

A third report on Local Authority Staff Resources

Produced by English Heritage, the Association of Local Government Officers and the
Institute of Historic Building Conservation

August 2011

I Executive Summary

1.1 In early 2011 there were 957.5 full time equivalent (FTE) historic environment members of staff in local authorities in England. This comprised 606.5 FTEs working on building and area conservation and 351 FTEs archaeological staff. These figures represent a reduction of 5.6% since comprehensive data was first collected in 2003¹; this breaks down into a reduction of 9.2% for Conservation Officers and a slight increase of 1.4% for Archaeological Officers. A high point in terms of numbers of historic environment staff was reached in 2006 when 1224 FTEs were working in local authorities, since then there has been a 21.8% reduction in numbers. In the past year there has been an overall reduction of 11.9%, with a reduction of 13.5% for conservation officers and 8.9% for archaeological officers (see figure 1).

1.2 It is concerning to note that whilst the planning application decisions show uplift in the past year of 5.2%, and listed building consent decisions show a slightly larger increase of 7.1%, the LA HE staff resource has reduced by 11.9% over the same period.

¹ As noted in the 2009 report, the figures for building conservation staffing contained in the Local Authority Conservation Provision Survey 2003 and in the later surveys were considered broadly equivalent for the purposes of providing a baseline, though while the earlier set will be robust in themselves, there is no way to confirm comparability between the statistics for 2003 and the 2006, 2008 and 2010 figures. See Implementing the Heritage Protection Reforms: A Report on Local Authority and English Heritage Staff Resources, EH/ALGAO/IHBC, May 2009.
<http://www.helm.org.uk/upload/pdf/LPA-resources2.pdf?1311765498>

2 Introduction

2.1 This report has been produced following the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Round and the subsequent Local Government Settlement which were announced in October and December 2010 respectively. It compares the historic environment staff resources in local authorities in the early months of 2011 with those available since the data was first collected for Conservation Officers in 2003.

2.2 This report updates the position from last year's report on the change in staffing resources from the historic environment in local authorities; and includes an initial analysis of the available planning and listed building consent data for 2010-2011.

2.3 English Heritage staff resources working with local planning authorities on planning-related and grant-aid work have not been reassessed for this report as there has broadly been no change since the 2009 report.

2.4 This report has been produced jointly by English Heritage with the Association of Local Government Officers (ALGAO), which is the forum representing archaeologists working for local authorities and national parks, and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), which is the professional body for building conservation practitioners and historic environment experts many of whom are in local government.

2.5 The incoming coalition government cancelled the plans for another round of local government reform. However sharing of resources and expertise between authorities has been positively encouraged by the government and it is likely that this will continue for some time. This sharing of resources and expertise takes many differing forms ranging from 'merger' of whole authorities to combined services, such as planning and development management, covering number authorities.

2.6 The statistics include the often extensive design role of specialist conservation officers. However they do not include roles carried out by non-

conservation design practitioners where there is no appropriate oversight, even though their actions may have substantial, and often detrimental, impacts, especially on the non-designated historic environment²

3 Local authority staffing provision

3.1 In early 2011 there were 957.5 full time equivalent (FTE) historic environment members of staff in local authorities in England. This comprised 606.5 FTEs working on building and area conservation and 351 archaeological staff.

3.2 These figures are for permanent, temporary and consultancy full time equivalents that provide historic environment expert advice within Local Authorities. The posts are those for which a related historic environment professional or academic qualification is required and for other staff, not fully qualified, who are engaged on equivalent work. Administrative staff is not included. Time spent directly managing staff is counted, as it has a direct consequence for the management of the historic environment. The management time of the head of a historic environment team is therefore included but that of the head of a group which includes the historic environment team is not.

3.3 The data was collected by ALGAO and IHBC. ALGAO has been keeping figures on local government archaeological staff resources on an annual basis since 1998; IHBC has also produced figures in 2006 and 2008, with broadly equivalent figures available from the Local Authority Conservation Provision Survey of 2003. Although there is more data for the archaeological resource, this report looks at the years for which both archaeological and building conservation data is available. These are 2003, 2006, 2008, 2009/10 and 2011.

3.4 The trend in employment in specialist historic environment services shows that there was an overall loss of nearly 129FTEs between the survey this year and

² For an indication of the cross-over between conservation and design activities see the see the IHBC paper 'Functions and titles of conservation and design services' (http://www.ihbc.org.uk/recent_papers/docs/ihbc_survey_service_titles.pdf).

last years survey. This is made up of a loss of nearly 95 conservation officer FTEs and just over 34 archaeological FTEs. This shows an increasing rate of loss over the previous years when the overall loss between 2008 and 2009/10 was 68FTEs, with a breakdown of 52FTE conservation officers and almost 16FTE archaeological officers.

