



## THE INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION

### QUANTIFYING LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY CONSERVATION STAFFING

#### **Project Number**

English Heritage Project Number 5154

IHBC Project reference CP06/06

#### **Executive Summary**

This project was sponsored by English Heritage in partnership with the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), which carried out the survey of all the Local Planning Authorities in England between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2006.

It is conceived as part of a projected wider survey, investigating the local delivery of conservation services through Local Authorities. The findings are intended to help complement the study sponsored by DCMS and English Heritage, carried out by WS Atkins and focussing on a small number of Local Planning Authorities and their services (2006). These highlighted the importance of local connections of conservation staff on securing government priorities/agendas. The project is the start of a wider response to the widely-accepted need to understand LPA conservation strategies and resources in more detail. While professional and Local Authority services in archaeology have been reviewed in great depth with the support of English Heritage through ALGAO, and a core body of information is available for that part of the management of the historic environment, local conservation services have received only limited analysis (eg Grover 2003).

However the findings are also a stand-alone snap shot of conservation staffing in October 2006 and are especially valuable because it is a fully comprehensive survey covering all local planning authorities rather than a sample or incomplete full survey. It is the first national mapping exercise of lead staff responsible for delivering conservation in English Local Planning Authorities.

#### **Restrictions:**

The IHBC information was collected through the IHBC membership network and cannot be used for marketing purposes. Intellectual property Rights are held by IHBC and licensed to English Heritage.

## **1. Research methods**

363 local planning authorities were contacted during October 2006. These authorities all have local planning authority status dealing with planning applications within their area. Not only does this, therefore, include two tier 128 District, 99 Borough and 12 City Councils but also 114 Unitary Authorities, 9 National Parks and 1 Development Corporation. The work did not include County Councils, as these fall outside the definition of local planning authorities. A Local Planning Authority is here defined as the local authority or council that is empowered by law to exercise planning functions for a particular area of the United Kingdom. The authority is usually the local Borough or District Council but National Park Authorities are also considered to be local planning authorities. County councils are the authority for waste and minerals matters only and do not deal with majority of conservation related applications including householder applications. The survey also excluded authorities outside England, as the remit was defined by the needs of English Heritage.

Complete or almost totally complete responses were successfully obtained from 100% of these authorities.

The initial point of contact for survey work was where applicable the IHBC member in the authority. If there was, as is often the case, more than one IHBC member then the member with the most senior job title was chosen. If the IHBC member did not consider themselves to be the most senior conservation contact in the authority that person was then contacted. Where the senior contact was unavailable for a period of time information was gathered from other colleagues directly involved with the conservations service.

Telephone survey work was carried out in October 2006, following planning and development in mid-September. To ensure a consistent approach was all carried out by Fiona Newton, the IHBC Project Officer.

Each person contacted was asked for detailed contact details for the senior conservation contact in the Authority. They were also asked to quantify the size and type of their conservation service providing information on job titles etc of all their conservation staff. This included gathering information on how many permanent and temporary in house conservation staff were employed by each authority along with an assessment of use of consultants to provide a

conservation service or making use of services from other authorities through a service level agreement or similar.

Inevitably putting respondents on the spot during a telephone call could influence the accuracy and quality of their responses. Many assessments of the full time equivalent of staffing, and more particular of the use of consultants or other authorities through a service level agreement, were broad estimates on the part of the interviewee rather than information based upon contractual arrangements. Given the level of survey carried out the research has taken this information on face value and assumed the estimations are broadly accurate and has made no attempts to alter it.

