Historic England

Commission

Minutes of the 348th meeting held on 27 February 2025 at Cannon Bridge House, London, EC4

Commissioners present:	Lord Mendoza (Chairman) Sandra Dineen Lady Jane Gibson Professor Helena Hamerow Sir Jonathan Marsden Patrick Newberry Robert Sackville-West Susie Thornberry Richard Upton Sue Wilkinson
Staff present:	Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive Liz Bushell, Director of Corporate Services Beatrice Carpineta, Governance Officer (minutes) Tom Foxall, Regional Director, London & South-East (for part) Katharine Grice, Director of Communications & Public Engagement Nick Kent, Head of Governance Claudia Kenyatta, Director of Regions [Job-share] Melanie Lewis, Director of Strategy & Business Improvement Charles Smith, Policy Director Julia Ward, Head of the Chairman & Chief Executive's Office Andrew Wiseman, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Others present:	Nick Wright, Chief Financial Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part)

1 Apologies, announcements and Declarations of Interest

1.1 Attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Commissioners Ben Derbyshire and Paul Farmer; from boardroom apprentice April Stephenson; and from staff member Ian Morrison, Director of Policy & Evidence.

1.3 Commission held a minute's silence in memory of Dame Julie Kenny who had died on 21 February 2025.

Declarations of Interest

1.4 There were none.

2 Minutes of 12 December 2024 Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 347th Commission meeting held on 12 December 2024 were approved as a correct record.

2.2 There were no actions arising from the minutes not dealt with on the agenda.

2.3 **Commission APPROVED the minutes of the 347th meeting held on 12 December 2024 as a correct record.**

3 Chairman's Report

3.1 The Chairman said that he continued to focus on raising the importance of heritage with those outside HE, including Ministers. This meant attending a significant number of external events.

3.2 In other updates the Chairman reported that:

- he had joined the Government's new Soft Power Council and would receive support from the Head of International Strategy;
- recruitment of new Commissioners was in progress with interviews expected in mid-March;
- recruitment of a new Chief Executive was under way; it was hoped that it would be completed in early April;
- HE had made a submission to the House of Commons Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee inquiry into the heritage sector; it was likely that either the Chairman or the CEO would give oral evidence; the Chief Executive and himself had met with the Chair of the Committee;
- the Chairman congratulated the Director of Corporate Services and the team on a positive outcome to HE's bids for the 2025/26 grant-in-aid budget from DCMS.

3.3 In discussion, Commission noted that it was hoped that the new Commissioners would be appointed before the summer recess so that there could be a handover prior to the retirement of existing members at the end of the year; a further round of recruitment would be needed partly because vacancies had increased with the sad death of Dame Julie Kenny.

3.4 **Commission NOTED the Chairman's report.**

4 Chief Executive's Report

4.1 The Chief Executive introduced his report to Commission and highlighted several topics.

4.2 <u>Budget 2025-26 & Spending Review</u>
The Chief Executive said that HE had received notification from DCMS of its 2025/26 budget allocation. The cultural sector had received a better settlement than forecast but the process would begin again with the Spending Review (SR). The Executive Team's rethinking of HE's structure and delivery would continue as part of the SR process. The Director of Corporate Services added that it was expected that DCMS would make its final SR submission in April, the SR statement would be in June with the HE getting its allocation confirmed in the autumn.

4.3 Listed Places of Worship funding
The scheme had been continued for a further year. But, with a reduced budget there was uncertainty about its long-term survival as a funding programme.

4.4 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
The Chief Executive updated Commission on the latest discussions about the future of the visitor attractions at Ironbridge Gorge. Commission discussed the current situation, considered the options for the future management of the visitor attractions there and noted that it was one of many heritage visitor attractions facing significant operating difficulties that HE might be asked to support in future.

4.5 Historic Estate Conservation Committee (HECC)
Following discussion at the December Commission meeting, it had been decided to delay any decision over changes to the membership and role of HECC until English Heritage Trust had completed their restructuring. In the interim, HECC was reducing its number of site visits.

4.6 The Chief Executive concluded his report by noting that HE was submitting evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry into soft power; that HE was still highly rated in the RepTrak survey of public sector performance; and that he would shortly be delivering a lecture at Durham University.

4.7 **Commission NOTED the Chief Executive's report.**

5 English Heritage Trust financial performance report

5.1 The Chief Financial Officer of EHT reported that the situation remained as reported to Commission last December with visitor numbers still below pre-pandemic levels this year. Although membership retention had held up, EHT was not recruiting as many new members, partly because of lower visitor numbers at sites. Reduced visitor numbers meant that unrestricted income would be approximately £11m down on budget but this had been offset by action to reduce expenditure and defer projects.

5.2 The Chief Financial Officer said that these sort of expenditure reductions were needed to address long-term sustainability – hence the reshaping programme currently underway. Consultation with staff would conclude shortly, with a large amount of feedback to follow up. Resources had been set aside in this financial year for the up-front cost of the necessary changes.

5.3 The EHT board had agreed a new strategy which no longer assumed that visitor numbers would return to pre-pandemic levels of around six million visitors. It was expected that visitor numbers would remain broadly flat in 2025/26 at around 5.8 million. The reshaping programme would mean rationalising the number of sites open in the winter and curtailing opening at some sites that could not be profitable.

5.4 The Chief Financial Officer said that the intention was to set a neutral budget in 2025/26, that is, one which would offset surpluses against several big capital projects that EHT needed to complete. Between now and the end of this financial year, the aim was to be ready for the Spring and Easter period with marketing to drive up visitor numbers. A new Income & Marketing Director had been appointed as part of the reshaping exercise and would start in May.

5.5 Commission discussed the Chief Financial Officer's report. Points made included:

- that development income was below budget in 2024/25 but the reshaping exercise was intended to drive more partnerships in future;
- whether the revised forecasts for visitor numbers were robust, given that earlier forecasts had not been realised; the Chief Financial Officer said that EHT could not be certain, but the point of the reshaping was to enable them to operate with lower visitor numbers and to concentrate their income generation teams on increasing visitors;
- whether there had been a change in the visitor economy, post-Covid that had affected the broader heritage sector; the Chief Financial Officer observed that this year was an anomaly, with a fall back in visitor numbers that might be explained by the cost-of-living crisis and poor weather; the next couple of years would show whether this was a long-term trend;
- comparisons with the National Trust were not relevant because EHT is dependent on visitor income whereas the NT has considerable additional investment income;
- there were indications of a change in visitor behaviour across the sector, with visitors only visiting an attraction once a year instead of several times; across the cultural sector business models were under review because of uncertainty;
- some venues were attracting visitors through increased numbers of events; EHT was going to shift to smaller but more frequent events.

5.6 Commission also discussed the conservation maintenance programme at EHT, noting the 26 per cent underspend in 2024/25. The Chief Financial Officer accepted that projects had been deferred but added that the reshaping was about recognising that the Trust was not getting the visitor numbers to pay for essential conservation work. The Chief Executive observed that the underspend amounted to a large cut in an already small budget and that there were health and safety risks in delaying maintenance which in turn could lead to sites having to be closed.

5.7 **Commission noted the English Heritage Trust Financial Update, February 2025.**

6 Tintagel: EHT Property Acquisition

6.1 The General Counsel & Corporate Secretary said that this was a proposal for EHT to acquire a property close to the entrance of Tintagel Castle with the intention of converting it into a visitor centre. The report set out the costs and benefits. The General Counsel drew attention to the fact that the bulk of the purchase cost would be met through a legacy to EHT.

6.2 Commission discussed the proposed acquisition. Commissioners noted the good potential return on the investment but also identified several risks including unforeseen increases in refurbishment costs. But there was an awareness that the current arrangements at the site made for a poor visitor experience.

6.3 The Chief Financial Officer (EHT) advised members that the project was the Trust's number one commercial priority at present. This was because of the poor facilities at Tintagel, which made for a confusing offer to visitors and led to poor recruitment of new members at what should be a prime site. No food or drink would be offered at the new visitor centre to avoid competing with nearby businesses.

