



Communications and Outreach Strategy 2025-2028

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Foreword

This updated communications and outreach strategy responds to the changing context in which the IHBC operates. These include the shift in work and meeting patterns, continuing planning reform, changes in Parliamentary procedures, economic changes and an increasing focus on climate change and biodiversity.

Through the IHBC's various activities, the Institute is influencing attitudes to conservation and planning. This new Communications and Outreach Strategy takes into account these changes. At the same time, there is a focus on promoting diversity in the profession.

The Strategy seeks to maintain and enhance communication with members and also reach out to other stakeholders and audiences. This includes continual development of our digital and social media activities.

David McDonald
IHBC Chair

1. Introduction



1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

Effective communications and outreach activities are key to the IHBC's operations. 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 (2021-24) 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 National Office, Council, committees and branch and volunteer-led activities.

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

1.1.2 Structure of the Strategy

The strategy is in four 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. Chapter 5 includes a core script, to help create consistent between the IHBC's various activities.

1.2 Target Audiences

1.2.1 Stakeholders

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

1.2.2 IHBC Members and Potential Members

The IHBC is an inter-disciplinary professional body for historic building and historic environment conservation professionals, providing support to members across private, public and voluntary sectors, ensuring professional standards, developing skills and promoting the interests of the conservation profession.

1.2.3 IHBC Internal

This includes elected and appointed officers, trustees, staff (employed and consultant), volunteers, networks, Branches, partners and service providers.

1.2.4 UK and National Governments

A key part of the IHBC's work is to seek to influence key legislation, policy, and programmes and raise awareness of the benefits of conservation in supporting sustainable and effective growth.

1.2.5 Local Government and Local Councils

Raising awareness of the importance of professional officers and teams with conservation and heritage skills is central to the IHBC's work. This includes awareness of legal compliance issues in decision-making.

1.2.6 National Organisations

The IHBC works with numerous other UK 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.

1.2.7 Community Groups and the General Public

Community organisations are increasingly involved in planning for their area, including policy development, taking on heritage assets and direct delivery of heritage projects. Heritage professionals often support such bodies and help them to achieve positive outcomes. Many members of the public also have an interest in heritage. The *Caring for your Home* web hub is the IHBC's primary interface with the general public, together with the *MarketPlace* service and events.

1.2.8 Construction Sector, Developers and Property Owners

Understanding the role of heritage specialists across the construction sector helps non-specialist practitioners and professionals, developers and property owners to employ the necessary professional skills to achieve their desired outcomes. The IHBC's Conservation Wiki is recognised as the key tool delivering that service.

1.2.9 Heritage Bodies

Part of the IHBC's role is explaining to national and local bodies the scope and nature of conservation professional practice as an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary activity.

1.3 Internal Communications

1.3.1 Good Internal Communications

The strategy also deals with internal communications, to ensure that the IHBC and its various committees, branches and officers act in a cohesive and consistent manner.

To help with good internal communications, the following have been introduced:

- Board papers are circulated routinely to committee chairs for information;
- National office updates are circulated to committee and branch chairs, with additional signposts in public NewsBlogs;
- Following committee and council meetings, relevant papers are forwarded to IHBC officers, including Trustees.
- IHBC is reviewing staffing structure and capacity, including capacity to extend communications and outreach activities.
- The recent appointment of branch consultants provides additional capacity for engagement between the national office, branches and the wider membership.
- A core script has been added into this strategy, in the interests of consistency between different activities and committees (see Chapter 5).

2. Strategic Aims



2.1 Scope of Professional Practice

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

This includes promoting understanding of conservation practice as a creative, problem-solving activity. This involves providing advice and making judgements that reconcile 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

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

The 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

2.2.3 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, including more effective and inclusive regeneration and growth, healthier lifestyles, carbon management and biodiversity, town-centre recovery and other community benefits.

2.4 Conservation Skills

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

This includes encouraging local authorities and private sector bodies to employ appropriately skilled individuals and teams.

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

2.5 Influencing Policy, Legislation and Programmes

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

This includes a range of news and information services, publications, 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

3.2.1 IHBC Competences and Areas of Competence

The IHBC's professional membership competences define the value of membership and underpin the areas of competence. The descriptors (explanatory text supporting each competence) were updated in 2023 and should be revisited again from time-to-time, to recognise ongoing changes to the scope and nature of professional practice.

