Response ID

Submitted to Construction Products Reform White Paper
Submitted on 2026-05-19 06:50:23

About You

What is your name?

Name:

What is your email address?

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Where are you based?

Regional Location Dropdown:

Where do you or your company/organisation trade? (Select all that apply)

England

If Other::

Are you responding as an individual, on behalf of a company/organisation, or on behalf of a trade body/association?

behalf of dropdown list:
Company/Organisation

What do you consider is the primary role of you or your company/organisation?

Role of Org - Dropdown:
Central Government

If Other::

What is the name of your company/organisation (if applicable)?

Name of Organisation:
Historic England

What role do you have in your company/organisation (if applicable)?

Role in Organisation:
Co-Head of Building Conservation and Designed Landscape

What is the size of your company/organisation (if applicable)?

Size of Org - Dropdown:
Large (250+ employees)

Chapter 6: Regulating Products

1 What should be included in guidance to support industry to understand their responsibilities regarding products critical to safe construction?

Please explain your answer.:

Historic England supports the reforms' focus on strengthening safety outcomes following Grenfell and emphasises the importance of ensuring that foreseeable risks across the full building stock are properly captured. In that context, Historic England welcomes clear guidance for "products critical to safe construction" to support duty holders in identifying and managing safety risks across design, specification, procurement and installation. Guidance should set out, in plain terms, how products and systems are identified as "critical" and how "safety critical scenarios" are determined in context. In line with the post‐Grenfell safety objectives, we emphasise that product safety is not always determined by performance in isolation, but by how products perform in context, including their interaction with substrates and whole‐building behaviour. Where product performance is considered in isolation from real‐world application, foreseeable safety risks may not be fully captured. The term 'safe construction' therefore requires clearer definition; at present, the White Paper appears to refer to a 'risk of serious harm if something goes wrong', but this is not yet clearly specified or consistently applied.

This is particularly important to ensure safety risks are properly captured across the existing building stock, especially in a country with a large stock of older and traditionally constructed buildings [Today, the UK has one of the oldest housing stocks in Europe (Nicol et al, 2016 https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-environment/circular-economy/#ref32). In England, 21% of all domestic buildings and 32% of all non-domestic buildings were constructed prior to 1919 (VOA, 2023; Whitman et al, 2016 https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-environment/circular-economy/#ref43)], where product performance and safety outcomes are often highly dependent on the interaction between products, substrates and whole-building behaviour. In these cases, risks may not be fully captured where product performance is considered in isolation from its application context.

The driver for the proposed changes results from the catastrophic fire at Grenfell. But safety measures are also needed to protect people's health. This highlights that "safety" should be understood broadly, including foreseeable risks arising over time from building performance and occupation. This is exemplified by the Awaab case (Awaab's Law: Guidance for tenants in social housing - GOV.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awaabs-law-guidance-for-tenants-in-social-housing/awaabs-law-guidance-for-tenants-in-social-housing) and other instances of fatalities resulting from damp, mouldy, or cold and overheating in buildings (Overheating in Historic Buildings | Historic England https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/upgrading-thermal-elements-installing-insulation/overhea leading to thermal discomfort and health implications (The hidden problem of overheating - Climate Change Committee https://www.theccc.org.uk/2017/08/08/hidden-problem-overheating/). Such conditions cause significant harm to many vulnerable and elderly people and poor air quality afflicts everyone. These problems are often caused by ill-considered and inappropriate materials and systems being used to refurbish or 'improve' historic and traditional buildings.

Another serious risk to consider is flooding. The national flood risk assessment indicates that with climate change the total number of properties in areas at risk from rivers and the sea or surface water could increase to around 8 million by mid-century. In other words, 1 in 4 properties in England will be in areas at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea or surface water by mid-century. (National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England 2024 - GOV.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-er The regime should therefore ensure that foreseeable environmental risks are incorporated into the definition and application of "safe construction", including how product selection and system design affect building resilience and occupant safety over time.

To ensure the regime captures foreseeable safety and performance risks across the existing building stock, including historic and traditionally constructed buildings, the guidance should explicitly include:

1) A heritage and traditional construction lens within "critical scenarios":

• "Criticality" can depend on context and construction typology. A product that is safe and effective in cavity wall construction may create serious risks in solid-wall assemblies where moisture movement is essential to performance (for example, moisture trapping leading to decay or mould). This highlights that safety risks may arise where product performance is assessed in isolation rather than in context. This is evidenced by lessons from large-scale retrofit programmes, where specification, detailing, workmanship and moisture behaviour are not adequately considered together, and outcomes can include damp and mould, fabric deterioration and adverse impacts on occupants' health. Examples include the Fishwick scheme in Preston (Disastrous Preston retrofit scheme remains unresolved - passivehouseplus.co.uk https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yp4qllxv1o) and retrofit programmes in Wales where moisture-related defects were reported following external wall insulation installations (Historic England, 2024 When Retrofit Goes Wrong https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-environment/introduction-to-retrofitting/when-retrofit-goes-wrong/).