The responses were recorded directly into a database in File Maker Pro format and example of an entry from the database is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1 Example of part of survey record form in File maker Pro database**

IHBC	
Name of authority	East Lindsey District Council
Local authority department in which service sits	Planning & Regeneration
Address of Local Authority	Toller Hall
Address of Local Authority 2	Hatley Park
Address of Local Authority 3	
Address of Local Authority 4	
County	LINCOLNSHIRE
Postcode	LN11 0UP
Type of Local Authority	DC
IHBC Branch	E4
Area	
Population	131,447
Number of Listed Buildings	c. 1400
Number of Conservation Areas	17
Name of senior conservation contact	Robert Walker
Job title of senior conservation contact	Principal Assistant (Policy & Conservation)
IHBC Membership number	Q755PE4
Other professional memberships	RTM
Telephone number of senior conservation contact	01507 326497
email address	robert.walker@e-lincs.gov.uk
Does authority have a conservation service	Yes
Main function of service	4
Other conservation related services in Local Authority	None
FTE directly employed permanent specialist trained staff	1
FTE temporary specialist conservation staff	0
Number of full time equivalent staff working on conservation	1
Service level agreement with other authorities	None
FTE of services from other authorities through SLA	0
Outsourced conservation services	Yes
Full time equivalent outsourced services	1
IHBC priorities to assist LA - research training guidance	
Notes	Previous had 3 CO's. Resignation of conservation service lead to a further 4 of appointed and high achieving staff (success at CAPS, HERES, THD, capital projects etc). Two of CO's were transferred to DC leaving the service to provide all other services of service. These 2 staff have now left leaving only 1 CO. One of the DC Officers who is a small amount of conservation has been asked not to take additional staff. Use of two computers is currently necessary until early 2007 to allow recruitment of additional staff.

## **2. Information gathered**

The following information was gathered in each interview:

<b>Name of authority</b>	<i>The full name which is normally used</i>
<b>Local authority department in which service sits</b>	
<b>Address of Local Authority</b>	<i>Postal address including postcode</i>
<b>County</b>	<i>County area at 1974 local government reorganisation. Thus unitary authorities in former counties such as Avon and Cleveland are included as ‘former county of ..’ rather than apportioning them to a county in which they do not sit for local government purposes</i>
<b>Type of Local Authority</b>	<i>The types of local authority considered were as follows; Unitary Authority (UA), District Council (DC), Borough Council (BC), Non unitary City Council (City), National Park (National Park)</i>
<b>Region</b>	<i>The region is defined as that covered by either Government Offices, English Heritage, Regional Development Agency and IHBC membership. The boundaries for all of these are the same although names may vary regions as follows: East Anglia or East of England (EA) East Midlands (EM), London (LO), North or North East (NO), North West (NW), South East (South (SO)+ South East (SE) ), South West (SW) West Midlands (WM) Yorkshire or Yorkshire and Humber (YO)</i>
<b>Population</b>	<i>A field has been allowed of this information but this was not included in the survey</i>
<b>Area</b>	<i>A field has been allowed of this information but this was not included in the survey</i>
<b>Name of senior conservation contact</b>	<i>Respondents were asked who they considered the senior conservation contact in the authority. In the main they saw this person as the team leader or senior most conservation officer, that is the person who directly managed the conservation service and made day to day conservation decisions. In a few cases the name of the departmental manager was given. If the name was given by a third party concerted attempts were made to speak to the senior contact. In the main the named person agreed</i>

*they were the senior contact although some redirected the interviewer towards the conservations staff.*

**Job title of senior conservation contact**

*Job title as provided by senior conservation contact*

**IHBC Member**

*If contact is a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation*

**Other professional memberships**

*Membership of professional institutes other than the IHBC includes RICS, RTPI, RIBA, AIOB, IFA, MLI, ARB etc*

**Telephone number of senior conservation contact**

**Email address**

**Main function of service**

*Interviewees were given four options;*

- Investigation, research and education*
- Project development including regeneration work and project management*
- General Historic Environment Management works more directly related to the planning system such as development control work, planning policy, advice to the public etc.*
- Combination of two or more of the above functions*