3.5 These figures translate into an overall reduction of 11.9% between 2009/10 and 2011, with a reduction of 13.5% for conservation officers and 8.9% for archaeological officers. This represents a reduction of 5.6% since comprehensive data was first collected in 2003; this breaks down into a reduction of 9.2% for Conservation Officers and an increase of 1.4% for Archaeological Officers. These figures for the past year compare with an overall reduction between 2008 and 2009/10 of 5.9%, with a reduction for conservation officers of 6.9% for conservation officers and 4.0% for archaeological officers. The most recent data shows that the number of HE staff in LAs is falling at an increasing rate, with over 10% of the overall resource being lost during the past year

3.6 The longer term trend since data was first collected for conservation officers in 2003 shows that the conservation officers have reduced in numbers by 9.2% (61.5 FTE) whilst the archaeological officers have gone up very slightly by 1.4% (4.7 FTE) over the same period. Overall for both combined the loss has been 5.6% (56.8 FTE)

3.7 These longer term trends are shown in the graph below and indicate a peak was reached in 2006 with subsequent falls for both conservation and archaeological staff. For conservation officers the 2011 figure is 25.8% (210.5 FTE) lower than that recorded at their peak in 2006 and that archaeology officers suffered a fall of 13.8% (56.1 FTE) over the same period.

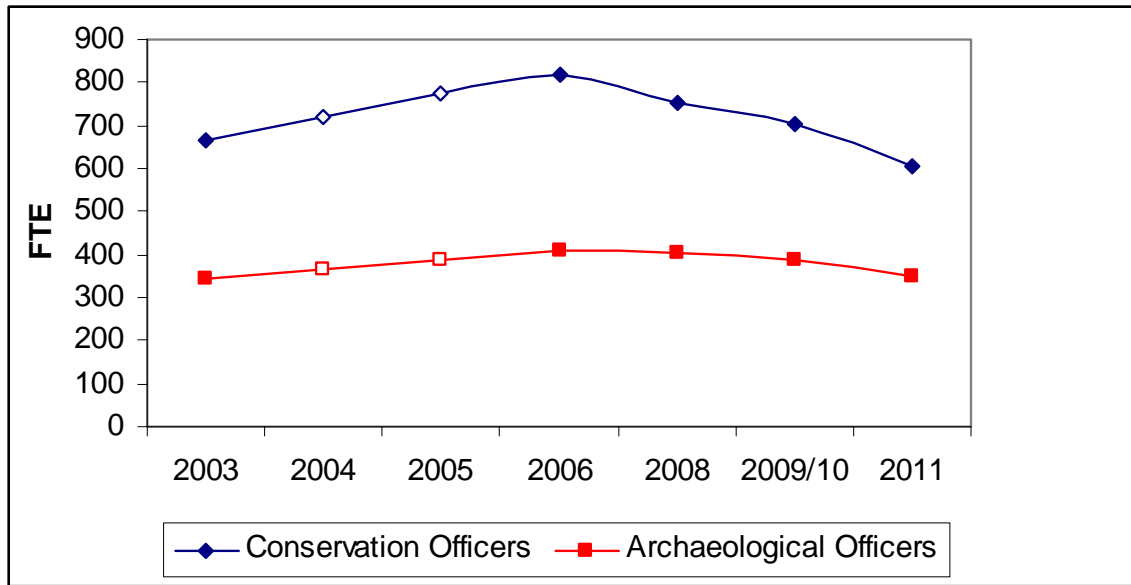


Fig 1 Conservation and archaeological staff expressed as FTEs

4 Regional Breakdowns

4.1 The regional breakdown of the resource confirm the overall trend from the national picture with all regions recording a reduction in capacity for both archaeology and conservation, with the one exception of the archaeological provision in London which remained static from 2009/10.