6.4 **Commission APPROVED the purchase by English Heritage Trust of the Wootons Inn at Tintagel.**

7 Planning Policy Reform

7.1 The Policy Director gave an on-screen presentation of developments in planning policy since the 2024 general election. He explained that the Government was driving change to the system to speed up the planning process in England and to deliver an increase in housing construction as part of its core mission to deliver economic growth. Greater consistency in decision-making was also an important factor.

7.2 HE was expecting that Ministers would bring forward the Planning & Infrastructure Bill this Spring, with the Devolution Bill later in the summer as well as a consultation on substantive changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Bill would speed up planning, make changes to planning committees and to judicial review of planning decisions and introduce regional strategic plans. The Devolution Bill will expand mayoral authorities in England and enable local growth plans.

7.3 The NPPF is to be revised with a consultation starting in May. HE is in discussion with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on these issues and in detail on the NPPF.

7.4 The Policy Director invited Commission to discuss the proposals and the three questions about HE's suggested response in paper tabled for the meeting. He referred to HE's ambitions for heritage set out in paragraph 3.1 of the paper and invited Commission to comment on them.

7.5 Commission welcomed the presentation and the policy paper and discussed the issues raised. During the discussion members,

- wondered whether the wording around safeguarding heritage in HE's policy ambitions drew the correct balance;
- recognised the need to align with local and mayoral authorities when possible;
- noted that the shortage of planning officers, including conservation officers, in local authorities urgently needed correcting; local authority reform could also affect the number of planning officers;
- asked about the role of statutory consultees such as HE as it would be likely to change with earlier involvement in the planning system; it could mean focusing on regional plans in order to have the greatest impact, perhaps working with other ALBs;
- argued that this was a moment which could enable poor quality growth or it could unlock the opportunity for more heritage-led regeneration; it would be important to have others making the case alongside HE, amplifying HE's arguments.

7.6 In response, the Policy Director said HE was very much aware of the skills shortages and the need for training as the emphasis moved from casework to strategic planning. These were points HE was putting to government. The Director of Regions said that the changes to the planning system would have significant implications for HE and for the way in which staff worked. For example, there could be a shift from reactive

development advice to inputting on plans. This would have resource implications. There could be 100 new local plans and 30 new strategic plans in this Parliament.

7.7	**Commission DISCUSSED and NOTED the planning policy reform paper.**

8 Corporate Priority Summary: Progress & Performance Update

8.1 The Chief Executive said that the report to Commission had been amended following discussions at the December 2024 meeting. There would be a more fundamental review later in the year.

8.2 The Director of Strategy & Business Improvement said that it had been useful to review the CP alongside the budgeting process over the last quarter. It had helped the discussion about how HE would need to change in response to changes in planning, and to devolution. The Director noted that most of the RAG ratings in the performance summary were green. Following discussion at ARAC, the team would be stress testing these ratings to ensure that the KPIs were sufficiently stretching.

8.3 Priority 1: Better Places

Members welcomed the emphasis on investment in the approach to better places but encouraged management to pursue potential donations. The Chairman and the Chief Executive both reported recent promising sponsorship leads. The Director of Regions reported that the High Street Heritage Action Zones evaluation would be published at the end of March and Commission would be asked to help with the advocacy work. The £15m of Heritage at Risk funding announced by DCMS was welcome but there were significant delivery challenges for the one-year programme in 2025/26.

8.4 Inclusive opportunities

The Director of Communications & Public Engagement said that the new branding had been introduced with accessibility in mind as well as ensuring that HE came across more clearly. Members praised the introduction of the new branding, noting that it was high-risk work but the result has emerged clearer and more concise.

8.5 Challenged about the apparent misalignment between the CP KPIs and the RAG ratings in the performance summary, the Director of Strategy & Business Development said that many KPIs sat behind the ratings. There were questions about the methodology in some cases and this was partly why a review was underway.

8.6 Planning, listing and conservation

The Director of Strategy & Business Development said that this area of the performance summary was one that needed revision as it did not capture effectively all that HE was doing. There had been significant progress however, and that had led to improvements in the ratings.

8.7 Climate action

The Director of Corporate Services explained that the red rating for priority 4.1 [implementation of HE carbon-reduction plan] was because of the lack of resources to carry out work to the estate needed to meet the net zero target. Some resources had been found for 2025/26 and a bid would be made for further investment as part of the Spending Review.

8.8 Stewardship of the National Collection

The Director of Strategy & Business Development said that Shared Services were now amber rated because of uncertainty as to how the EHT reshaping exercise would affect Shared Service income. The rating for Fort Cumberland had gone from red to amber because of investment at the site over the last quarter. Members asked whether that rating change was correct in view of the conservation deficit at Fort Cumberland. The Director felt that it was justified given the investment made but she acknowledged that there were many uncertainties about the longer-term situation at the Fort.

8.9 **Commission NOTED the Corporate Priority Summary and welcomed the updates.**

9 Historic England Financial Update & Draft Budget 2025/26

9.1 The Director of Corporate Services presented the draft 2025/26 budget for approval and a financial update on the 2024/25 year. The Director explained that the Executive had adopted a different approach to the 2025/26 the budget setting by combining it with the business planning process. This had enabled the Executive Team to think strategically about how the budget supported the Corporate Plan.

9.2 When planning work had commenced in the autumn, HE was modelling a £3.5m structural deficit and there were £7m of budget pressures for which there was no provision in the baseline. As a result, savings exercises were modelled to identify savings, to create efficiencies and to generate additional income. The Director said that some of these potential efficiencies and income opportunities would continue to be developed.

9.3 HE had made a strong case to DCMS about the structural deficit. The outcome of the DCMS business planning process was positive with a two per cent uplift in HE's baseline provisional grant-in-aid allocation for 2025/26. In addition, there is £5m of one-off funding towards the structural deficit.

9.4 The Director said that DCMS had agreed to fund in 2025/26 heritage schools (a project previously financed by the Department for Education) and the inheritance tax conditional exemption scheme in support of HMRC which formed part of the Shared Service with EHT and which had been partly suspended through lack of funds. There was a one-off grant of £15m for heritage at risk capital grants in 2025/26 with revenue support for HE to deliver it.

9.5 The Director said that following the settlement, the Executive was able to present a balanced budget to Commission for approval without a structural deficit and with £3.5m of the budget pressures met. The Budget included £1m in savings; some one-off costs from restructuring would be met from reserves. The bulk of the reserves would be retained in advance of the Spending Review.

9.6 The Director of Strategy & Business Development explained the next steps in the planning and budgeting process for the Spending Review. This year's budget had been planned alongside the priorities in the Corporate Plan. Eight thematic groups would now review different areas of the business, looking at how they could be more efficient.

9.7 Commission discussed the draft budget and welcomed the fact that the settlement was an improvement on earlier expectations. Members discussed the implications on the budgeted uplift for workforce pay, including the potential impact on recruitment and retention. The Chief Executive observed that in some areas of the business HE was uncompetitive on salary with other parts of the public sector, as well with the private sector.

But the pension was an attractive element and HE's retention was better than the private sector. The Director of Corporate Services said that the cost of the increase in employer's National Insurance contributions was being met by the Treasury in 2025/26.

9.8 The Director of Corporate Services reported on the current financial position. It was now expected that the 2024/25 financial year would end with a balanced budget after a programme of in-year savings and some underspends. HE was now working effectively with HMRC to resolve the long-standing claim for a VAT rebate; it was hoped that it would be resolved later in the year.

9.9 **Commission:**

- **APPROVED the proposed 2025/26 budget, noting the risks for this financial year and beyond;**
- **and NOTED the forecast year-end position for 2024/25.**

10 Historic England Committee minutes and updates

10.1 Commission noted the minutes and oral updates from recent sub-committee meetings.

Minutes from sub-committees:

A. Audit & Risk Assurance Committee 6 February 2025
B. Business & Finance Committee 13 February 2025
C. Historic England Advisory Committee 21 November 2024
D. Historic England Conservation Committee 29 January 2025
E. London Advisory Committee 21 November 2024
F. Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Strategic Programme Board 12 December 2024 and 6 February 2025.

11 Casework Report & Planning Bulletin

11.1 Commission received its regular update on Historic England's business critical casework and recent and forthcoming planning developments. Commission discussed several cases, including the future of the landscape at Arlington Court and progress in disposing of Baguley Hall.

