



United Kingdom Association of
Building Preservation Trusts

HERITAGE COUNTS 2015

UKAPT Building Preservation Trust Research - July/August 2015

Introduction

In May 2015 Historic England commissioned the UK Association of Preservation Trusts to undertake research for the building preservation section of Heritage Counts 2015. The brief covered four main areas;

- An overview of BPT activity and live projects
- A piece about policy changes at UKAPT
- Case studies of BPT recent projects
- New research into the motivations, finances, community involvement and future maintenance of building preservation trust type projects (using data gathered mainly from UKAPT members but including some non-UKAPT members undertaking similar projects)

Research Methodology

It was agreed to use Survey Monkey to complete the research and a questionnaire was evolved through discussion between UKAPT and Historic England. The questions were further refined by UKAPT staff.

Having agreed the questions, the survey was sent out to 150 English UKAPT members on 21st July and to a further 208 English non-member organisations on 3rd August. 48 responses were received, of which 36 are from UKAPT members and 12 are from non-members.

Summary of Findings

Motivation -

- Historic and architectural character is the prime motivator for trusts taking on a project (over 80%, when compared with 13% who selected finding a new use)

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- Historic character is more important to trusts when selecting a project than the building being at risk (62%, in comparison to 35%). Only 15% of trusts cited local authority influence or the intervention of a national heritage body as a reason for selecting a project.

Uncompleted projects -

- 54% of trusts indicated that they did not have any projects that they had been unable to take forward after initial research; a remarkably high statistic considering the complexity of the projects which demonstrates the persistence of trusts in tackling these buildings. Of those trusts that had not been able to pursue projects over 15% had problems in raising funds and 13% had issues with securing ownership or an interest in the buildings. Around 13% of trusts who responded were single project trusts so the question was not relevant to them.

Finance -

The findings show the importance of trusts' own resources when seeking funds for a project with 77% of trusts contributing from their own resources to complete projects. Donations are also an important source of funding with 57% of trusts using donations to help fund the projects. Other findings showed that:

- trusts are being creative in accessing funds from a wide range of sources (other grants 70%)
- Just over half of trusts surveyed are using Heritage Lottery Fund grants for project funding (52%), although the level of HLF grants represent the majority of funding for projects
- 27% of trusts are using Architectural Heritage Fund funding for projects

Challenges and Opportunities -

- The greatest current challenge for trusts is to secure funding with over a third of trusts indicating that they found it very difficult.

- However they seem to have little difficulty in getting heritage information and securing the services of suitably qualified professionals, (only 3 trusts finding the first tasks very difficult and none having trouble with the second) reflecting the heritage knowledge embodied in the building preservation trust movement
- The question about finding a suitable contractor resulted in a mixed picture with about a third of trusts indicating they found very easy and a small number finding it very difficult, and the majority in between not having a particular problem.
- The majority of trusts did not have problems securing Listed Building and Planning Consents, but 12 respondents did have significant issues with Planning permission and 15 respondents with Listed Building Consent.

Community Involvement -

- The survey demonstrated the highest levels of community involvement were through volunteering (73%) and acting as a trustee (81%) but well over 50% of trusts involve the community through open days, events and visits.
- Those trusts that engage enthusiastically with the public tend to start right from the beginning of a project, whereas other more building focussed trusts take longer to engage their communities and have few volunteers or visitors.
- The most popular methods of communicating with visitors and volunteers are word of mouth (86%), local media and open days (both 80%) with social media at 66%.
- However trusts indicated that they found the most effective methods of attracting volunteers and local audiences are posters and leaflets, and use of local media.
- The work trusts undertake is both admired and greatly appreciated by others in the local community. When asked what the project meant to the local community, trusts responded as follows:

“Stroud Valleys Artspace are our end users and for them the Brunel Goods Shed has provided a wonderful experimental space for exhibitions and events. They now hold the lease with Network Rail”

Visitor postcard “ Thank you for a most interesting and inspiring day! Everyone was so impressed with the work achieved through your vision. May the great work continue! Best wishes for the future.”

“The use of an historical and cultural asset for the benefit of local challenged communities”

“It has saved a 1586 listed building from being left to decay and part of the town’s heritage that would have gone forever”

“the community have benefited from new jobs, training opportunities, extensive free community events, really exciting and useful volunteering opportunities and real economic benefit to the area. Cromford Village, once suffering from a high turnover of failed small businesses is now a thriving community with a number of successful high class outlets.”

Future care –

The survey results demonstrated the really strong commitment of building preservation trusts to the future care of buildings in their care.