**Other conservation related services in Local Authority**

*This question sought to establish if any other conservation services were provided in other departments of the authority. This drew out instances where authorities employ conservation specialists in Regeneration to run conservation led regeneration grant projects or Estates to manage council owner historic buildings. The relationship between these two groups of people can be strong and co-operative but it can also be tenuous. Without this question a number of important conservations services could have been ignored.*

**Full Time Equivalent directly employed permanent specialist trained staff**

**Full Time Equivalent temporary specialist conservation staff**

**Service Level agreement with other authorities**

**Full Time Equivalent of provision**

**from other authorities through Service Level Agreement**

**Outsourced conservation services**

*The use of consultants for conservation work was recorded as:*

- 1. 'Yes' if the consultant provides a regular weekly or monthly service for a set number of days to carry out the same work as a conservation officer (Development control advice, planning policy or advice to the public). It is the equivalent to that which could be carried out by an in house appointment and if possible a FTE given in the next field.*
- 2. 'Project' meaning that consultants are employed for one off easily defined projects. Employment of consultants is based on completion of discrete projects rather than on the amount of days worked. These projects can include work on Conservation Area appraisals and management plans, buildings at risk surveys, project management of enhancement or building projects or structural engineering, architectural or other specialist advice on a particular project.*

**Full time equivalent outsourced services**

**Notes**

*Time was taken to discuss various staffing and service issues with respondents and any comments or anomalies were recorded as notes.*

**Name, Job Title, Professional memberships and IHBC Membership of other staff members**

*Details of other professional conservation staff involved in conservation service in the local authority.*

### **3. Levels of specialist conservation staffing**

#### **a) No staffing or limited staffing**

**62 local authorities have no specialist in house conservation adviser either permanent or temporary**

**39 Authorities have no internal conservation service of any type.** These authorities do not have any in house advisor: neither either a specialist conservation officer or a non-specialist planning officer or similar with some conservation responsibility.

Whilst the majority of the authorities take some limited form of external advice **seven authorities take no conservation advice of any form having neither in house advice, service level agreement nor using consultants.**

21 authorities have only a minimum service using a non specialist member of staff. This is often a junior planner who handles a limited amount of conservation work for a few hours a week and in 12 of these authorities the officer responsible spends less than 2 days a week on conservation work. In some authorities a larger team of planners or urban designers with some conservation knowledge share out the conservation related work. Thus in two authorities teams of 4 and 8 urban designers claim to provide the equivalent of 3 and 2 FTE conservation posts respectively.

Of these authorities 14 received their conservation advice from outsourced consultants. The level of this advice varied from one authority which used consultants on a very occasional basis to one which had the equivalent of a one FTE post provided by a consultant. Of the remainder three used consultants for less than one day a week, six used them for one day a week, two for two days a week and one for four days.

22 of the 39 Authorities without in house advice had a service level agreement for conservation with another authority. In the main this advice came from County Councils – Essex, Durham, West Sussex, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Northumberland and Surrey. In a very small number of cases this advice came from a neighbouring authority.