11.2 **Commission NOTED the Casework Report and the Planning Bulletin.**

12 Any Other Business

12.1 Commission discussed progress in recruiting new Commissioners.

13 Closed Session

13.1 Commission held a closed session.

Nick Kent
Head of Governance
March 2025

Historic England

Commission

Minutes of the 349th meeting held on 12 June 2025 at Cannon Bridge House, London, EC4

Commissioners present:	Lord Mendoza (Chairman) Nairita Chakraborty Ben Derbyshire Sandra Dineen Paul Farmer Lady Jane Gibson Professor Helena Hamerow Sir Jonathan Marsden Patrick Newberry Robert Sackville-West April Stephenson Susie Thornberry Richard Upton Sue Wilkinson
Staff present:	Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive Louise Brennan, Interim Director of Regions Liz Bushell, Director of Corporate Services Beatrice Carpineta, Governance Officer (minutes) Natalie Gates, National Partnerships Projects SRO (for part) Katharine Grice, Director of Communications & Public Engagement Nick Kent, Head of Governance Melanie Lewis, Director of Strategy & Business Improvement Ian Morrison, Director of Policy & Evidence Emma Squire, Chief Executive designate [job-share] Sarah Tunnicliffe, Senior Policy Adviser, Rural & Landscapes (for part) Julia Ward, Head of the Chairman & Chief Executive's Office Andrew Wiseman, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Others present:	Nick Merriman, Chief Executive Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part) Nick Wright, Chief Financial Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part)

1 Apologies, announcements and Declarations of Interest

1.1 Attendees were welcomed to the meeting. The Chairman offered Lady Gibson the condolences of Commission on the death of her husband.

1.2 The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Chief Executive designate, Emma Squire, and the Interim Director of Regions, Louise Brennan.

1.3 No apologies had been received from Commissioners.

Declarations of Interest

1.4 There were none.

2 Minutes of 27 February 2025 Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 348th Commission meeting held on 27 February 2025 were approved as a correct record.

2.2 There were no actions arising from the minutes not dealt with on the agenda.

2.3 **Commission APPROVED the minutes of the 348th meeting held on 27 February 2025 as a correct record.**

3 Chairman's Report

3.1 The Chairman spoke to his written report. He thanked Paul Farmer and Sue Wilkinson for their support on the appointment panel during the recruitment for the new Chief Executive Officer, which had been successful with the appointment of Claudia Kenyatta and Emma Squire in a job-share.

3.2 In other updates the Chairman reported that:

- new Commissioner appointments by DCMS were still awaited;
- he had met the new Heritage Minister, Baroness Twycross;
- he had attended several meetings of the Soft Power Council's Europe working group.

3.3 **Commission NOTED the Chairman's report.**

4 Chief Executive's Report

4.1 The Chief Executive introduced his report to Commission and highlighted several topics.

4.2 <u>Spending Review</u>
The Chief Executive said that the DCMS settlement was now known following the Chancellor's statement the previous day but the impact on the department's arms-length bodies was unclear. DCMS would need to make efficiency savings over the next three years. The Director of Corporate Services added that HE would need to make one per cent savings each year from 2026/277 to 2028/29 and had notified DCMS of its plans, which included savings from the planned estates rationalisation. In discussion, Commission noted that HE would not know its detailed settlement from 2026 until the autumn.

4.3 <u>Heritage protection reform</u>
The Director of Policy & Evidence said that a paper had been taken to the Historic England Advisory Committee (HEAC) which contained three elements of heritage-related planning reform now under discussion: the Planning & Infrastructure Bill, now before Parliament; changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which could provide opportunities in respect of vacant historic buildings; and the review of statutory consultees, where a forthcoming public consultation would outline proposed changes. The Director was positive about the likely outcome of these changes.

4.4 Commissioners welcomed the approach taken by the Executive Team, which had looked at the planning system from the applicants' perspective. Members also noted that HEAC had been supportive of management proposals.

Action: Circulate revised edition of the HEAC paper to Commissioners.

4.5 UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKReiiF)
The Chief Executive said that HE had had a successful visit to the Forum, where events included launching a prospectus of historic buildings suitable for development. Discussions had highlighted the importance of public sector disposals to the development sector. The Chief Executive (designate) said that HE was pursuing that question with the Chief Executive of the Office of Government Property. There was considerable interest in opportunities for housing and HE had meetings planned with Homes England and with Oldham Council to take this further. Oldham Council was interested in a mill conversion.

4.6 Commissioners welcomed HE's participation in UKReiiF. It was felt by those who had attended that HE had shown energy and positive engagement with developers.

4.7 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
The Chief Executive said a proposal from the National Trust to secure the future of the attractions was with DCMS.

4.8 New Chief Executive
The Chief Executive explained that the new Chief Executive job-shares were working alongside him in preparation for their taking on the role in November. They were leading on a number of forward-looking projects.

4.9 Louise Brennan had been appointed Interim Director of Regions for a year. This was a good example of internal promotion.

4.10 Historic Places Panel
Commissioner Ben Derbyshire said that the HPP report on Barrow-in-Furness had received widespread media coverage. The Chief Executive said that in future there would be an opportunity for HPP's activities to be reported on a regular basis to Commission, as the work of other committees and panels was reported.

4.11 **Commission NOTED the Chief Executive's report.**

5 English Heritage Trust (EHT) financial performance report

5.1 The Chief Executive Officer of EHT gave an update. He said that the reshaping exercise had now been completed; 189 people had left EHT, about seven per cent of the workforce. The cost was £6.5M but the payroll savings were about the same. The Senior Management Team was largely new and getting started. Further cost savings would be identified.

5.2 The charity now had a new vision, mission and five-year plan. The five-year mission was to become financially sustainable with three goals of care, share and grow. There was now one plan for the organisation rather than six departmental ones. The current financial year was a transitional one during which the changes would be bedded in. EHT was now developing a plan for capital works.

5.3 During discussion, Commissioners raised a number of topics:

- "hidden gems" – asked about the policy of making some properties appointment only, the CEO EHT said that this was not for ever – the list could

change over time; he would be meeting the community and volunteers at one such property where it might be possible to retain regular opening through volunteers;

- prices – asked about ticket and membership prices, the CEO said that these had been reviewed and increased this year as part of the reshaping exercise; trial promotion were taking place to explore options for increasing revenue;
- conservation of National Heritage Collection – the CEO acknowledged that EHT was behind in its conservation work because of the reshaping exercise. He was looking at the matter now and would come back to Commission later in the year. A trustee experienced in building conservation was in the process of being appointed to the EHT board and an annual report on the state of conservation was to be discussed by the trustees in July. There was an aspiration to spend a minimum amount each year. The General Counsel added that data on conservation was required by the operating licence issued by HE to EHT, these would be used as the baseline for the purposes of condition monitoring. The Director of Corporate Services said that HE had bid on behalf of EHT for further capital support to conserve the National Heritage Collection as part of the Spending Review*;
- local membership – the idea of local membership and other community-based initiatives was welcomed by Commissioners and seen as effective; the CEO EHT said they were investing more in local events and in play spaces at the properties;
- the reshaping – Commission acknowledged that the reshaping had been a difficult exercise.

5.4 The Chief Financial Officer of EHT then reported on the outturn of the 2024/25 financial year and the current trading position. He said that because of mitigations put in place when income levels were considerably down on forecast, the 2024/25 financial year had resulted in a manageable £400,000 loss. This included absorbing the costs of the reshaping exercise in-year. The intention was to break even in 2025/26. So far trading had been good in April but less so in May. Various approaches were being trialled to stimulate new trade at sites.

5.5 Commission discussed the Chief Financial Officer's report. Points made included whether there was room for local initiatives to stimulate interest and income. The CEO EHT said that was very much the case with reshaping leading to greater devolution and to encouraging local initiatives such as bids to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Commission noted that the negative impact of potential tax changes as a result of the Digital Markets Bill could be serious for EHT.

Action: The CEO EHT to brief the Chairman of Historic England on the tax issue relating to the Digital Markets Act

5.6 Commission thanked the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer for their report.

5.7 **Commission noted the English Heritage Trust Financial Update, June 2025.**

* Secretary's note: The bid was unsuccessful.