- Over 73% of trusts have revenue income set aside for maintenance
- Over 73% have maintenance plans
- Over 26% employ an architect or surveyor to do regular maintenance checks
- 30% of trusts trained their volunteers to do routine maintenance

In-depth analysis

From the results of the questionnaire, three topics emerged that were of particular interest and these were selected for further in-depth analysis. The topics selected were:

- Changing relationships with Local Authorities
- The challenges and opportunities of community involvement
- Future care of properties

Detailed interviews are being conducted with 10 different BPT that reflected the range and diversity of the BPT movement. The BPTs were selected on the basis of geographic area, size and capacity of operation and type of BPT.

Trusts selected for further interview are (subject to availability):

1. Arkwright Society – A well established bpt on a single site with numerous grade I and II* buildings. Currently undertaking a £6m project to repair and open Building 17 to the public. The trust has about 30 full and part time staff, multiple tenants on site and a turnover of c£1m. Contact with local authority has mainly been through grants, loan guarantees and with planning consents

2. **Birmingham Conservation Trust** - Another well established but smaller bpt; originally set up, housed and operated (for the first 10 years) by the local authority with councillors on the board. The Trust often works in partnership, and restored the Birmingham Back to Backs with National Trust, who now run it as one of their most popular venues. In recent years BCT has established an independent base in Birmingham at Newman Brothers Coffin Works and is gradually loosening ties with local authority. The move to an independent base has allowed the Trust to engage far more effectively with local communities and new audiences, particularly using social media to encourage visitors to events.

3. **Heritage Lincolnshire** – Another very active trust with multiple projects at different stages, a team of staff and freelance specialist consultants. They are employed by Lincolnshire County to deliver many of their heritage services, including the archaeology service, heritage events, heritage training and advice and information on all aspects of heritage in Lincolnshire. Heritage of Lincolnshire has lead the way in using volunteers to update information on listed buildings for Historic England and community engagement with the built heritage.

4. **Heritage Trust for the North West** – A major player in the North West, the trust often supports other smaller trusts and has its own portfolio of major projects. It supports its work through two trading companies that manage a number of successful heritage attractions that were former projects. It has no particular affiliation to a local authority but works closely with a number of them.

5. **Norwich Preservation Trust** – Founded in 1966 by a donation from the Norwich Society the trust has completed 19 major projects and has 3 currently in progress. It has close ties to the local authority who appoint up to 7 trustees to the board. It is run by one of the most experienced bpt project managers in the country.

6. **Manchester Victoria Baths Trust** – Born out of community action, the trust now operates a programme of social and community activities in the baths on behalf of the local authority who own it. In 2003 the Trust won BBC Restoration and has since worked tirelessly to secure the future of Victoria Baths.

7. **Upminster Windmill Preservation Trust, Essex** - A single project trust undertaking a £1.27m repair programme with HLF and other funding. The Trust has opened the Mill to the public for some years with a programme of regular events and activities, which attract modest visitor numbers.

8. **Shrewsbury and Newbury Canal Trust** – Founded in 1990 this trust concentrates on preserving canal heritage, including volunteer work parties clearing areas of the canal. The Trust has undertaken several options appraisals on canal buildings and are tackling their first big project at Wappenhall Wharf having secured £1m HLF funding. Raising the match funding is their chief challenge at present.

9. **Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, Devon** – A small trust focussing on a single parish and especially one particular property, the Walronds. The restoration of the early C17th century house was completed this year, having secured HLF funding and the trust has now changed into operation mode, arranging events and hiring out community rooms on the lower floors and hiring out holiday accommodation for rent on upper floors to subsidise the on going maintenance. The gardens are still undergoing renovation.

10. **Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust** – Set up in the 80s, this group of local volunteers have campaigned for over 25 years to preserve this exceptional medieval barn in partnership with South Gloucestershire Council who purchased the building and partially repaired it. They run 3-4 major events a year, including an opera and an orchard day bringing in over a 1,000 people. They use volunteers to manage events and maintain the property, fundraise and undertake incremental repairs as fund become available.

The questions to be asked are as follows:

Changing relationship with LAs

- What is the current relationship - do they help with at risk register, finding funding, helping with professionals help/contractors etc? Do you get guarantees from the LA's or short term loans?
- Has that changed over the last 2 years? We are particularly interested to hear about changes in relation to conservation and planning and the impact that might have had on projects?
- What do you think the reasons for that are?
- Has the reduction in LA funds had an impact on the work of the trust? Please explain.
- How do you see the relationship going forward?

Challenges and opportunities of community involvement

- The details of your community involvement, including volunteers, visitors and users

- Has it been difficult to attract visitors/ volunteers/end users?
- Are your trustees active and if so what do they do?
- What roles do you use volunteers for?
- Are there any formal volunteer structures?
- Does your trust work with partners and if so what type of partner - commercial operator/education sector/community groups/ ...?
- If your trust works with partners, at what stage does it engage with them?
- Does your trust record any of the social, economic or environmental impacts on a regular basis?
- If impacts are recorded what methodology do you use?

