### Member Participation

There are various mechanisms for members to be involved in the IHBC's work, in particular following the adoption of a new constitution. These include organisation of events, policy development, responses to consultations, governance and other work areas (local, national and international).

### Training and Events

IHBC training considers conservation against a wide context of different professional disciplines.

To ensure maximum relevance and benefit of IHBC events:

- The subject of the annual school – the national conference - is carefully considered to ensure relevance to current and relevant practice issues (for example technical and digital resources and town centre recovery).
- Training events and articles should address the range of IHBC competencies.
- IHBC continues to develop and deliver projects, programmes and events to develop building conservation skills and support networking and knowledge exchange.

In addition, IHBC publicises relevant training opportunities offered by other organisations.

### Materials and Resources

To support members, the IHBC:

- Develops concise, accessible and clear guidance, tools and materials to support members in professional practice and people seeking to join the IHBC. Such materials should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- Ensures and monitors that our its publications reflect the IHBC's view of professional practice and give equal emphasis to the four Areas of Competence and the eight competences.
- Will update as necessary the published guidance and practice standard 'Conservation Professional Practice Principles', prepared and published with the Historic Towns & Villages Forum and Civic Voice.

## Digital and Social Media

Digital and social media is of key importance to delivering this strategy's aims, including:

- Maintain and develop the website to make sure it is concise, clear, accessible and easy to negotiate.
- Continue with IHBC's successful NewsBlog and linked digital publications such as the Conservation Wiki and the CPD Circular, as well as the wide-ranging social media channels
- Investigate the possibility of continuing to run the AGM and other meetings through digital media, so as to involve more members and from a wider geographical spread.

## 3.5 Research and Influencing

### Policy

Policy and consultations activities on key issues should be publicised (e.g. press releases on consultation responses).

Concise and clear core scripts may be developed for key areas of policy. This would help to provide clarity and consistency in influencing and communications activities and create a shift from a reactive to more proactive approach.

### Promotion of Conservation

Conservation will be promoted through, advocacy and partnering with compatible organisations, including structured partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding.

It is especially important to develop evidence and promote awareness of the positive economic benefits of conservation. This includes awareness of how heritage has supported physical and economic transformations, including in under-performing areas (see also Chapter 4).

The IHBC will use its new CREATIVE Conservation Fund, linked awards such as the Student Awards programme, as well as partnerships to promote and celebrate the benefits of conservation practice.

IHBC will seek to enhance its press, media and other resources to promote conservation and heritage interests. The aim is to make the IHBC the 'go-to' body on conservation and heritage matters.

### Research

IHBC will seek opportunities to undertake and publish research into the economic, social and environmental values of heritage, in particular to demonstrate how heritage supports healthy lifestyles, addresses climate change and supports innovation, enterprise and growth (see also Chapter 4).

IHBC undertakes periodic research on conservation specialist skills provision in local authorities.

The IHBC will progress a new strategy to expand its research agenda, operations and networks, including developing a research circular to promote research delivering outputs most useful to conservation practitioners.

## **Climate Change and Sustainability**

IHBC promotes conservation as a place-making activity, with social, economic and environmental dimensions. Heritage should be addressed as an integral part of the wider planning for an area, delivering more sustainable and inclusive forms of development and economic development.

IHBC will promote awareness of the need to consider sustainability at the level of 'place', in addition to adaptation of buildings. A focus on place includes consideration of mixed use, pedestrian permeability and connectivity, green infrastructure and live/work patterns (such as 15 minute neighbourhood). Conservation of embodied energy (materials and construction) is a further key dimension.

## **Parliamentary**

IHBC's Parliamentary activities are set out in Part 3 of this strategy.

# **3.6 Operations**

## **National Office**

The national office will continue to enhance its management and monitoring of services. Regular interaction with IHBC's members will inform the development of the IHBC's strategy and services.

The national office will look at options for providing skilled communications staff or consultants as part of the national team, or providing access to training and skills development for national team members.

This will help to recognise the strategic importance of communications and to provide the basis for effective handling of the press, parliamentary activities, and promotion.

## **Systems**

Systems will be reviewed as necessary to create strong linkages between the IHBC's committees, including closer liaison between policy and communications and responding especially to the new governance arrangements.

A key aim is to develop systems to ensure that all significant consultation responses are accompanied by a press release, setting out the IHBC's position.



## 3.7 Partnerships

Partnership development will include:

- Working with national bodies, agencies and funders across and beyond the UK relevant to conservation practice and outcomes;
- Seeking to strengthen links with bodies with similar interests (e.g. chartered built-environment professional bodies, Civic Voice, Scotland's Towns Partnership, Locality, Architectural Heritage Fund, HTVF and other bodies with place-making agendas).
- Seeking to increase the occurrence of joint events with other built-environment professional bodies (for example the RTPI, RIBA and RICS).
- Consider joint policy and consultations work with compatible organisations including national amenity bodies.
- Develop dialogue with organisations with related environmental concerns, especially around the natural environment, biodiversity and climate change.



## **4. Parliamentary**

### **4.1 Conservation, People and Places APPG**

#### **Secretariat**

IHBC was instrumental in the establishment of the Conservation, People and Places All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and provides the secretariat.

This is a means to raising understanding of the historic environment, including the varied economic, social and environmental benefits that it delivers.

#### **Inquiries**

IHBC will support the APPG's inquiries and provide evidence.

### **4.2 Influencing Government**

#### **IHBC Responses**

IHBC competencies should be used as a benchmark against which to consider the Institute's response to programmes, initiatives, consultations, white papers, select committees, guidance and policies from the UK and national governments.

#### **IHBC Priorities**

Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- promoting understanding of the social, economic and environmental benefits and opportunities created by heritage;
- the contribution that conservation makes to wider agendas, including tackling climate change, high-street recovery, regeneration, economic levelling up and supporting good physical and mental health;
- the value of, and need for, specialist skills in conservation in all sectors;
- ways to improve legislation and policy to achieve clearer and more effective conservation and use of heritage;
- the need for national guidance to move from a narrow focus on significance towards planning for heritage in its widest sense;
- the multi-disciplinary nature of the heritage sector.

#### **Parliamentary Receptions**

IHBC will examine the costs and benefits of holding Parliamentary reception(s) at UK and/or national levels.

# Contact

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