• "Safety" should encompass reasonably foreseeable secondary harms arising from product choice and system interaction (for example, moisture accumulation, decay mechanisms and resultant risks to occupant health and fabric integrity), not only the primary intended function. This helps ensure that foreseeable risks are captured beyond the initial performance intent. Thus, the term 'safe construction' should be defined as 'the appropriate selection of a material or a system that performs the safety critical function it is selected for, is compatible with adjacent materials, and will not result in other serious health issues for occupants at a later date'.

2) Clear delineation of responsibilities for heritage contexts

Guidance should state, explicitly for historic/traditional buildings:

• Principal Designer: responsible for ensuring that what is specified is safe and materially compatible with existing fabric, including moisture movement, salts, thermal behaviour and (where relevant) reversibility/repairability.

• Principal Contractor: responsible for ensuring installation methods do not undermine compatibility, including detailing at interfaces/penetrations and workmanship issues that can introduce moisture pathways or compromise performance (including, where relevant, fire-stopping/compartmentation detailing that could allow fire spread if poorly executed).

• Manufacturers: responsible for providing product information that distinguishes suitability for modern versus traditional construction, and for stating clearly where testing/assessment does not cover traditional assemblies or substrates. Manufacturers should also provide access to product testing information, highlighting to the designer where test limitations occur. For example, if the product has been tested only in isolation, or only with certain build-ups. This is important to define where products are appropriate for new, or modern construction, or where appropriate for moisture-open construction (traditional construction), which equates to a large share of the UK building stock and is arguably more at risk of maladaptation.

3) Competence expectations that explicitly cover older/traditional buildings

• Guidance should require duty-holders to demonstrate access to competence and experience in traditional building performance (including moisture risk management) where critical products are used in/onto historic fabric.

• It should make clear that generic “new build” competence may be insufficient where risks are driven by moisture behaviour and complex interfaces with existing materials. This reflects that, in existing buildings, performance and risks often depend on system interaction and material behaviour that differ from those assumed in modern construction. This can be managed by ensuring that principal designers and contractors have an appropriate understanding of the materials they are specifying and installing, including factors such as moisture movement, heat gain and thermal expansion, which are increasingly important in the context of retrofit, overheating and climate change risks.

4) Proportionate assurance routes for traditional products used in safety critical scenarios

• Guidance should avoid inadvertently excluding traditional materials and methods (for example, timber, thatch, lime-based materials, handmade masonry units, natural stone/slate) simply because they do not fit modern standardisation pathways or large-scale testing models.

• Where enhanced assurance is needed, guidance should recognise appropriate forms of evidence alongside formal certification, such as well-documented long-term performance, targeted testing relevant to the actual substrate/assembly, and credible sector guidance—particularly where supply chains are dominated by SMEs and micro-producers.

5) Worked examples for “critical scenarios” in traditional buildings

Guidance should include practical, worked examples illustrating compliant approaches for common high-risk situations in traditional buildings, such as:

• fire stopping/compartmentation in traditional floor and roof voids;

• insulation and retrofit interfaces on solid walls;

• flood resilience products on timber frames or historic masonry;

• coatings/finishes where moisture behaviour is critical.

Such guidance should be co-produced with heritage bodies and sector specialists, to provide clarity, avoid misapplication, and protect both safety outcomes and historic fabric.

Regarding the issues surrounding the Approved Documents as highlighted in “Section 6.9.7 We will also review Regulation 7(1) of the Building Regulations 2010, to ensure that it supports the safe selection and use of products”. Where revision of standards or approved documents are being undertaken, a representative from the heritage sector, ideally via one of the government departments (Historic Environment Scotland, Cadw, Historic England, or NI), should be included to ensure that guidance reflects the full range of construction typologies and avoids foreseeable risks of maladaptation.

Chapter 8: Assurance and Oversight of Testing, Conformity Assessment and Certification

2 Do you agree that the above principles should underpin the licensing regime for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs)?

Yes

Please explain your answer. Please outline how you think a licensing regime for CABs could work operationally.:

Agree with heritage-focused conditions. Historic England supports a licensing regime for conformity assessment bodies (CABs) that strengthens rigour, transparency and public interest duties, as an important element in ensuring that testing and certification support robust and reliable safety outcomes. We consider this essential to restoring confidence in the construction products regime and to ensuring that testing and certification are trustworthy, consistent and enforceable.