Future care

- Do you have a maintenance plan?
- Do you have funds secured/ringfenced for future maintenance of buildings?
- Do you employ architects/surveyors?
- Is this because of funding conditions?
- Do use volunteers for maintenance or are there other challenges for the physical maintenance for the buildings?
- What income streams do you have that support the future care of the project?
- Are there gaps in support services for future care - such as operational issues or property care advice?

HERITAGE COUNTS

Summary of findings from in-depth interviews

OVERARCHING SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

1. The cuts in local authority funding are having a major impact on building preservation trusts.
2. The impact is not just on grants but also on all elements of strategic work from planning documents to support with difficult owners.
3. Despite difficulties, Trusts all wish to maintain and nurture good relationships with the local authorities even though this is proving harder work.
4. Trusts feel that the changes could result in more opportunities for them to provide heritage services and take on local authority assets through community asset transfer. Trusts are saying that there is now more of a willingness from some councils to work as partners and a greater recognition that trusts can be part of the solution.
5. Trusts are working hard to become financially self-reliant in a short period of time, diversifying their income streams and being entrepreneurially creative but the situation is proving very challenging, even for larger trusts.
6. Building preservation trusts are doing great things but most trusts are not regularly recording the impact of their work so they do not have the hard evidence to justify support. Many felt that they should be better at recording their impacts and are seeking a user-friendly model to work from.
7. Trusts demonstrate a strong commitment to the long-term future of their historic buildings. Most have ring-fenced funds and all are committed to creating resources to fund the future maintenance.
8. It is common for trusts to have highly skilled professional trustees with expertise in conservation, property, marketing and community engagement skills.
9. In relation to community involvement, most building preservation trusts now have significant and on-going community engagement, although the audiences tend to be self-selecting rather than representative of the population.
10. Succession planning is an issue for many trusts, particularly for posts of Chairman or Treasurer, as Trustees are struggling to find younger trustees with enough time and energy.
11. The interviews also revealed the demand for more advice and support on maintenance and business planning, possibly reflecting more single project trusts taking on the operation of their buildings.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS BY INDIVIDUAL QUESTION

Changing relationships with local authority

Current relationship

1. There is a huge variation in the relationships Trusts have with local authorities as some trust work across a wide geographic area and some trusts only work on one building.
2. Most trusts have well developed relationships with their local councils, often at a high level, as well as at officer level
3. Councils help with ownership of property (several have bought property to save it and then worked with Trust to restore the building), grants, putting pressure on owners to release properties to Trusts, interest free loans to underwrite cashflow for projects, strategic support in planning documents, and officer support with planning applications etc. Some have also written bids for Trusts.

Changes over last 2 years

1. All trusts have noticed a big reduction in services from Local Authorities, resulting in delays in securing planning permission, and a dramatic reduction in grants for both projects and in some cases core costs.
2. Many trusts have also noticed the impact on strategic measures, such as Urgent Works Notices or putting pressure on owners. The cuts appear to have significantly reduced councils' capacity and confidence to help Trusts in the wider sense.
3. However many trusts feel that the relationship is now better, as Local Authorities are starting to see trusts as part of the solution to their problems. Trusts are also being recognised as having significant skills in conservation and related matters that could lead to them providing services for the LAs, if they do not already do so.

Reasons for changes

1. All trusts believe that the changes are due to funding cuts but that reduced staffing is having a knock on effect on important non-financial strategic things such as planning documents and support with difficult owners.

Impact of changes on work of the Trust

1. Trusts are having to work harder to maintain good relationships with local authority/ies.
2. Trusts are having to think more entrepreneurially in order to survive in the future

3. Trusts are increasingly having to demonstrate their value and importance as the competition for funds increases.

Relationship with Local Authorities going forward

1. All Trusts assume good relationships with their Councils will be maintained, but that the pattern of having councillors on the Board which was common is likely to change. Instead trusts more likely to work at high level with senior officers and keep independent but close relationships with a wider range of councillors.
2. All trusts assumed that there would be little or no financial support in the future, unless it was through commissioned services.
3. All agreed that the relationships would be different and some felt that it would be better balanced with trusts being recognised as part of the solution.

Future care

Do you have a Maintenance Plan?

1. Most trusts had maintenance plans in place. Many are based on the HLF model but where the projects were not HLF funded, trusts tended to have less formal maintenance plans. In the case of one trust they have in house conservation builders who do all the repairs.

Do you have funds ring-fenced for the future maintenance of buildings?

1. Most trusts have funds ring-fenced for maintenance, especially those that have HLF funding. In many cases the projects have only recently been completed so reserves are very modest.

Are funds ring-fenced because of funding conditions?