**b) Levels of permanent specialist staffing**

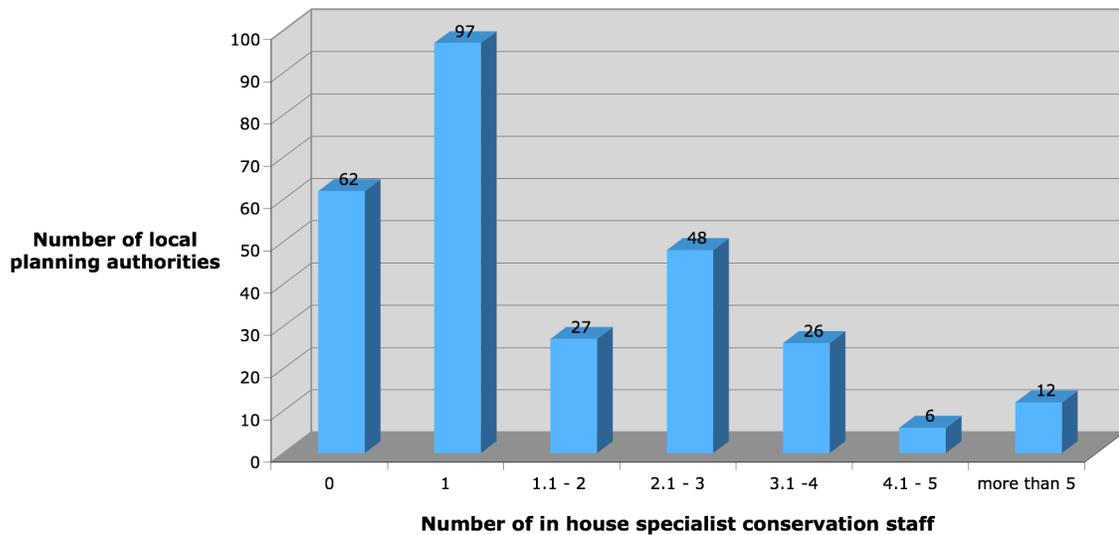
Three hundred authorities have permanent specialist conservation staff. Of these 15 have less than one full time member of staff.

**The largest number of authorities (97) have one full time specialist staff member.**

Of the remainder twenty seven authorities have between one and two FTE staff, fifty seven have 2 members of staff; nineteen have between 2 and 3 staff; 29 authorities have 3 members of staff; 9 have between 3 and 4 staff; 17 have 4 staff; two have between 4 and 5 FTE; four authorities have 5 staff and twelve authorities have more than 5 staff.

Thus 54% of authorities (19 have less than 2 permanent specialist conservation staff whilst only 9.6% (35) have more than 4.

**Figure 2 Conservation Service Provision in English Local Planning Authorities**



#### 4. Use of external consultants

As described above 14 authorities with no internal conservation service outsourced their conservation work to consultants but there is also a bigger picture of the use of consultants by local authorities.

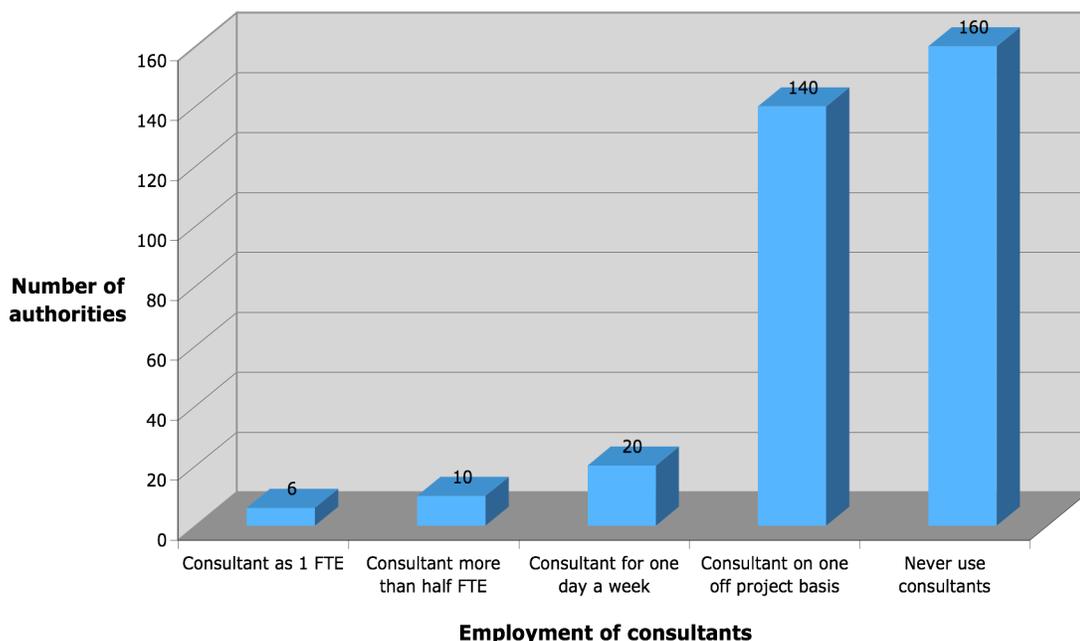
57 local authorities were using consultants on a regular basis to cover day to day workload. Six of these had consultants working for the full time equivalent of one member of staff, ten more used consultants for more than two and a half days a week. The majority (20 authorities) used consultants for one day a week.