6 Annual Report & Accounts 2024/25 & Financial Outturn 2024/24

6.1 The Director of Corporate Services reported on the updated draft of the Annual Report & Accounts 2024/25 (ARA). The Director said that an earlier draft had been scrutinised by the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) in May. The audit by the National Audit Office was still underway and was on track for the meeting of ARAC on 4 July and approval by Commission on 11 July. There were no major changes in the ARA since last year. There were additional disclosures relating to the environment; the format of these would be re-examined for next year.

6.2 Negotiations continued with HMRC over the outstanding VAT reclaim. HMRC had proposed a formula for calculating the VAT rebate which was now being considered.

6.3 The Director then reported on the outturn of the 2024/25 financial year, which had finished with a slight overspend of £16,000. That was a turnaround from a projected deficit of £2M last summer and had required a considerable amount of work across the organisation. The CEO noted that this had largely been achieved without delaying expenditure to the following year.

6.4 Commission discussed the draft Annual Report & Accounts and the financial year outturn. Members noted that:

- this year's addition of disclosures of climate-related financial information would be followed in the future by those relating to nature, following the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures;
- ARAC had commented on the layout of the draft Annual Report and made suggestions to improve narrative flow;
- no major issues had been identified by the National Audit Office in the draft accounts.

6.5 **Commission NOTED the draft Annual Report & Accounts 2024/25 and the outturn of the Financial Year 2024/25.**

7 Corporate Priority Summary: Progress & Performance Update

7.1 The Director of Strategy & Business Improvement noted that the Priority Summary now contained a full 12 month's data. This provided an opportunity for Commission to reflect on whether this was the right information and the right format. Some changes had been made but a wider conversation was happening internally and the resulting changes would be shown in reports later in the year.

7.2 One change that had been made was to give Executive Team members responsibility for each Corporate Plan priority. This gave a clear message across the organisation, but the Executive Team retained responsibility for Corporate Priorities as a whole.

7.3 Other changes included reducing the number of activities under each Corporate Priority, as there were too many in some cases and it was proving difficult to aggregate data. There were also some areas, such as engagement with communities and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, which had been added.

7.4 The Director asked Commission to feedback whether the current Priority Summary gives the level of assurance needed in the KPIs, whether there was too much information or there was something missing.

7.5 Commission welcomed the Summary. Suggestions for change included reducing the number of priorities and a greater focus on impact rather than activity.

7.6 The Director turned to the update on current progress and noted that as this was a 12-month report, it contained a page showing expenditure in 2024/25 by corporate priority. Commissioners suggested that there was a need to show transparently the running costs of historic buildings that HE was looking after directly (such as Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings and Fort Cumberland).

7.7 Priority 1: Better Places

The acting Director of Regions told members that there had been 370 expressions of interest for the Heritage at Risk 2025/26 capital programme with a total value of around £145 million. Fifty-two expressions of interest were shortlisted for a full application and those applications were now being sifted. The Director said that criteria had encouraged a wide range of applicants, including bodies that had not applied for grants before. This approach had important implications for the grant review.

7.8 Commissioners welcomed progress, noted that expressions of interest were for ten times the available grant and suggested that this was shared with Ministers. Responding to a question about progress of the Culture and Heritage Capital Programme, the Director of Policy & Evidence said that the Executive Team would look at bringing an update to Commission later in the year.

7.9 Planning, listing and conservation

Commissioners asked about the licensing procedure for aerial photographs, about whether the priority given to national infrastructure was properly reflected in the Priority Summary and the review of statutory consultees.

7.10 Climate action

The Director of Strategy said that the two amber ratings in the summary reflected the need for de-carbonisation of the estate. Initial investigations at the Engine House at Swindon suggested the timeline for the works would be extended. The Director of Corporate Services said that the carbon reduction plan was being reviewed as its current trajectory was too even and it needed to reflect when the reductions would happen. The Director of Policy & Evidence said that two key vacancies in HE for roles related to climate change policy and delivery had now been filled.

7.11 Stewardship of the National Collection

The Director of Strategy said that the urgent works at Fort Cumberland had been completed and the laboratories there had been officially opened. A board had been established to look at future plans for the Fort.

7.12 In respect of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, the Director reported that a preferred development partner for the residential site had now been identified. Approval would be sought from the Programme Board later that day[†]. Options for further work inside the main mill were being examined but realising the residential development would be an important step in the long-term plan to safeguard the Maltings.

[†] Secretary's note: The Strategic Programme Board agreed to the preferred development partner.

7.13 The Director said that Shared Services remained amber rated while EHT completed their reshaping exercise.

7.14 In discussion, Commissioners queried the absence of any key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Stewardship of the National Collection by EHT given HE's oversight responsibilities. It was noted that devising effective metrics was challenging as not all properties in the collection were of equal monetary or historic value. The conservation deficit calculation generated a theoretical figure but not withstanding that, the deficit did need to be reduced over time by EHT.

7.15 The General Counsel & Corporate Secretary said that a new set of KPIs for the National Heritage Collection had been agreed with EHT and were contained within the new Property & Operating Licence which came into force in April. HE was meant to receive the baseline data in April but that had been delayed because of the EHT reshaping exercise. EHT would be providing interim figures. He thought that the summary slides should be amended in future.

7.16 Developing Historic England

Under this heading the Director of Strategy & Business Development highlighted the ongoing work to upgrade digital support and noted the amber rating as a result of insufficient resources to complete the digital strategy. The Chief Executive added that the implementation of the new grants system was almost complete but the new casework system needed a further year.

Action: Executive Team to consider bringing an update on the culture and heritage capital programme to Commission later in the year

7.17 **Commission NOTED the Corporate Priority Summary and welcomed the updates.**

8 Historic England as Defra Delivery Body

8.1 The Director of Policy & Evidence said that this was an opportunity to update Commission on the work that HE has been doing on behalf of the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) over the last decade but particularly its work as a Defra delivery body more recently. This was an important moment as Defra would be reviewing their priorities following the Spending Review. HE was keen to maintain the heritage work that Defra had been funding.

8.2 The Senior Policy Adviser (Rural & Landscapes) gave an onscreen presentation which described work with Defra to protect and enhance heritage in rural areas managed through schemes that predate Brexit and through the Environmental Land Management scheme since 2021. Since 2023 HE had become a delivery body for Defra with responsibility for two additional schemes. Working with Defra was important because all Registered Battlefields, 88% of Scheduled Monuments and 67% of Registered Parks and Gardens are on agricultural holdings. Since 2006 Defra had committed £350 million to conserving rural heritage, approximately £25 million a year, which had reduced the number of scheduled monuments on the Heritage at Risk register (HAR) by two-thirds. The co-benefits included keeping buildings in functional use, increased tourism, better access as well as mitigating climate change impacts and the risk of flooding.

8.3 The Senior Policy Adviser said that economic analysis of the impact of the Defra schemes showed that for every £1 spent, £4.55 was generated over five years and £6.07 over 10 years.

8.4 The National Partnerships Projects SRO briefed Commission on the programmes in 2023/24 and 2024/25 that had delivered £10 million to repair over 100 heritage buildings located on farmland in protected landscapes. HE was able to recover the overheads connected with the scheme from Defra, including staff time. The separate Countryside Stewardship Heritage Service provided £5 million annually in funding to support the repair of unroofed structures such as scheduled monuments. Many of the applications concerned buildings on the HAR or vulnerable to being included.

8.5 The National Partnerships Projects SRO explained the funding arrangements with Defra and its relationship to grant-in-aid funded work, including the current review by Defra of their funding schemes for the period from 2026/27 onwards. There would be significant implications for heritage in rural areas, and for HE, if the current schemes were discontinued. It was important that the partnership with Defra was better understood and better known.

8.6 Commissioners welcomed the report and presentation and discussed the work with Defra. They noted in particular:

- this project as an example of successfully delivering on time and on budget for another government department;
- the importance of using this project in communications to highlight the success; this should include highlighting the successful programme to local authorities in rural areas; the Senior Policy Adviser said that HE would be supporting Defra with aspects of its communications work;
- it was important to get this work reported in the farming media so that farmers were more aware of the grant schemes;
- the very high rate of return obtained for public investment was particularly noteworthy;
- the importance of getting full cost recovery in future for work for other departments;
- the success of this project demonstrated that HE could deliver for other partners; the Chief Executive (designate) said that this point was being made to other potential partners including strategic and local authorities.