However, the licensing regime must be designed to prevent foreseeable safety risks arising from misapplication. In particular, it should ensure that safety risks arising in different construction contexts, including historic and traditionally constructed buildings, are appropriately assessed and addressed. Historic buildings rely on a wide range of traditional materials and assemblies, often supplied by SMEs and micro producers, and frequently used in mixed systems, including modern products applied to historic substrates. The licensing regime should therefore explicitly require CABs to be competent to assess, or to access demonstrable specialist expertise to assess, performance in traditional construction contexts. This should include consideration of unintended or secondary risk pathways, for example where products tested for one performance outcome (such as fire resistance) may influence moisture behaviour and longer-term material performance.

CABs could also be required to attend Government organised seminars to discuss issues of interest, together with commissioned independent experts/academics with no monetary interest in products, to address problems and establish consistency amongst them. This would help strengthen confidence in testing regimes where there is currently variability in practice.

Key safeguards and requirements:

1) Scope of competence (including traditional materials and assemblies)

In our response to the green paper, we noted that product testing and certification must not be limited to modern construction assumptions. We emphasised that “it is important that products are tested, specified and installed within the construction typology that they are intended to be used in” and that where this is not the case “there is potential to cause damage and decay to the existing building and health issues to the occupant”. This highlights that products assessed in one construction context may present risks if applied in another without appropriate consideration.

In licensing terms, CABs should therefore be required to demonstrate competence (or formal access to competence) to assess products used with traditional substrates and assemblies, including the way they interact with moisture movement, salts and long-term fabric performance.

We also previously recommended that product testing documentation should "clearly state in all certificates whether the product has been tested on both modern and traditional construction build ups or products, or whether it has only been tested on modern construction." Implications of use in different context and climates, and their effects on existing fabric, should also be noted. This should be a mandatory licensing requirement, because it is a practical safeguard against misapplication in historic buildings.

2) Transparency and disclosure (including test context and adverse outcomes)

Historic England has consistently called for fuller transparency in what is tested, how it is tested, and what is not covered. In our earlier response we stated that it would be valuable for information resources (and by extension, certification evidence) to include "full test context, including the methodology, conditions, and construction build-up used during testing" and also to include "information on failed or partial test outcomes, not just the final successful result." We recognise that this may require careful consideration to balance transparency with commercial sensitivities, but greater clarity on test context and limitations is essential to support safe specification and use. We also noted the importance of "clear identification of construction typologies tested (e.g. solid wall vs cavity wall, modern)" and test limitations.

In licensing terms, CABs should be obliged to require and retain sufficient underlying evidence to support certificates, and to ensure that certificates and associated public documentation include:

• the build-up/substrate and boundary conditions used in testing;

• clear limitations of validity (what was not tested; where results should not be extrapolated);

• transparent change control (where a product formulation or manufacturing process changes).

3) Managing conflicts of interest and resisting commercial pressure

A licensing regime must ensure CABs can act independently in the public interest. CABs should be required to demonstrate separation between commercial functions and technical decision-making, documented impartiality procedures, and robust internal escalation routes where staff identify pressure to soften or reinterpret outcomes.

Operational model (how a CAB licensing regime could work in practice):

A) Tiered licensing aligned to product risk

• A tiered approach should be adopted, with higher licensing requirements where CABs assess safety□critical products and systems.

• Higher tiers should require deeper technical capability, stricter audit frequency and stronger evidence retention/disclosure requirements.

B) Competence mapping and specialist access

• CABs should maintain a published competence map (at least in outline), showing the domains they can competently assess.

• Where CABs assess products likely to be used in traditional buildings, they should be required to evidence named technical leads or formal access to independent expertise in traditional materials and building performance (including moisture movement and long-term interactions with historic substrates).

C) Quality assurance, auditing and consistency

• Licensing should include mandatory periodic technical audits (including unannounced audits), with a focus on the quality of technical judgements and evidence, not only procedural compliance.

• In our earlier response we suggested that "CABs could be required to attend Government organised seminars to discuss issues of interest, together with commissioned independent experts/academics to address problems and establish consistency amongst them." A structured programme of regulator-led technical forums and calibration exercises should be embedded in licensing conditions to improve consistency and confidence across CABs.

D) Evidence retention and rapid regulatory access

• CABs should be required to retain sufficient underlying evidence (including test reports, contextual details and change-control records) for a defined period, and to provide it rapidly to regulators when requested to support market surveillance and enforcement.