Some authorities are also currently using consultants to backfill vacant posts or those where officers are off sick or on some sort of extended leave. Often this use of consultants will cease when normal working arrangements resume.

A very substantial number of authorities (140 authorities or 39%) including those with specialist conservation provision claimed to use consultants on a project basis. Whilst this can include one off reports on single buildings or areas the two most common projects were THI applications which are often complicated and time consuming and Conservation Area Appraisals which are linked into completion of BVPI 219.

160 authorities or 44% claimed to never use consultants as part of their service delivery.

**Figure 3 The use of consultants for conservation work in Local Planning Authorities**



## **5. Temporary Staff**

45 authorities admitted to currently employing temporary specialist conservation staff. The actual figure may be greater than this as they were not asked specifically which of their staff were temporary and so may not always have declared this information. 8 of the temporary staff are part time. 30 authorities employ one full time temporary member of staff whilst six authorities employ two, one employs three and one authority employs six temporary staff.

At least ten appointments of temporary officers have been made to carry out Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans to fulfil BVPI 219. These are often fairly junior assistants on 12 to 18 month contracts. A number of these temporary staff (more than 4) have been funded through the Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) and the funding stream will therefore expire when the PDG ceases.

22.5 FTE posts have been created for temporary staff to manage conservation lead regeneration schemes such as Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative and English Heritage's Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes.

The remaining incumbents of temporary posts are carrying out other general or project specific conservation work with a number working on Buildings at Risk.

The significant number of temporary conservation staff recently appointed to produce Conservation Area Appraisals disguises the real pattern of conservation provision with temporarily higher staffing levels.

## **6. Service level agreements with other authorities**

51 authorities claimed to have a service level agreement with another authority. In the main these were with County Councils – Essex, Durham, West Sussex, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Northumberland and Surrey being those most often referred to.

Some District Councils are also acting on a consultancy basis for their neighbours for example one authority in the South is providing conservations services for two of its neighbours.