8.7 **Commission DISCUSSED the role of Historic England as a delivery body for Defra and AGREED that HE should continue to influence policy direction of new and existing agri-environment schemes to ensure coverage across all heritage assets and seek funding through Spending Review 2025 part 2 to continue existing services; and AGREED that Historic England should continue as a delivery body for Defra on a cost recovery basis.**

9 Historic England Foundation – Trustee Renewal

9.1 The Director of Strategy & Business Development asked Commission to endorse the proposal in the written report that Mr Fabian Richter, Chair of the Historic England Foundation, should be re-appointed as a Trustee of the Foundation for a final two-year term from 26 June 2025.

9.2 **Commission AGREED to the re-appointment of Mr Fabian Richter as a Trustee of the Historic England Foundation for a final two years from 26 June 2025.**

10 Historic England Committee minutes and updates

10.1 Commission noted the minutes and oral updates from recent sub-committee meetings, including the annual report of the Historic England Advisory Committee.

10.2 Commission agreed that in future these Committee reports would include a report from the Historic Places Panel.

Minutes from sub-committees:

A. **Audit & Risk Assurance Committee 19 May 2025**
B. **Business & Finance Committee 13 February and 19 May 2025**
C. **Historic England Advisory Committee 6 March 2025** (and annual report)
D. **Historic England Conservation Committee 1 April 2025**
E. **London Advisory Committee 6 March 2025**
F. **Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Strategic Programme Board 27 February 2025.**

Action: Include a report from the Historic Places Panel in future Commission meetings

11 Casework Report & Planning Bulletin

11.1 Commission received its regular update on Historic England's business critical casework and recent and forthcoming planning developments.

11.2 **Commission NOTED the Casework Report and the Planning Bulletin.**

12 Any Other Business

12.1 None.

13 Closed Session

13.1 Commission held a closed session.

Nick Kent
Head of Governance
July 2025

Commission

Minutes of the 350th meeting held on 09 October 2025 at Cannon Bridge House, London, EC4

Commissioners present:	Lord Mendoza (Chairman) Nairita Chakraborty Ben Derbyshire Sandra Dineen OBE Paul Farmer Jane, Lady Gibson OBE Professor Helena Hamerow Sir Jonathan Marsden	Patrick Newberry Jamie Ritblat Robert Sackville-West Philip Shepherd April Stephenson Susie Thornberry Richard Upton
Staff present:	Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive Louise Brennan, Interim Director of Regions Liz Bushell, Director of Corporate Services Nick Kent, Head of Governance Claudia Kenyatta, Chief Executive designate [job-share] Melanie Lewis, Director of Strategy & Business Improvement Ian Morrison, Director of Policy & Evidence Amy Pitts, Director of Communications & Public Engagement Julia Ward, Head of the Chairman & Chief Executive's Office Andrew Wiseman, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary	
Others present:	Geoff Parkin, Interim Chief Executive Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part) Nick Wright, Chief Financial Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part)	

1 Apologies, announcements and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chairman welcomed attendees to the 350th meeting of Commission, including new Commissioners Jamie Ritblat and Philip Shepherd, Amy Pitts returning from maternity leave and the Interim CEO of English Heritage Trust, Geoff Parkin.

1.2 The Chairman reminded Commission that this was the final meeting of the retiring Chief Executive Officer, Duncan Wilson. Duncan had an exceptional career running institutions such as the Old Royal Naval College at Greenwich, Somerset House and Alexandra Palace. Over the last 10 years' he had achieved much, including establishing the new model, seeing the sector through Covid, leading the revival of Shrewsbury Flaxmill, and starting the National Blue Plaques scheme. The Chairman said that one of Duncan's most important achievements was in establishing such an outstanding management team. Commission expressed its appreciation to Duncan for all his work at Historic England.

1.3 Commissioners Ulrike Knox and Sue Wilkinson had sent their apologies.

Declarations of Interest

1.4 Ben Derbyshire declared interests in respect of Audley End and Walmer Castle.

2 Minutes of 12 June 2025 Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 349th Commission meeting held on 12 June 2025 were approved as a correct record.

2.2 In respect of item 5.5 of the 12 June minutes, Nick Wright updated Commission on the impact of the Digital Markets, Competition & Consumers Act 2024 on English Heritage Trust (EHT). In respect of 7.6, the Historic Places Panel would now report in writing to Commission meetings and the first such report was on the agenda.

2.3 **Commission APPROVED the minutes of the 349th meeting held on 12 June 2025 as a correct record.**

3 Chairman's Report

3.1 The Chairman covered his written report. He said that he had prioritised developing a better understanding in Government of the importance of Historic England (HE) to both policy and delivery. To that end he had met with a wide range of organisations.

3.2 In other updates the Chairman noted that Historic England was about to sign a new agreement with its opposite number in Saudia Arabia to assist them in their heritage work; and that he had visited the Expo in Osaka (for the FCDO) as part of preparations for the next Expo in 2030 in Riyadh.

3.3 **Commission NOTED the Chairman's report.**

4 Chief Executive's Report & the Corporate Progress Summary

4.1 The Chief Executive introduced his report, and the Corporate Progress Summary, to Commission.

4.2 Arms-Length Body Review
The Chief Executive said that the review was now under way and that HE had prepared options for consideration but no decisions had been made.

4.3 Heritage Sector skills
The Chief Executive said that it had been decided not to revive the sector skills training programme that HE had run in the past but to assist donors willing to fund such work to connect with those who could deliver apprenticeships. The Director of Policy & Evidence added that HE wanted to see systemic change in the way heritage skills is woven into broader skills training.

4.4 Heritage protection reform
The Chief Executive updated Commission on discussions with Government on reform of heritage protection. HE had largely been reassured but some issues were yet to be resolved. The Director of Policy & Evidence said that HE continued to argue for policy changes that would promote greater use of historic buildings for housing.

4.5 City of London Plan
The Chief Executive updated Commission on discussions over the City of London and on its implications for the Tower of London World Heritage Site.

4.6 In discussion, Commissioners raised several points on the CEO's report and on the Corporate Progress Summary:

- welcoming the fact that High Street HAZ had been shortlisted for social value of the year;
- the relevance of the Government's new Pride in Place programme to HE's work on place;
- HE's exceptional performance in responding to 99 per cent of advice requests in 21 days and the prospects for greater income from the new planning fees system;
- the news that the condition of Fort Cumberland has stabilised and the backlog of repairs is now being addressed.

4.7 **Commission NOTED the Chief Executive's report and the Corporate Progress Summary.**

5 English Heritage Trust (EHT) financial performance report

5.1 The Interim Chief Executive Officer of EHT gave an update after his first three months in post. While there was much to do, the organisation had a strong brand and a great team in place. The foundations were strong but there were things that needed to improve including ensuring a close relationship with Historic England, improving governance and demonstrating financial competence to DCMS.

5.2 The Interim CEO said that he was focusing on costs to deliver a balanced budget at the end of the year, which remained on track, and the organisation was preparing a detailed programme for the conservation and maintenance capital programme. Branding was being reviewed, and they were looking for a better way to describe the national collection. There was a need to invest in a modern visitor experience at the sites. All these changes would require capital investment.

5.3 The CEO (HE) responded by saying that HE was looking at how it could help EHT, both with the need for capital funding to maintain the national collection but also to assist EHT to make the case to Government for longer-term support.

5.4 In discussion, Commissioners explored the issues with capital investment, fundraising from philanthropists and from the lottery and the need to improve the visitor experience so that it met contemporary expectations. The Interim Chief Executive also briefed Commission on the process to recruit a new Chair.

5.5 The Chief Financial Officer (EHT) covered EHT's financial performance in 2025/26. Income levels were lower than expected and mitigations had been put in place. Some capital projects had been deferred but there was still confidence that break-even would be achieved. The approach to membership was being reviewed to ensure that the offer met contemporary expectations. The leadership team was being encouraged to focus on investing to grow.