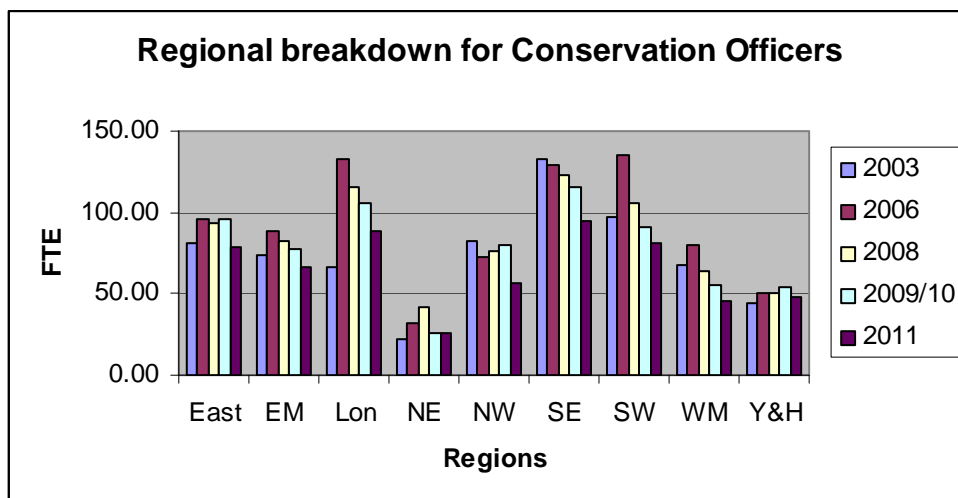


Fig 2 Regional breakdown for Conservation Officers expressed as FTEs

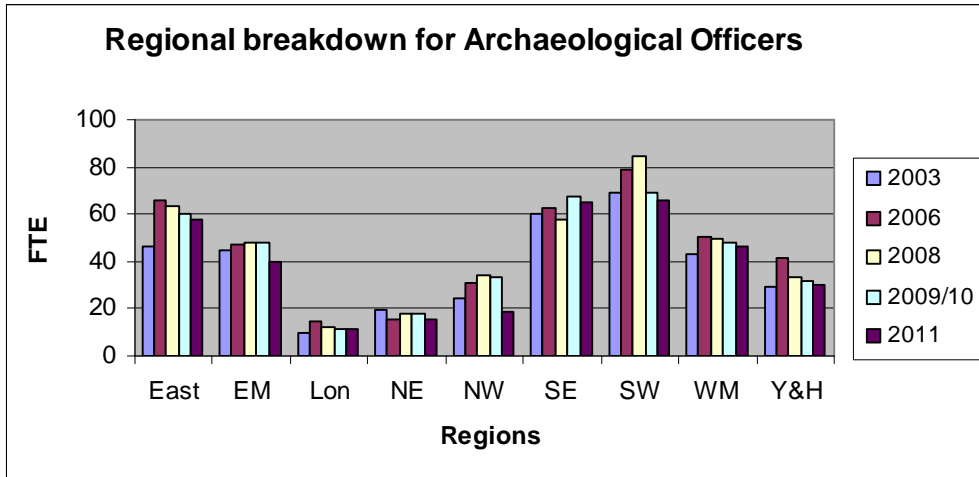


Fig 3 Regional breakdown for Archaeological Officers expressed as FTEs

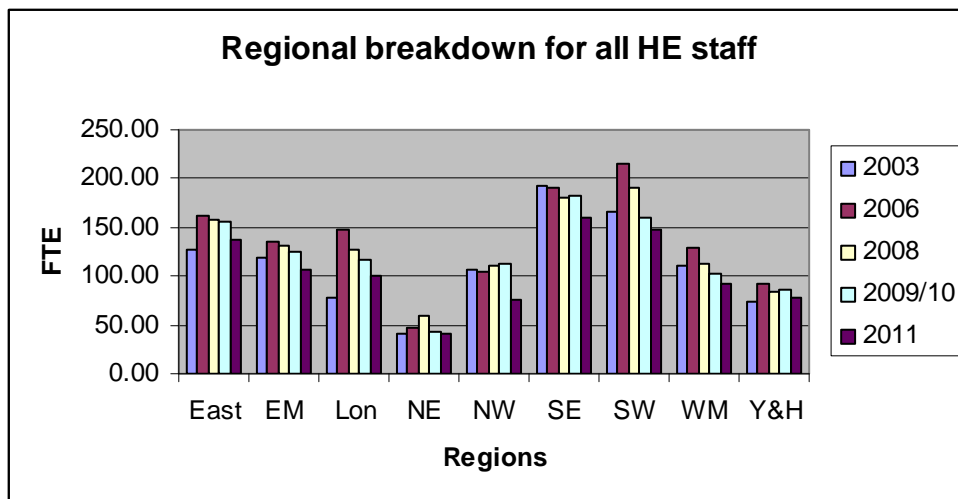


Fig 4 All local authority historic environment staff expressed as FTEs

4.2 These tables show that the North East had the lowest drop in overall numbers with a loss of 2.9FTE, this is probably a reflection of the low overall numbers of LA HE staff in the region. The North West region had the largest drop with a loss of 37.6FTE, which represents 29% of the total, with the conservation and archaeological officers both suffering significant losses. At present we have been unable to identify whether there were specific causes of such large losses in the North West for either the conservation or archaeological officers.

