

## REPAIR OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS WITHIN HEREFORDSHIRE

Report By: Head of Planning Services

### Wards Affected

Whole County

### Purpose

1. To report upon the operation of the Council's Historic Building Consent Scheme and English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register 2004.

### Financial Implications

2. The budget for the Council's Historic Building Grants Scheme is set at the beginning of each financial year. For 2004/5 and with the agreement of the Cabinet Member for the Environment, this budget is being used more flexibly to tackle a number of pressing building issues.

### Background

#### Historic Building Grants Scheme

3. For **2003/4** members approved an initial budget for Historic Buildings Grants of £25,500.00. This sum was supplemented by a further sum of £3,619.00 which is recycled grant money that has been offered and either not claimed or clawed back following the sale of property. A total of £29,119.00 was therefore available to offer in that financial year.
4. This enhanced sum enabled 12 offers of grant to be made. Appendix 1 lists those properties that have benefited from grant aid together with the nature of repairs undertaken. Should members require specific information about any of the awards they are asked to contact the Historic Buildings Surveyor who can furnish them with details.
5. The available budget triggered works valued in excess of £170,000 all of which were executed by local Herefordshire craftsmen with a number of materials being sourced locally. This work is important in helping to retain the local distinctiveness of our built heritage within the County, enhancing in turn both the local economy and tourism.
6. The grants budget for **2004/5** is £26,140 and again some recycling is likely such that a total of £36,140 is presently anticipated. Of this some £4,320 has been reserved for contribution towards a project involving buildings at St Katherine's, Ledbury and £3,500 towards Urgent Works at The Summerhouse (aka the Watchtower), Homme House, Much Marcle.

7. The sum available for 2004/5 is already fully committed. Appendix 2 lists those properties for which grant aid has been offered and the value of work triggered in this instance is around £260,000. Appendices 1 and 2 are attached for members as confidential papers.
8. Within 2004/5 to date some 50 inquiries for grant aid have been received and this is typical of the annual level of interest.

**English Heritage's Buildings at Risk**

9. English Heritage publishes an annual list of those grade 1 and 2\* Listed Buildings that it considers to be at risk. Some 34 entries relate to Herefordshire and these are listed in Appendix 3.
10. Two new entries are made compared to the 2003 register although one of these, Clifford Castle, appears to be the re-insertion following an omission in error. Kilpeck Castle is a completely new entry.
11. Although there have been no deletions from the previous year, some improvements have taken place. English Heritage lists grades the buildings according to a priority 1 (low) to 6 (high). Works have been undertaken to two of the buildings on the previous list, Wilton Castle and Broomy Hill Pumping Station, and these have now entered the lowest category of risk.
12. The Council owns one of the properties on the list – Hereford City Walls. This is the Saxon Wall to the rear of St Owens Court. Works are soon to commence which should hopefully remove it from the list, or at least reduce its level of priority.
13. Reference is made in paragraph 6 to the funding of Urgent Works at the Summerhouse, Much Marcle. Although these works are only intended to safeguard against further decay, measures are being investigated to secure its long-term restoration. In addition Works are being undertaken to the Palm House at Whitbourne Hall with the aid of funds from English Heritage which should improve the condition of this building.
14. It is difficult to identify the overall condition of grade 2 Listed Buildings, which make up around 94% of the County's 5,800 Listed Buildings. It is hoped to carry out a sample survey over the next 6 months to forecast the level and extent of their vulnerability.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that the report be noted**