1. For new trusts doing a single project with HLF funding the maintenance plans have been done because of funding conditions but evidence from more established trusts demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that reserves are built up for the future care of the buildings.
2. Trusts take on buildings at risk and put in huge effort to improve them so they intrinsically understand the importance of maintaining buildings.
3. Trustees are legally obliged to keep assets in good repair so the legal structure of the trust endorses the need for maintenance plans.

Do trusts employ architects/surveyors?

1. Most funded projects employ a professional team to complete restoration work but do not employ architects for maintenance work. However many

trusts have access to high level of skills through trustee architects and surveyors who do regular condition surveys.

Do you use volunteers for maintenance and are there any physical challenges?

1. The majority of trusts have volunteers doing some level of maintenance on the buildings, contents and grounds, but often only in quite small numbers. They tend to do work at low level; leaving paid professionals to do the higher level work such as cleaning out gutters.
2. A number of trusts interviewed arranged regular volunteer work parties, had well developed Health and Safety procedures and trained volunteers.
3. The Trust that has the in house building team (see earlier notes) uses trained volunteers alongside paid specialists.

Income streams for future maintenance

1. Most trusts have a mix of income streams. Many rely on visitor and event income and keep costs down by using volunteers to open the property. Rents are another common source of income. Some provide paid consultancy and conservation services to local authorities. One has a popular holiday let within the property. Norwich Preservation Trust creates a sinking fund from services charges on its rented buildings.
2. Heritage Trust for the North West is unusual in having income from retail, catering and building trading companies.
3. Several trusts we spoke to are still developing their business plans so the income streams are only projected.

Are their gaps in support services for future care?

1. The responses to this question were very varied and depended on the skills of individual boards. Some trusts wanted more about maintenance plans, some wanted property advice on leases etc, others wanted more advice on governance. Trusts were especially interested in toolkits/models for things like recording impacts, maintenance plans etc.
2. A lot of trusts had older Trustees looking to step down but were experiencing problems recruiting active new trustees and wanted support in that area.
3. Several trusts remarked that there was plenty of advice around, but they wanted an independent voice such as UKAPT to point them towards the most user friendly and workable models, rather than having to spend a lot of time having to research advice which might not be relevant to their project or be too onerous to maintain.

Challenges of community engagement

Details of current community involvement

1. The majority of Trusts are closely engaged with their communities through events, open days and volunteering.
2. However there are a few established trusts that concentrate on delivering the building projects and do limited community engagement, such as Norwich Preservation Trust.
3. Although Trusts are mostly well connected to their communities only a few are working to widen their audiences or target hard to reach groups, such as Birmingham Conservation Trust and Heritage Lincolnshire.

Any difficulties in attracting visitors/volunteers and users?

1. Most Trusts expressed no difficulties in attracting volunteers or visitors, with modest marketing and word of mouth working well for them.
2. However they were having difficulties with recruiting trustees, especially younger Trustees. See earlier notes about recruitment of Trustees

Are your Trustees active and if so what roles do they do?

1. The majority of Trusts had active and skilled trustees, although there was concern from many trusts that their trustees were over retirement age and recruiting younger trustees was proving difficult.
2. Many trusts benefited from professional trustees who did repair surveys, conservation work, property management, legal negotiations, etc.
3. Other trustees managed volunteers, did research, took photographs, did social media, helped with event management and maintenance.
4. Another key role for many trustees is liaison with their local authorities.

What roles do you use volunteers for?

1. Helping with opening the property and events are the most common volunteer tasks, but maintenance, research and archiving are all commonly done by volunteers. Other trusts use volunteers for administrative tasks, social media and machinery conservation.

Are there any formal volunteer structures?

1. Most of the larger trusts have well developed volunteer structures but even smaller trusts that use a lot of volunteers have put policies in place.
2. Several trusts have volunteers working alongside their paid staff or contractors.

Does your Trust work with partners and if so what type?

1. Partnership working is common amongst trusts, with most trusts interviewed indicating that partnership are key to their operation and success.

At what stage does your Trust start to work with Partners?

1. Most trusts adopt a fairly pragmatic approach to partnerships, developing them as they go along and the opportunities arise.

Does your trust record any social, economic or environmental impacts on a regular basis?

1. Almost all trusts interviewed thought they ought to be doing more consistent recording of impacts, but several felt that they did not have the capacity.
2. The economic and social impacts were more likely to be recorded than environmental ones, although some trusts felt this would become increasingly important.
3. HLF funding is a major spur to recording impacts.

If impacts are recorded what methodology is used?

1. Trusts opening their properties to the public are good at recording visitors and in some cases capture film of participants and testimonials.
2. Health and safety laws mean that volunteers' hours working on maintenance and repairs are closely recorded and monitored.
3. Economic impacts are measured through direct jobs created and visitor spend generated.
4. Trusts would welcome a robust, easily used toolkit for recording impacts.