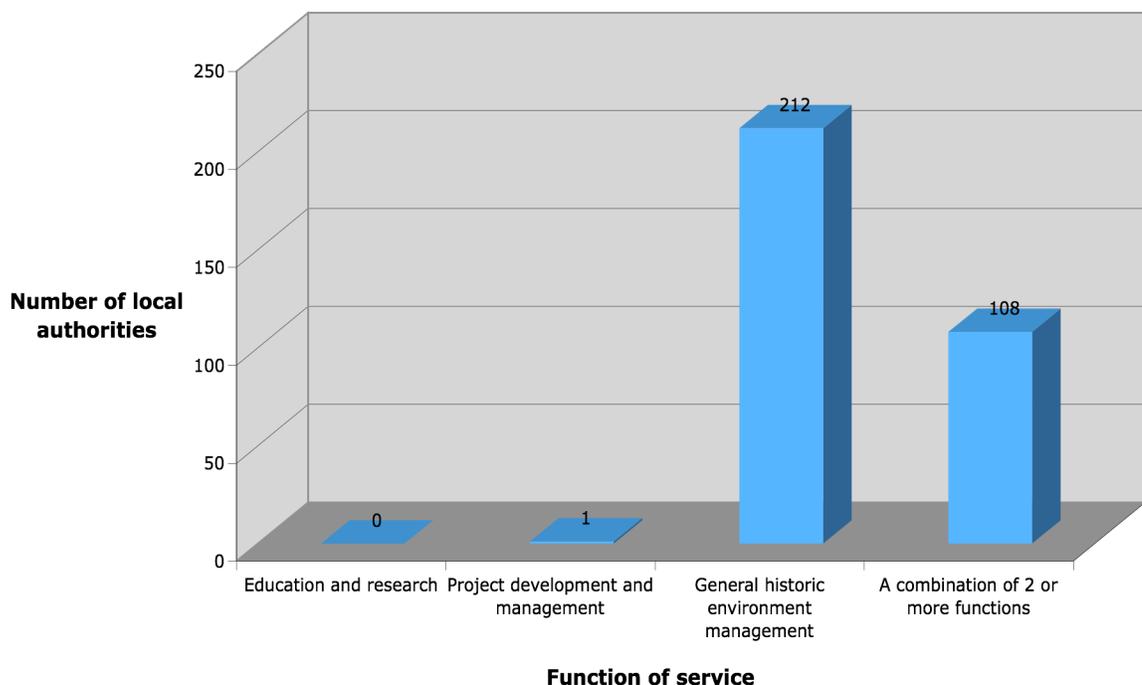
There is also one example of adjoining local authorities coming to an agreement to appoint one conservation officer to work across boundary giving three days to one authority and two to the other.

One other interesting anomaly is in the case of the metropolitan districts of Tyne & Wear. Despite being all being Unitary authorities each pays a contribution towards costs of specialist conservation team based in Newcastle. This arrangement has its roots in old county team and applies to both the single authority without any kind of conservation service and to those with other levels of service provision.

## 7. Main function of service

None of the authorities interviewed claimed to have a conservation service that is mainly education or research based and only 1 felt that all their work was project development or management. The work of 212 authorities is general historic environment management which is directly related to the planning system such as development control work, planning policy and advice to the public. 108 authorities do a combination of work which includes statutory planning and conservation work but also involves developing conservation led regeneration schemes, capital projects, and major improvement schemes.

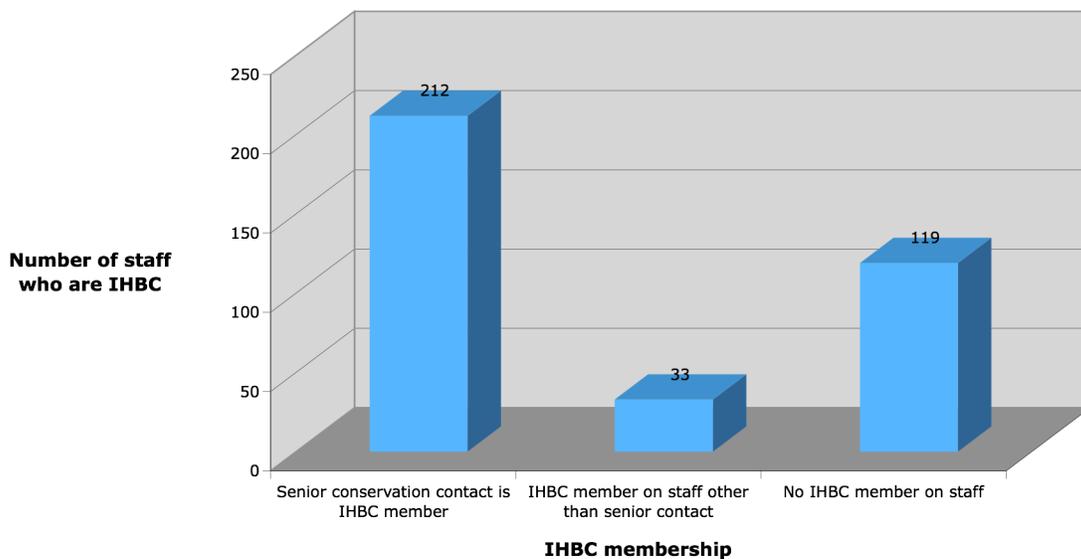
**Figure 4 Function of local authority conservation services**



