

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Where is Planning going?

It's been hard to keep up with the changes in planning legislation and practice since the publication of first PPS5 and then the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (reported in *LA 13* no 2 (Autumn 2011) 30) and even more difficult to predict what their impact will be on archaeology and the historic environment in general.

Let's start with the *Penfold Review*, and the government's proposed implementation of it. The overall aim is to 'minimise the burden of complying with development consents, and to de-regulate entirely where it is appropriate'. This impinges on the heritage protection in various ways:

- To reduce the number of 'unnecessary' applications for Listed Building Consent (LBC), 'the Government will enable the extent of a listed building's special interest to be legally defined in its list entry',
- So that developers can plan with more certainty, 'the Government will enable developers to seek a Certificate of Immunity (COI) from listing or scheduling at any time, valid for five years',
- To reduce the need for repeated applications for LBC, 'the Government will allow owners of listed buildings and local authorities to enter into Statutory Management Agreements',
- To reduce the paperwork involved, 'the Government will remove the requirement for Conservation Area Consent when demolishing unlisted buildings in a conservation area, and make this subject to planning permission instead'.

These measures will require more information from the List than is usually

available, so 'the Government will commission English Heritage to begin a programme to update the list entries of listed buildings, providing more detail on the special interest of listed buildings'. The programme will start with enhancing the listing of 20th-century office buildings.

We now move on to the English Heritage event *Next steps for England's heritage*, held on 23rd May, at which John Penrose MP (Minister for Tourism and Heritage) spoke of the need to 'nail for ever the canard that economic growth and heritage are mutually opposed' and said that they 'coexist brilliantly'. However, to make that work, he said that some streamlining is required [roughly as outlined above].

In response, Peter Hinton, Director of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), regretted the lack of any parallel process for Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), and pointed out that the process of granting SMC for archaeological purposes continues to be managed without reference to the professional accreditation of the archaeologists concerned, an obvious weakness in the system.

English Heritage has announced various initiatives in this area:

- An online Powerpoint briefing on the NPPF and a series of training courses for the heritage sector about the implications of the NPPF for the historic environment,
- Revision of the online tool *Placecheck* (www.placecheck.info/) to help groups identify what they like, dislike and want to change about their area, and advice for local groups on Neighbourhood Plans.
- Developing an indicator to measure

the capacity of local authorities to safeguard the historic environment,

- The publication this summer of the first comprehensive guide to local heritage listing in England.

We shall have to be alert to both possible benefits and threats that are likely to come in future consultations, and in particular to make sure that the buried heritage does not miss out vis-à-vis the more immediately visible parts of our heritage, but that both are given equal esteem.

Grants from City of London Archaeological Trust

Applications to CoLAT (the City of London Archaeological Trust) are invited for small grants to assist archaeological work in the City of London and its environs (roughly, out to the M25). CoLAT prefers to support research, education and publication, especially by amateur groups, but most kinds of archaeological work will be considered. As in recent years, the funds available include a grant from *London Archaeologist* (£5000 in 2011) to assist projects to overcome any hurdles that they may keep them from publication.

The guidelines for applicants and application forms have been revised, and are posted on the CoLAT website (www.colat.org.uk). The deadline for applications this year is 28 September 2012. The meeting of CoLAT to consider the applications is in early December. Grants are available for one year only from 1 April 2013, so careful planning may be required. See the website or contact the Secretary, John Schofield, jschd.demon.co.uk for further details.

Annual Lecture and General Meeting

London Archaeologist's 43rd AGM was held on Tuesday 22nd May at the Institute of Archaeology

The following officers were elected: Managing Editor, Peter Rowsome; Editor, Clive Orton; Secretary, Becky Wallower; Treasurer; Alastair

Ainsworth; Membership Secretary, Jo Udall. Victoria Donnelly, Richard Gilpin, Victoria Ridgeway and Lucy Whittingham were re-elected, and Dominic Perring was elected to the Publication Committee. Standing down, Josephine Brown was thanked for her

excellent chairmanship .

After the AGM, Professor Warwick Rodwell reviewed ten years of important work in his enthusiastically received lecture: *The Archaeology of a Royal Peculiar: new light on Westminster Abbey and its furnishings.*