5.6 Commission discussed the Chief Financial Officer's report and made suggestions for developing EHT's resources.

5.7 **Commission NOTED the English Heritage Trust financial update.**

6 Baguley Hall Disposal

6.1 The Corporate Secretary & General Counsel said that Baguley Hall had been part of the national collection since 1969 but never opened to the public. Historic England has

been seeking a long-term use for the building and following a competitive process, Heritage Trust North West had been selected. They intend to open the building to the public for a variety of uses.

6.2 Commission discussed the proposed transfer and asked whether alternative models of ownership had been considered and whether the costs involved in managing the building currently could be transferred more quickly.

6.3 Commission agreed to the transfer subject to HM Treasury ratification.

6.4 **Commission APPROVED the disposal of Baguley Hall (with covenants) to the Heritage Trust North West, subject to ratification by HM Treasury.**

7 Historic England Financial Update & Reserves Position

7.1 The Director of Corporate Services gave an update on HE's financial position using the new format for financial reporting that includes five key performance indicators. The Director said that the position in September was a forecast small underspend at year end. The Director updated members on the progress of the Spending Review and possible outcomes; members discussed the issues raised. The 2026/27 budget would be likely to be agreed in January.

7.2 Turning to the reserves position, the Director explained that there had been a review of HE's reserves following issues identified during the 2024/25 year-end analysis. Reserves can only be accumulated from non-grant-in-aid resources, and it was HE policy to hold £1.8M in reserves to provide a cushion against unexpected developments. The review had identified that reserves were lower than expected. New procedures were being introduced to ensure better monitoring of the cash position and of reserves in future. DCMS had been kept informed of the review and its outcome.

7.3 Commissioners discussed the financial update and the reserves position. They noted that:

- HE would be providing back-office services to the new Football Regulator from 01 November 2025;
- HE had successfully accumulated reserves over the past 10 years and would be able to do so again;
- income generation, the plans for which the Business & Finance Committee had been discussing, was important and could contribute to building up reserves.

7.4 **Commission NOTED the year-to-date financial position, the forecast year-end outturn and key risks; it NOTED the updated reserves position; and it NOTED the updated timeline for the Spending Review and the 2026/27 budget setting process.**

8 Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings: Update

8.1 The Director of Strategy & Business Development updated Commission on the progress of the project to restore Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings (SFM).

8.2 SFM had been under the care of Historic England for 20 years. Phases one and two, the restoration of the main mill and several other listed buildings, had largely been completed. The upper three floors of the main mill were treated as commercial space and had been let. A loan was being arranged with DCMS to fit out the fourth floor so that it could be let. The restoration had been award-winning and showed that historic buildings could be restored and re-used.

8.3 The next stage was phase three: the restoration of the land around the site for a residential development. The Director of Strategy explained the process used to identify a suitable commercial partner. The Strategic Programme Board was seeking approval to sign a contract with that bidder.

8.4 Commission discussed the proposals for the residential development and future developments at the site and approved granting delegated authority to the SFM Strategic Programme Board to enter into a contract with the preferred bidder for the delivery of housing on the brownfield site.

8.5 **Commission APPROVED granting delegated authority to the SFM Strategic Programme Board and the Executive Team to enter into a contract with the preferred bidder for the delivery of housing on the brownfield site (subject to approval from HM Treasury and DCMS); and NOTED the points in para 2.3 *et seq* of the report.**

9 Historic England New Strategic Plan

9.1 The Chief Executive (designate) introduced a discussion on HE's new strategic plan. She explained that this was the beginning of a process that Commission would be able to input into over the autumn. The draft Corporate Plan would come to the December meeting for a more detailed discussion.

9.2 The Chief Executive (designate) spoke about proposals for revising HE's vision and the proposed priorities in the new plan, which were intended to be fewer and more focused. The themes of the new plan had been informed by the strategy discussion held at the December 2024 Commission meeting.

9.3 The Director of Strategy & Business Development then gave an on-screen presentation which expanded on the themes introduced by the Chief Executive (designate).

9.4 Commission discussed the issues raised by the presentations, asked questions about the principles and themes in the plan and put forward ideas to be considered by the Executive Team during the next stage of the process.

9.5 **Commission NOTED the presentations and DISCUSSED the issues raised in them.**

10 Historic England Foundation – Appointment of New Trustees

10.1 The Chairman asked Commission to agree to the appointment of three new trustees for the Historic England Foundation. Commission discussed the proposed appointments and agreed to them.

10.2 **Commission APPROVED the appointment of Mitch Barltrop, Chirstopher Boyle and Samantha Knights as Trustees of the Historic England Foundation for a term of four years with immediate effect.**

11 English Heritage Trust – Appointment of New Trustee*

11.1 The Chairman told Commission that following recent changes at EHT, it was felt that its board would benefit from an additional trustee with high-level experience of charity governance. Paul Farmer, who would be retiring as a Commissioner at the end of 2025 and had outstanding experience of charity governance, had agreed to become a trustee.

11.2 Commission discussed the appointment and agreed to it.

11.3 **Commission APPROVED the appointment of Paul Farmer as a Trustee of the English Heritage Trust for a term of four years, subject to due diligence checks.**

12 Historic England Committee minutes and updates

12.1 Commission noted the minutes and oral updates from recent sub-committee meetings, including the annual report of the Historic England Advisory Committee.

Minutes from sub-committees:

A. **Audit & Risk Assurance Committee 11 July and oral report on 18 September 2025**
B. **Business & Finance Committee oral report on 18 September 2025**
C. **Historic England Advisory Committee 15 May 2025**
D. **Historic England Conservation Committee 08 July 2025**
E. **Historic Places Annual Meeting 08 May 2025 and written report**
F. **London Advisory Committee oral reports on 10 July 2025 and 25 September 2025**
G. **Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Strategic Programme Board 12 June 2025.**

13 Casework Report & Planning Bulletin

13.1 Commission received its regular update on Historic England's business critical casework and recent and forthcoming planning developments.

13.2 **Commission NOTED the Casework Report and the Planning Bulletin.**

14 Any Other Business

14.1 None.

15 Closed Session

15.1 Commission held a closed session.

Nick Kent
Head of Governance
November 2025

* Paul Farmer left the room for this item.

Commission

Minutes of the 351st meeting held on 11 December 2025 at Cannon Bridge House, London, EC4

Commissioners present:	Lord Mendoza (Chairman) Ben Derbyshire Sandra Dineen OBE Paul Farmer Jane, Lady Gibson OBE Professor Helena Hamerow Ulrike Knox Sir Jonathan Marsden KCVO	Jamie Ritblat Robert Sackville-West Philip Shepherd April Stephenson Susie Thornberry Richard Upton Sue Wilkinson
Staff present:	Claudia Kenyatta, Co-Chief Executive Emma Squire, Co-Chief Executive Louise Brennan, Director of Regions Liz Bushell, Director of Corporate Services Amy Chacksfield, Private Secretary, Chairman & Chief Executive's Office Nick Kent, Head of Governance Melanie Lewis, Director of Strategy & Business Improvement Emily Moore, Head of Strategic Planning Ian Morrison, Director of Policy & Evidence Amy Pitts, Director of Communications & Public Engagement Dominic Ryan, Governance Officer Andrew Wiseman, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary	
Others present:	Geoff Parkin, Interim Chief Executive Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part) Nick Wright, Chief Financial Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part)	

1 Apologies, announcements and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting of Commission. This was the first meeting for Commissioner Ulrike Knox and the new Co-CEOs, and the final meeting of board apprentice April Stephenson. He congratulated the Chief Financial Officer, English Heritage Trust (EHT) on his appointment as Finance Director to the Tate.

1.2 Commissioners Nairita Chakraborty and Patrick Newberry had sent their apologies.

Declarations of Interest

1.3 Jane Gibson declared an interest as the new Chair of York Central Partnership.

2 Minutes of 09 October 2025 Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 350th Commission meeting held on 09 October 2025 were approved as a correct record.

2.2 The only matter arising was that the transfer of Baguley Hall (item 6.4) was approved and had been announced.

2.3 **Commission APPROVED the minutes of the 350th meeting held on 09 October 2025 as a correct record.**

3 Chairman's Report

3.1 The Chairman presented his report. He was supporting EHT in their Chair selection process. He announced that Philip Shepherd would be Chair of the HE Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) from 01 January 2026.