## 8. IHBC Membership

Of the senior conservation contacts at the 363 authorities contacted 212 were members of the IHBC (190 full, 18 affiliate & 4 associate). Of the remaining authorities 33 had other members of staff below the senior conservation contact who were IHBC members. This left 118 authorities which had no IHBC members, although a number of these do use members as consultants. 245 or 67% of authorities have an in house IHBC member on their staff.

**Figure 5 IHBC Membership in Local Authorities**



## 9. Trends in local government organisation and operation

### a. Vacant positions

The survey found a number of vacant positions in local authority conservation services. A number of causes were found for this

- Uncertainty about pending reorganisations has left many vacant positions unfilled until the new structure is in place.
- Some authorities are not filling vacant positions because of recruitment embargos or

budget uncertainties.

- Some authorities have tried to recruit and failed.

Some authorities are using consultants to back fill some of the work done by previous holders of vacant posts especially where they do intend to fill them eventually. Others have simply cut the staffing levels without making any additional provision.

#### **b. Local government organisation and reorganisation**

Internal reorganisation in local authorities has had a considerable impact on conservation service provision recently. In a large number of cases reorganisation has led to a decreased service through redeployment of conservation staff or removing vacant positions from the establishment. In a smaller number of cases the conservation service has been expanded slightly following reorganisation or has become a separate function with its own manager at team leader level.

The majority of conservation services are still located in the Planning function of the authority which can be regarded as their traditional home. But there is now a trend towards larger departments that include planning and other regulatory and/or community functions. This can lead to conservation managers who were previously third or fourth tier officers in the smaller department being reduced in status in the new larger department.

Sometimes Conservation Officers are located in a Regeneration department away from Planning. These conservation services often tend to be more involved in conservation led regeneration schemes although they may still advise planning colleagues. A number of services which had previously moved from planning, into leisure or regeneration, appear now to be moving back into planning or other regulatory services.

Sometimes they have been moved away from the regulatory aspect of planning with their Policy colleagues into a Policy and Performance section often under the direct authority of the Chief Executive. Although embedding them in corporate policy making this removes them from a public face of the council and from the decision making process. Staff in these services often felt cut off from the statutory process.

In some authorities conservation teams have been distributed around the council. This can sometimes mean disbanding the team and putting individual officers into area development control teams and into planning policy still within the same department but no longer functioning as a single unit. Such reorganisation can also lead to conservation officers being moved into different departments. One example had two conservation officers in Development Services which is in the Community Directorate whilst two are based in Environment & Regeneration which is under the control of the Chief Executive.

**c. Sick leave and maternity leave**

Six conservation officers were reported as having been on long-term sick leave. This was not pursued to establish if the cause of their illness was related to their work or stress. Thirteen conservation officers were on or about to go on maternity leave. Whilst many authorities had taken on consultants to cover for those officers on maternity leave this was not often the case with those on sick leave.

**d. First point of contact in local authorities and the customer service centre.**

Switchboard operators were often found to not know who or where their conservation officer was. In many cases calls were put through to general planning and in quite a number to Building Control. This pattern is considerably worse in those authorities that have modern customer service centres as opposed to traditional switchboards. Often they take large amounts of information but then do not know who deals with conservation and if they do will not give out direct dial numbers.

**10. Feedback on survey from respondents**

Some of the respondents to the survey volunteered their own view of what work should be included in a second phase of survey which they felt could be useful to them in their work. These included:

- Analyse clerical assistance alongside professional staffing. Good clerical support can

enable much more professional work to be done

- Salary levels
- Grant aid budgets

However a number of respondents were concerned that such survey work could have a negative effect on conservations service provision. Cases were cited the time of the 2002 Local Authority Service Provision Survey which lead to the loss of service in local authorities whose managers saw them to be over staffed or over provided. It is clear that any gathering of information regarding survey or budget would need very careful handling to ensure that there is no implication of a suitable conservation provision for all authorities as clearly the ‘one size fits all’ theory can not apply to local authority areas of varying size with differing pressures and problems.

