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NEWS FROM THE IHBC

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NEWS FROM IHBC LONDON

Heritage professional at IHBC London's recent Conference on Renewable Energy and the Historic Environment were told, in no uncertain terms, that Britain's historic buildings have to 'shape up' in response to climate change.

The sector was warned not to be distracted by renewable regeneration when the biggest issue facing building built pre-1920 was energy inefficiency and heat loss. Buildings must be made more efficient before it is worth attempting renewable generation.

Keynote speaker, eminent services engineer, Max Fordham went so far as to suggest radical interventions in a bid to challenge convention. He said,

'I see no good reason why inefficient Georgian brick buildings, like those on Bedford Square, can not be rendered externally to improve their efficiency. The windows could be replaced and brought forward in order to secure the correct visual effect.'

Whilst this caused consternation amongst delegates it reinforced the message that conservation professionals and the building industry must come up with acceptable solutions for historic buildings in terms of services, ventilation and insulation.

The 130 attendees were also reminded of the increasing threat to heritage, at home and abroad, from climate change and that a failure to respond with flexibility could lead to the widespread destruction of historic buildings through flooding and sea level changes.

A summary of the conference papers will be published in IHBC's magazine 'Context' early in 2008.

EDITOR'S NOTES

1/ The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) is the professional body for the United Kingdom representing building conservation specialists and historic environment practitioners in the public and private sectors. The Institute exists to establish the highest standards of conservation practice, to support the effective protection and enhancement of the historic built environment, and to promote heritage-led regeneration and access to the historic environment for all.

2/ IHBC is 10 years old and has a wide and diverse membership of architects, surveyors, engineers, designers, archaeologists and planners. It is the lead professional body in the sector that the Government turns to for advice and input into policy on the historic environment.

3/ It is managed by a Council body of volunteer members, supported by a Director and staff.

4/ The conference, held at grade I listed Royal College of Physicians, London, was the 4th annual conference organised by IHBC London Branch. The branch's 150 members are at the heart of conservation in the capital, working for government agencies, local government and the private sector.

5/ Max Fordham founded Max Fordham LLP in 1966. The practice's holistic approach to the design of building services has contributed to a list of sustainable, award-winning buildings, most recently Heelis – the new HQ for the National Trust in Swindon – with Feilden Clegg Bradley, which won the RIBA Sustainability Award in 2006. Max Fordham is Fellow and Past Present of the CIBSE, and is Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and Honorary Fellow of the RIBA. He is Visiting Professor in Building & Design at University of Bath and is the only Building Services Engineer on the Building Magazine's Hall of Fame list of 40 people who have had the greatest, most positive impact on building over the past 40 years.