3.2 **Commission NOTED the Chairman's report.**

4 Co-Chief Executive's Report

4.1 Co-Chief Executive Claudia Kenyatta introduced her report to Commission by highlighting four main points:

- a positive introductory meeting between the Co-CEOs and the Minister for Heritage, Baroness Twycross;
- the on-going discussions within the Executive Team about the budget and Spending Review settlement for Historic England (HE);
- the DCMS youth strategy and HE involvement;
- meetings with key partners, including the Local Government Association.

4.2 In questions and discussion, Commissioners raised several points on the Co-CEO's report, including:

- HE's involvement in the new towns programme and the forthcoming changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- the project to establish a long-term national archaeological archive;
- priorities in listing work;
- improving capacity in local authority planning departments;
- the on-going review of arms-length bodies.

4.3 **Commission NOTED the Co-Chief Executive's report.**

5 English Heritage Trust (EHT) financial performance report

5.1 Co-CEO Emma Squire briefed Commission on changes within HE to enable greater focus on the relationship with EHT. There had been good progress in discussions on issues of mutual concern.

5.2 The Interim Chief Executive Officer of EHT updated Commission on the progress of the organisation's business and finances so far in the 2025/26 financial year. He remained confident that EHT would break even in this financial year. The Interim CEO also said that progress was being made on improving governance, on updating the brand and in developing an understanding of the social and economic impact of EHT's work.

5.3 In addition, the Chief Financial Officer for EHT said that financial modelling for the next three years had been independently reviewed and had not identified any new risks or concerns.

5.4 In discussion, Commission raised several points including:

- the performance of EHT's commercial partnerships;
- the risks to EHT of the current UK economic situation;
- the assessment by EHT of the conservation deficit in the National Heritage Collection and its plans to address the deficit over time;
- measuring visitor feedback at sites.

5.5 **Commission NOTED the English Heritage Trust financial update.**

6 Use of HE Enforcement Powers: Annual Report

6.1 Commission had adopted a policy in 2024 on the use of HE's prosecution powers. The Executive Team had undertaken to report to Commission annually on the use of those powers. This was the first such report. HE's powers related to scheduled monuments and not listed buildings, offences relating to the latter were dealt with by local authorities.

6.2 Commissioners welcomed the report, noted the valuable work of HE staff in resolving recent heritage crime cases and, in addition, suggested that there would be value in showcasing examples of HE's successful casework.

6.3 **Commission NOTED the Annual Report on the Use of Historic England's Enforcement Powers.**

7 Historic England Financial Update

7.1 The Director of Corporate Services gave an update on HE's financial position, including the forecast year-end outturn (a small underspend), the reserves position (to be increased because of underspends this year which will be dispersed in 2026/27) and the still unresolved VAT claim against HMRC. The Director of Corporate Services also briefed Commission on the main risks in achieving a balanced budget this year.

7.2 Commission discussed the financial update and considered progress on resolving the VAT claim.

7.3 The Director of Corporate Services then updated Commission on progress with financial planning for 2026/27 and the remainder of the Spending Review period and outlined the likely timeline up to approval of the budget in March 2026.

7.4 **Commission NOTED the year-to-date financial position, the forecast year-end outturn, and the key risks that may impact these projections. It also NOTED the 2026/27 finance budget-setting milestones; and NOTED the other updates provided.**

8 Corporate Priority Summary

8.1 The Director of Strategy & Business Development introduced the report, highlighting progress made towards corporate objectives and explaining, where the RAG rating indicated amber or red, reasons why objectives had not been realised or were at risk.

8.2 Commission welcomed the progress made and discussed the priority summary. They considered the format for reporting and necessary future changes to the key performance indicators used to assess progress in the light of the current strategy review.

8.3 **Commission NOTED the Corporate Priority Summary update.**

9 Historic England New Strategic Plan

9.1 The Director of Strategy & Business Development introduced a workshop-style discussion on the new Strategic Plan with an on-screen presentation which covered the progress made so far in drafting the plan and sought Commission's advice on a draft logic model.

9.2 Commission discussed the issues raised by the presentation and commented in detail on the draft logic model.

9.3 **Commission COMMENTED on the draft logic model and on the areas where investment might be increased or reduced in future.**

10 Historic England Committee minutes and updates

10.1 Commission noted the minutes and oral updates from recent sub-committee meetings, including the annual report of the London Advisory Committee.

Minutes from sub-committees:

A. **Audit & Risk Assurance Committee 18 September 2025 and an oral report on 13 November**
B. **Business & Finance Committee 18 September 2025 and an oral report on 13 November**
C. **Historic England Advisory Committee 25 September 2025 and an oral report on 20 November**
D. **Historic England Conservation Committee 15 October 2025**

E. Historic Places Panel written report
F. London Advisory Committee 10 July 2025 and the Annual Report
G. Remuneration & Appointments Committee 09 October and 04 November.

10.2 **Commission DISCUSSED and NOTED the sub-committee reports.**

11 Casework Report & Planning Bulletin

11.1 Commission received its regular update on Historic England's business critical casework and recent and forthcoming planning developments.

11.2 **Commission NOTED the Casework Report and the Planning Bulletin.**

12 Any Other Business

12.1 On behalf of Commission, the Chairman thanked the Commissioners due to retire on 31 December 2025 (Sandra Dineen, Paul Farmer, Patrick Newberry, Susie Thornberry and Richard Upton) for their dedication and commitment to Historic England over several years.*

13 Closed Session

13.1 Commission held a closed session.

Nick Kent
Head of Governance
January 2026

*Secretary's note: the terms of office of Sandra Dineen, Paul Farmer and Patrick Newberry were extended after this meeting by the Secretary of State until 30.09.26.

Commission

Final Minutes of the 352nd meeting held on 12 March 2026 at Cannon Bridge House, London, EC4

Commissioners present:	Lord Mendoza (Chairman) Nairita Chakraborty Ben Derbyshire Sandra Dineen OBE Jane, Lady Gibson OBE Professor Helena Hamerow	Ulrike Knox Sir Jonathan Marsden KCVO Jamie Ritblat Robert Sackville-West Philip Shepherd Sue Wilkinson

Staff present:	Claudia Kenyatta, Co-Chief Executive Emma Squire, Co-Chief Executive Louise Brennan, Director of Regions Liz Bushell, Director of Corporate Services Amy Chacksfield, Private Secretary, Chairman & Chief Executive's Office Adala Leeson, Head of Social & Economic Research (for part) Melanie Lewis, Director of Strategy & Business Improvement Emily Moore, Head of Strategic Planning Ian Morrison, Director of Policy & Evidence Amy Pitts, Director of Communications & Public Engagement Dominic Ryan, Governance Officer Charlie Wheeler, Governance Officer Andrew Wiseman, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Others present:	Tony Hales, Chairman, English Heritage Trust (for part) Geoff Parkin, Interim Chief Executive Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part) Addison Devlin, Interim Chief Financial Officer, English Heritage Trust (for part).

1 Apologies, announcements and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chairman remarked on the news that four Commissioners had not been renewed, noting the loss of talent and the burden on the organisation to find new Commissioners.

1.2 The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting of Commission. He congratulated Tony Hales on his appointment as Chairman of English Heritage Trust.

1.3 The Chairman congratulated Louise Brennan on her permanent appointment as Director of Regions.

1.4 Commissioners Paul Farmer and Patrick Newberry sent apologies.

Declarations of Interest

1.5 None.

2 Minutes of 11 December 2026 Commission meeting and matters arising

2.1 The Minutes of the 351st Commission meeting held on 11 December 2025 were approved as a correct record.

2.2 There were no matters arising.

2.3 **Commission APPROVED the minutes of the 351st meeting held on 11 December 2025 as a correct record.**

3 Chairman's Report

3.1 The Chairman presented his report. He noted that the £1.5 billion announcement for heritage and culture from DCMS was positive for the sector.