## **11. Future work**

### **a) The need for further work**

The current survey work has provided a broad overview of conservation staffing in local planning authorities in England. It has afforded a clear image of the number of staff, use of consultants and use of services from other authorities but it is not an analysis of many of the more complex issues in conservation service provision. But this survey work has also provided a database of contact information through which to develop further research. However from this broad-brush position a more detailed and analytical research must be developed if we are to assess how:

- the Local Planning Authorities, and the local authorities in general, deliver conservation, including their relationship with other Local Authority services such as wider planning services, Community, Cultural Educational and Business services.
- what the real resources allocations are
- what the impact of Heritage Protection Reform/White Paper strategies will be
- how to promote effective interaction between local authority conservation services and the other the other parts of the Historic Environment and built environment and planning services.
- What the impact of economic development funders such as European funds and regional

development agency funds has been.

- What impact partnership working and relationships with building preservation trusts, amenity groups etc has.

b) In 2005 the Department of Culture Media and Sport and English Heritage sponsored a survey by Atkins (DCMS unpublished, 2006) that recognised the importance of developing this understanding. Atkins were to carry out a national survey of local authorities in the second phase of its work, but this work was not developed.

The work will initially create a resource to parallel the existing, long-standing assessments of Local Authority archaeological services provided by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) and also sponsored by English Heritage. The further intention is to build these two surveys together into a single survey of historic environment delivery services as soon as our knowledge base is sufficiently developed.

**In line with the earlier Atkins work and its recommendations for phase 2 work we suggest the following key issues to pursue in future research:**

i) **Nature of workload - Related to the statutory functions**

- The process for Listed Building Consent applications. Drawing out the different process methods such as whether conservation officers are case officers for applications or consultees etc.
- The existence of an up-to-date local list and how this is used
- The existence of an up to date buildings at risk register and whether anything is done to remove entries: Negotiation, Grant aid, Partnership working, Statutory notices, Compulsory purchase etc.
- The role and use of historic environment information, though the Historic Environment Record and other information resources and data management processes
- Percentages of time spent on particular activities
- Quantitative information on number of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Enforcement notices, prosecutions, Conservation area appraisals and management plans etc

**ii) Nature of workload - Pro active conservation work**

- Deeper investigation into the non-development control aspects of the work such as conservation lead regeneration, capital projects, enhancement schemes and other proactive work. The current survey, supported also by the findings of the Atkins survey, demonstrated that a large number of authorities were heavily involved in this sort of work and it has often been ignored by a concentration on the statutory process.
- Successful bids for external funding and numbers of projects initiated. Levels of core funding against other sources of income

**iii) Staffing and investment in staff**

- Staff numbers
- Professional qualifications and especially specialist staff skills and expertise.
- Salaries. Salary scale based on relevant bandings in local government i.e. set figures at something reflecting typical salary bands rather than arbitrary bands. So the salaries quoted would be current figures for say below scale 4, scale 4-6, SO1-2, PO1-2 and above PO2.
- Training opportunities and resources. Does the local authority support professional/academic training or in-service CPD?
- Dedicated administration and technical staff
- Other staff working in conservation from time to time
- Does the authority provide support for membership of a relevant professional body

**iv) Political and structural relevance**

- The interface with democratic processes – the planning committee, communities and other stakeholders
- The wider political relevance of conservation. Is there a heritage champion?
- The local authorities commitment to conservation
- Status in local authority structure of most senior conservation professional
- Input into corporate issues by conservation service.
- Internal and external relationships