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# **NEWSBLOG**

## **FROM THE IHBC NATIONAL OFFICE**

### **IHBC CONDEMNS PLANNING SKILLS INQUIRY REPORT**

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*Date: 24/07/2008*

The failure of the CLG committee inquiry on planning skills to recognise conservation needs was condemned today by The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), the UK's professional body for historic environment conservation.

'The institute welcomes the committee's focus on planning skills, but the absence in the report of even a mention of conservation is scandalous – these are essential skills for delivering 'heritage at the heart of planning'', said IHBC Director Dr Seán O'Reilly. 'It flies in the face of the high profile historic places and traditional buildings now have in government. Baroness Andrews' statements at the IHBC's recent national conference in Guildford confirmed the central role of existing places in the national planning system, while bodies representing nearly 1/4 million professionals joined up to respond to the draft Heritage Bill and it's focus on area conservation'.

Dr O'Reilly went on to say: 'At the same time skills challenges for conservation professionals in all specialisms, including planning, have never been higher. Research from ConstructionSkills, the sector skills council for the construction industry, has highlighted a problem where over a third of specialist practices report difficulties in recruiting professionals. The IHBC's own research has shown that 1 in 5 planning authorities don't have their own skilled specialist conservation staff. Salaries are falling, even before the credit crunch, and pressures from business, amenity and environment are continually increasing. At the same time DCMS wants to devolve to our planning authorities more direct management of our valued places. If these are not skills issues for planning, I don't know what are. And if it still doesn't register on the committee's radar, then maybe we should have a new committee' Dr O'Reilly concluded.

#### **References:**

For IHBC & sector news see: [www.ihbc.org.uk](http://www.ihbc.org.uk)

In June the National Heritage Training Group launched its survey of built heritage sector professionals: <http://www.nhtg.org.uk/newsIndex.asp>

CMS parliamentary inquiry into the Draft Heritage Bill is expected next week: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmcmds.htm#uncorr>

#### **Queries:**

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