3.2 The progress of the Palace of Westminster Restoration and Renewal was noted.

3.3 A constructive partnership was being forged with City of London despite the challenges in the relationship.

3.4 **Commission NOTED the Chairman's report.**

4 Co-Chief Executive's Report

4.1 Co-Chief Executive Emma Squire introduced her written report to Commission and highlighted the following points:

- capital funding for the Places of Worship Renewal Fund (POWRF) and the Heritage at Risk Capital Fund (HARCF) announced as part of the £1.5bn DCMS funding package for culture and heritage cemented Historic England as DCMS' first choice as a delivery partner; exceptional work had been done in Regions and Policy & Evidence to quickly draft the business cases for these programmes;
- the expansion of the capital funds was testament to great advocacy work by the heritage sector;
- planning reform work continued with the HE's response to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation response now published;
- the Co-Chief Executive had given evidence to the Commons' DCMS Select Committee recently and hoped to see some of the main points reflected in the Committee's report;
- the team were maintaining momentum on plans for a National Archaeological Archive;

- the appointments of Louse Brennan as Director of Regions and Deborah Williams as Midlands Region Director had been announced.

4.2 In questions and discussion, Commissioners raised several points on the Co-CEO's report, including:

- support for the proposed National Archaeological Archives;
- planning consent for the Liverpool Street Station scheme and the longer-term impact of the new City of London Plan;
- the impact of HE's dialogue with government on the draft NPPF.

4.3 **Commission NOTED the Co-Chief Executive's report.**

5 English Heritage Trust (EHT)

5.1 Commission received updates on English Heritage Trust from the Co-CEO Claudia Kenyatta, who set out some of the work done on governance over the last year by HE and EHT working together, from the Director of Corporate Services, who outlined the challenging financial position at EHT, and from the Interim Chief Executive Officer of EHT, who gave Commission further insight into visitor numbers, capital spend and the revenue picture.

5.2 Commission welcomed the new Chairman of EHT who spoke about his first impressions after three weeks in the role. He addressed the longer-term financial position of EHT and the need for the Trust to work effectively in partnership with HE and DCMS.

5.3 In discussion, Commission raised several points including:

- the financial position of EHT over the next year;
- the need to involve local communities to support sites;
- the continuing need for effective prioritisation for conservation projects;
- further scope for HE and EHT shared services;
- EHT visitor numbers compared to other visitor attractions.

5.4 The Chair of HECC provided a summary of the Committee's annual report on the condition of the National Heritage Collection, including highlighting the risks to the Collection. In presenting her report the Chair praised the work and commitment of EHT staff.

5.5 **Commission NOTED the EHT General Update; NOTED and DISCUSSED the HECC annual report; and NOTED the EHT Financial Update.**

6 Culture & Heritage Capital Programme: Update

6.1 The Director of Policy & Evidence introduced a presentation by the Head of Economic & Social Research updating Commission on the work of the Culture & Heritage Capital

Programme (CHC) since its launch in 2021. The programme seeks to show the value of culture and heritage alongside other parts of the economy as a capital, alongside other capitals such as human capital, natural capital and financial capital.

6.2 Commissioners noted the update and discussed the issues raised:

- support for this work and how it will help HE in the future - launch planned for later this year.
- whether the adoption of natural capital had been successful in changing outcomes - nature was now included the UK national accounts and therefore counted as part of UK GDP;
- how HE was using the evidence generated by the CHC programme in businesses cases, such as that for the POWRF.

6.3 **Commission NOTED the update on the Culture & Heritage Capital Programme.**

7 Corporate Priority Summary

7.1 The Director of Strategy & Business Development introduced the final report on performance against HE's six priorities in the 2023-2026 Corporate Plan, and explained the RAG ratings.

7.2 Commission welcomed the progress made and discussed the priority summary, and raised the following questions and comments:

- whether this was the last such report – the Director confirmed that it was and that there would be a gap before a new report came to Commission;
- query how the aerial photographs and archive links to income – the Director of Communications said it was a result of people accessing images online; BFC would like to look at charging policies on HE services;

ACTION: Director of Communications & Public Engagement to report to BFC later in the year on charged-for archival services.

7.3 **Commission NOTED the Corporate Priority Summary.**

8 Historic England Financial Update & Budget 2026/27

8.1 The Director of Corporate Services gave an update on HE's financial position, including the forecast year-end outturn, which was now expected to be a balanced budget with a stronger reserves position than previously forecast.

8.2 Commission discussed the financial update and the progress on resolving the VAT claim, noting that the potential outcome was very disappointing, particularly given the importance of the claim to EHT.

8.3 The Director of Corporate Services presented the draft Budget 2026/27 for Commission's approval. She explained that this detailed work has created a robust budget that backed up the new Strategic Plan.

8.4 The Director explained that HE had received a flat cash settlement from DCMS but with some additional specific resourcing. The Executive Team had produced a balanced budget through to 2028/29 which required spending reductions but also allowed for increased activities in other areas. The budget included planned pay awards but would require significant savings across the organisation. BFC had reviewed the budget and recommended it to Commission for approval.

8.5 Commission discussed the draft Budget 2026/27 and in particular noted the following:

- the number, cost and impacts of possible redundancies.

8.6 **Commission NOTED the forecast year-end position for 2025/26. It APPROVED the 2026/27 budget; and NOTED the risks for this financial year and beyond.**

9 Historic England New Strategic Plan

9.1 The Co-CEO, Claudia Kenyatta, introduced, and the Director of Strategy & Business Development and Head of Strategic Planning presented, the draft new Strategic Plan. ET members also presented the three priorities of the Strategic Plan.

9.2 Co-CEO Claudia Kenyatta said that this work had been completed quickly to enable the plan to align with the Spending Review settlement. It had been worked on robustly, openly and in a collaborative way. She thanked Commission for its contributions throughout the process.

9.3 Commission discussed the issues raised by the presentation and commented in detail on:

- the importance of housing as part of growth and ensuring that HE's role in this area was understood;
- the possibility of reframing growth as opportunity with fewer negatives;
- how achievement against the growth objectives will be measured (ET members gave some examples, including new KPIs being introduced in quarter one of 2026/27);
- how the forthcoming evaluation of the Historic Places Panel will show the value of Places work;
- the need to clarify the link between heritage and place with health and wellbeing;
- the funding of heritage bodies by HE and plans for the future;
- the 38 actions under the three priorities might be too many – should they all start at once?
- the need to communicate effectively the shift in strategy, particularly to the property development sector.

9.4 The Director of Strategy & Business Development summarised the next stages for discussion, approval and implementation of the new Strategic Plan. The Director of

Communications & Public Engagement set out the internal and external communications plans associated with the launch of the new Strategic Plan, which would include briefing materials for Commission.

9.5	**Commission CONSIDERED and APPROVED the draft Strategic Plan in principle, NOTING that further refinement would follow.**

10 Changes to Committees

10.1 The Chairman and the General Counsel & Corporate Secretary explained the proposed changes to Committees, which would mean transferring most of the responsibilities of the Remuneration & Appointments Committee into the Business & Finance Committee. A Senior Independent Commissioner would lead the annual appraisal of the Chair and deputise for the Chair when necessary. The Chairman confirmed that Sue Wilkinson had agreed to be Senior Independent Commissioner.

10.2	**Commission APPROVED the proposed changes to Committees and the appointment of a Senior Independent Commissioner.**

11 Historic England Committee minutes and updates

11.1 Commission noted the minutes and oral updates from recent sub-committee meetings, including the annual report of the London Advisory Committee. The Chairman suggested that in future, in addition to the current reporting of minutes of meetings, there should be a discussion about the work of an individual committee.

Minutes from sub-committees:

A. **Audit & Risk Assurance Committee 13 November 2025 and an oral report on 26 February 2026**
B. **Business & Finance Committee 13 November 2025 and an oral report on 26 February 2026**
C. **Historic England Advisory Committee 20 November 2025 and oral reports on 24 February and 05 March 2026**
D. **Historic England Conservation Committee 28 January 2026**
E. **Historic Places Panel written report**
F. **London Advisory Committee 20 November 2025 and an oral report on 05 March 2026.**

11.2	**Commission DISCUSSED and NOTED the sub-committee reports. Commission AGREED that the work of individual committees should be considered in turn at future Commission meetings.**

12 Casework Report & Planning Bulletin

12.1 Commission received its regular update on Historic England's business critical casework and recent and forthcoming planning developments.

12.2	**Commission NOTED the Casework Report and the Planning Bulletin.**

13 Any Other Business

13.1 There was no other business.

14 Closed Session

14.1 Commission held a closed session.

Nick Kent
Head of Governance
March 2026