3.3 Supporting Diversity

3.3.1 Monitoring

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

3.3.2 Promoting Diversity

The IHBC will promote diversity in the following ways:

- IHBC will extend its targeting of under-represented groups as potential members, with a Board Statement in December 2022 underpinning the strategy
- Council meetings will include a focus on diversity and inclusion;
- A diversity and inclusion Working Group has been established and will help make recommendations to the Board on actions to increase enhance representation;
- Training for staff, trustees and members should include awareness of diversity, including unconscious bias.

3.4 Member Support

3.4.1 Member feedback

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

3.4.2 Member Participation

There are various mechanisms for members to be involved in the IHBC's work, in particular through national Committees and panels, Branches and associated networks. Participation is encouraged through the organisation of events, policy development, responses to consultations, branch activities, governance and other work areas (local, national and international).

The IHBC will keep members informed of opportunities for volunteering, including through membership of regional and national committees. Through Council especially, the IHBC is also enhancing routes and guidance to develop members' skills and opportunities in future chairing, trustee and related roles.

3.4.3 Training and Events

The 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 practice issues (for example technical and digital resources, housing and town centre recovery).
- Training events and articles should address the full range of IHBC competences.
- The IHBC continues to develop and deliver projects, programmes and events to develop building conservation skills and support networking and knowledge exchange.
- Developing joint events with other key sector bodies, to extend outreach.

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

3.4.4 Materials and Resources

To support members, the IHBC does or will do the following:

- Continue to develop concise, accessible and clear guidance, tools and materials on various subjects, to support members in professional practice;
- Following the updating of the competence descriptors, the updating of membership application forms and guidance is a priority.
- Updates as necessary to the published guidance and practice standard 'Conservation Professional Practice Principles', prepared and published with the Historic Towns & Villages Forum and Civic Voice.
- The IHBC's CREATIVE Conservation Fund strategy will simplify access to, and development and funding of, key service areas;
- Using the Welsh language in appropriate documents, especially if there is to be engagement with the Senedd.

3.4.5 Context and IHBC Yearbook

The main journal of the IHBC is *Context*. The *Yearbook* is the IHBC's membership directory.

The IHBC will continue to monitor publications, to ensure that they provide a strong focus on professional practice, with equal emphasis to the four Areas of Competence and the eight competences. IHBC publications will focus where possible on current challenges and issues facing members, for example high-street adaptation and recovery, sustainable and walkable neighbourhoods, housing delivery, and biodiversity.

3.4.6 Digital and Social Media

Digital and social media is of key importance to delivering this strategy's aims.

The IHBC will:

- Continue with the IHBC's successful NewsBlog and linked digital publications such as the Conservation Wiki and the CPD Circular, the Research for Practice Digest and the wide-ranging social media channels;
- Continue to run the AGM and other meetings through digital media, so as to involve more members, from a wider geographical spread.

A high priority will be given to reviewing the website to make sure it is concise, clear, accessible and easy to negotiate for members and those interesting in applying for membership. This includes:

- Ensuring there is a clear and logical structure, with a clear menu;
- Updating, archiving or deleting older materials;
- Ensuring that all membership guidance and forms are fully updated, consistent and based on current competences and descriptors;

- Improving the web service through the introduction of an integrated digital membership ('CRM') service.

3.5 Research and Influencing

3.5.1 Policy

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

Using the core script in Chapter 5 as a basis, concise and clear core scripts may be developed for specific 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.

3.5.2 Promotion of Conservation

Conservation and its social, economic and environmental benefits will continue to 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 uses its CREATIVE Conservation Fund, linked awards such as the Student Awards programme, as well as partnerships to promote and celebrate the benefits of conservation practice.

The IHBC will continue 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.

The IHBC will seek recognition of conservation professionals, for example through promoting nominations for awards and honours, including through the branches.

3.5.3 Research

The IHBC will continue to 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).

The IHBC undertakes periodic research on conservation specialist skills provision in local authorities and the construction sector.