5 Planning Data 2010-11

5.1 The CLG planning data for 2010-11 has been recently released and shows that there has been an upturn of nearly 22,000 in the numbers of a planning application decisions compared to the previous year. In 2010-11 there are 439,905 planning application decisions compared to the previous year's figure of 418,000. This equates to an increase of 5.2% over the past year. When the data is broken down into regions the picture becomes considerably less homogenous. Most of the increase is accounted for in London, South East and East

5.2 The Listed Building Consent decisions also record a small increase of just under 2000 decisions, 29,168 in 2010-11 as opposed to 27,234 for the previous year, which equates to an increase of 7.1% over the past year. The graph below shows the high degree of consistency between the profiles for planning application decisions and listed building consent decisions. When the data is looked at regionally there is no pattern or consistency, for instance the North East records an increase whilst the North West doesn't.

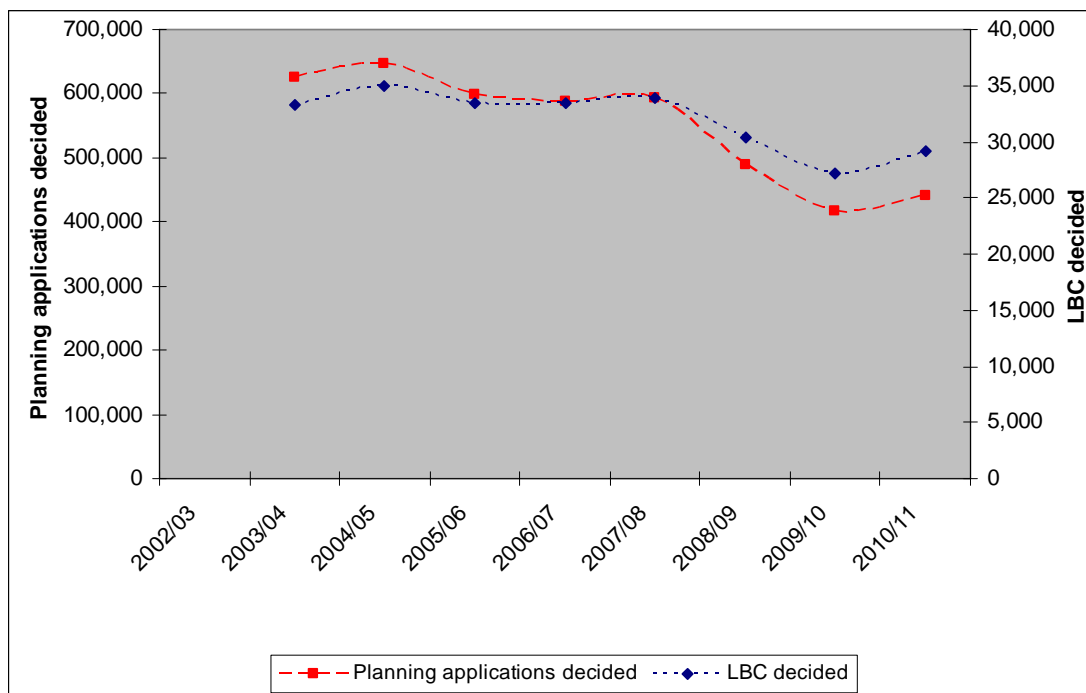


Fig 5 Plot of planning applications and LBC decisions showing the trend since 2003/4

5.3 These uplifts in numbers of decisions in the past year reverses the drop in numbers over the past three years. It is too early to say whether the longer term

drop from the peak in 2004-5 is going to be reversed for either planning applications or listed building consents. The figure above shows the degree of consistency between the graph for LBC and that for planning applications.

5.4 It is concerning to note that whilst the planning application decisions show uplift in the past year of 5.2%, and listed building consent decisions show a slightly larger increase of 7.1%, the LA HE staff resource has reduced by 11.9% over the same period. If these trends continue it is likely that the demand, as demonstrated by planning applications and listed building consent applications, will exceed the capacity of the local authorities to be able to respond with suitably qualified experts and therefore fulfil their obligations under PPS5.

5.5 Listed Building Consent decisions and planning application decisions are used as proxy indicators of the workload for conservation and archaeological staff because these are the only data that CLG collect and publish on an annual basis. It should be noted and remembered that both archaeological and conservation staff spend varying amounts of time doing work which is not reflected in the planning or LBC statistics e.g. agri-environmental stewardship.

