



PRESS RELEASE

Historic towns take the initiative on Heritage Protection

The Heritage Protection Bill, which is expected to go through Parliament early in 2009, will have far reaching effects on the historic towns and cities of England. Many of the proposed changes have been welcomed by organisations and professionals working in the heritage environment.

However, concerns have been voiced, in line with the Parliamentary Committee's Report published in the summer, regarding the skills and resources which will be available in Local Authorities to implement the new regime.

To address some of these concerns the small Midlands City of Lichfield hosted a national conference, organised by the English Historic Towns Forum.

New research into the use of Article 4 Directions and a review of the publication – "Townscape in Trouble" - which lead to the creation of these Directions, was also presented to the conference whilst representatives from the Department for Culture Media and Sport and English Heritage discussed the Bill, its implications and measures which will be put in place to support it.

Case studies were also used to demonstrate the positive impact that A4s, local listing and conservation area management can have on town centres – enhancing their economic performance as well as the built environment.

Director of EHTF, Chris Winter, said "We do not promote the preservation in aspic of our heritage assets, places must be fit for modern uses; but the value of the historic built environment to health and education is sometimes underestimated and it is vital that we find ways to conserve – whilst enhancing – these assets. With well considered support, the new legislation should help us to use the lessons of the past to deal with the challenges we are facing – housing capacity, climate change and economic uncertainty."