The IHBC will continue to expand its research agenda, operations and networks, including developing a research circular to promote research delivering outputs most useful to conservation practitioners. An enhanced CREATIVE Conservation Fund will support this.

3.5.4 Climate Change and Sustainability

The 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.

The IHBC will promote awareness of the need to consider sustainability and carbon management 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 biodiversity, and live/work patterns (such as walkable neighbourhoods). Conservation of embodied energy (materials and construction) is a further dimension.

3.5.5 Parliamentary

The IHBC's Parliamentary activities are set out in Part 4 of this strategy.

3.6 National Office

3.6.1 Activities

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.

The IHBC has employed consultants to support branch and volunteers and enhance internal and external communications.

3.6.2 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 new and evolving 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

3.7.1 Partnership Development

Partnership development include includes both strategic and practical (delivery) dimensions:

- Working with national and international 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, Scottish Civic Trust, 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, CIOB 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

4.1.1 Changes to APPGs

The IHBC was instrumental in the establishment of the Conservation, People and Places All Party Parliamentary Group (CPPAPPG) and provided the secretariat. This helped to raise awareness and understanding of the historic environment, including the varied economic, social and environmental benefits that it delivers.

Changes to requirements for APPGs mean that the CPPAPPG has ceased to operate. It did have considerable implications for staff time, so the IHBC is considering other options for Parliamentary activities (see 4.2).

4.2 Parliamentary Activities

4.2.1 IHBC Responses

IHBC competences are 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.

The IHBC will:

- as costs and benefits permit, host or support Parliamentary Receptions and their equivalent at UK and devolved levels of government;
- respond to green papers, consultations and invitations to provide evidence to Parliamentary committees.
- Liaise with other like-minded national bodies on the above;
- Seek to brief sympathetic politicians.

4.2.2 Priorities

Particular emphasis is placed on:

- the key messages in the core script in Chapter 5, including the economic and other values of heritage;
- ways to improve legislation and policy to achieve clearer and more effective planning for heritage and the conservation and use of historic buildings and places;
- the need for guidance at all levels to move from a narrow focus on significance towards the full scope of conservation professional practice and consideration of the values of heritage against the wider social, economic and environmental context.

5. Core Script



5.1 Purpose of the Core Script

5.1.1 Purpose and Use

The following core script includes key messages to set out the IHBC's general position on the values of heritage, climate change, regeneration, planning and placemaking, skills and resources, and professional practice.

The core script should be used to inform and create consistency between the various areas of the IHBC's work, including advocacy, consultations, CPD and research. More detail will emerge through these various activities.

5.2 Core Script – Key Messages

5.2.1 Values of heritage

Heritage has economic, community and environmental values, in addition to helping to achieve more effective, sustainable and inclusive forms of growth, economic development and regeneration. Most heritage is in productive use, so forms part of the infrastructure of urban and rural areas. Heritage also supports the visitor economy. Conservation helps with high-street recovery, provides flexible space for business and supports good physical and mental health.

5.2.2 Climate Change, Carbon Use and Biodiversity

Most historic areas are intrinsically sustainable, often being walkable and permeable for pedestrians and having a mix of uses and facilities and incorporating valuable green infrastructure (helping biodiversity). Loss of old buildings involves loss of the embodied energy used in their construction and materials. Improving building performance is also part of this bigger picture.

5.2.3 Regeneration and Economic Development

Historic buildings and places often form a basis for effective physical and economic transformation and regeneration. VAT on building refurbishments is a significant barrier to economic activity, creating property price inflation in high growth areas and stagnation in areas where there are viability challenges.

5.2.4 Planning and Placemaking

Heritage should be an integral part of the wider social, economic and environmental planning of an area. Heritage should be a key factor in planning for high streets, housing, employment and local communities. Good planning is about place-making and involves working with a range of stakeholders and communities.

5.2.5 Skills and Resources

There is a need to develop placemaking and heritage skills and capacity in the public and private sectors. This would create economic, social and environmental benefits through better decision-making. Heritage forms an important part of the construction sector and there is a need to expand capacity and heritage skills.

5.2.6 Professional Practice

Heritage professional practice encompasses a range of professional disciplines and involves finding creative solutions to conserve heritage and realise its economic, community and cultural potential.

6. Contacts



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