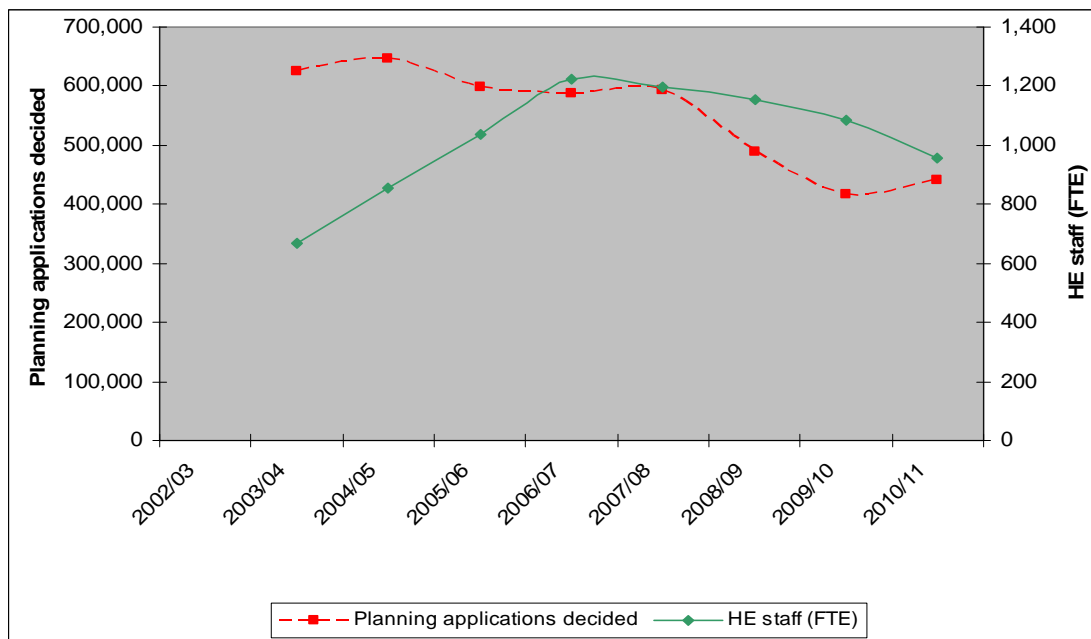


Fig 6 Plot of planning applications decided with the overall number of local authority historic environment staff

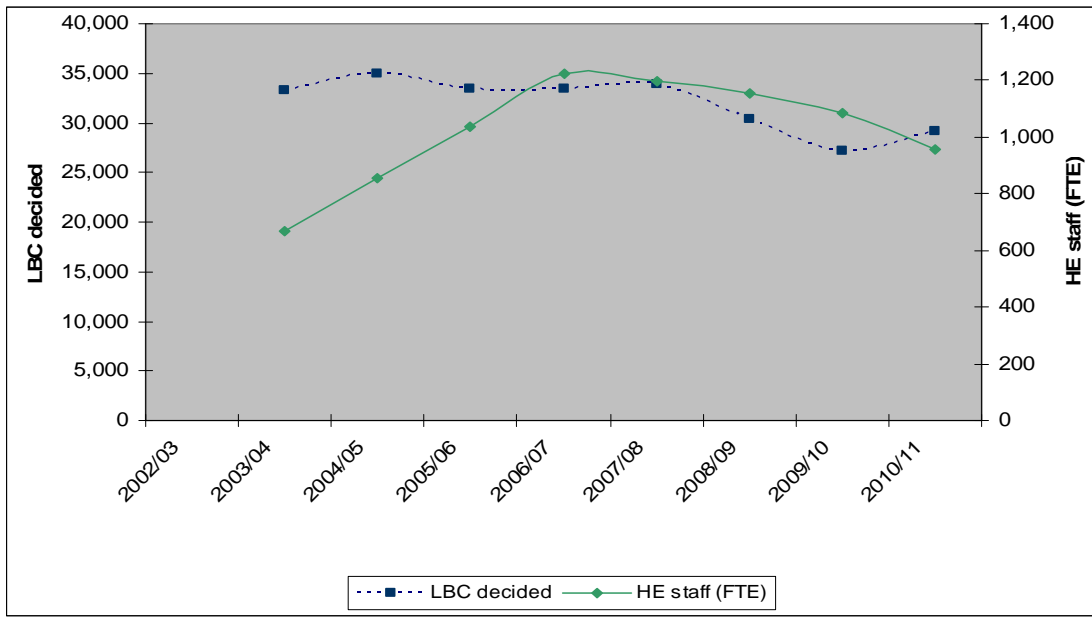


Fig 7 Plot of listed building consents decided with the overall number of local authority historic environment staff.

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August 2011