• This aligns with Historic England's earlier emphasis that transparency should include the test context and limitations, and that it is "imperative" that those specifying products are able to do so with the relevant information to design out risks.

E) Clear certificates that prevent misapplication in historic buildings

• Certificates should explicitly state the construction typologies and substrates covered by the assessment and where extrapolation is not valid.

• Where products are commonly marketed for use on traditionally constructed buildings, certificates should identify any known constraints relating to moisture movement and compatibility with traditional materials, where relevant to foreseeable use.

In summary, Historic England supports CAB licensing as a necessary reform, but the regime must explicitly embed competence and transparency requirements that address traditional construction. Without these safeguards, there is a material risk that certification may be interpreted as broadly applicable beyond the conditions in which performance has been demonstrated, and products may be misapplied in different construction contexts, with adverse consequences for fabric durability, occupant health and wider safety outcomes. Across the regime, a central consideration is that product safety cannot be reliably determined in isolation from use context; without this, foreseeable safety risks may not be identified.

3 Do you agree that this national testing and research facility would lead to the highlighted benefits?

Yes

Please explain your answer.:

Historic England supports new public sector testing and research capacity. We agree with the White Paper's analysis that the UK's cadre of specialist building science experts has declined over decades, alongside a reduction in public sector testing and research capacity, and that a gap has emerged since the transition of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) from government adviser to contractor. A national testing and research facility would help rebuild capability and provide expert, impartial advice to underpin a well-functioning construction products regime.

We consider that new public sector testing and research capacity would deliver these benefits by providing:
(i) assured capacity for regulatory testing (reducing delays and reliance on scarce private capacity);
(ii) a stronger interface between building science and regulation, keeping requirements under continual review; and
(iii) sustained applied Research & Development to improve testing methodologies, support horizon scanning, and inform policy and regulatory action with independent technical insight.

It would also help rebuild a talent pipeline by creating roles, training routes and collaboration opportunities that strengthen long-term resilience in the system.

This should explicitly include the development and validation of new test methodologies and reference assemblies relevant to existing and traditionally constructed buildings (including mixed systems and moisture performance), so that the regime can respond quickly to emerging risks and avoid unintended harm where products are applied outside the contexts for which they were originally designed.

From a heritage perspective, the facility would deliver major benefits if it:
• supports independent, impartial testing that is accessible to SMEs and micro-producers (including traditional and craft-based manufacturers) who cannot fund extensive commercial testing programmes, helping to avoid market exit and loss of critical heritage supply chains;
• develops and validates test methods and reference build-ups that reflect real-world use, including mixed systems and traditional construction typologies, particularly where products are routinely applied to historic substrates and performance depends on system interaction and moisture movement;
• generates publicly available datasets, guidance and decision-support tools that help practitioners select products that are safe and appropriate for their intended context, reducing inappropriate use and downstream risks of fabric deterioration, damp-related defects and associated health impacts; and
• strengthens applied research and knowledge transfer across the sector, including long-term performance monitoring, durability studies and "what works" evidence for repair, retrofit and adaptation in older buildings. This research function fills evidence gaps the market cannot address, supports innovation in low-carbon and climate-resilient solutions compatible with historic fabric, and builds technical expertise for the whole built environment.

Restoring a publicly funded centre for applied research and testing would therefore provide a valuable resource for the entire sector—particularly where independent evidence is needed to underpin safe practice, enable proportionate regulation, and support innovation in areas critical to heritage, low-carbon construction and public safety.

Historic England has strong in-house technical expertise and an established network of academic and sector partners, and would be well placed to contribute to the peer review of outputs from a national testing and research facility. We commission and publish applied research to support evidence-based policy and practice, and we routinely engage with research produced across government. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in discussions on the national testing and research facility and how Historic England can contribute to its development and outputs.

Historic England would also be interested in exploring a more direct role in supporting the facility's development and operation, particularly to ensure that heritage and traditional construction contexts are appropriately represented in test design and application. This could include contributing to the development of heritage-relevant methodologies and supporting applied research and validation through our technical teams and partnerships. Drawing on our state-of-the-art laboratory and research facilities at Fort Cumberland, we could also support aspects of testing, prototyping and long-term performance monitoring. We would welcome further engagement with government on how our expertise and facilities could contribute to a distributed, heritage-informed national testing capability.

4 What opportunities are there for government to establish partnership models to establish new public sector testing and research capacity?

Please explain your answer.:

Historic England recommends partnership models that explicitly include heritage, traditional construction and retrofit expertise, alongside mainstream construction product capability. A blended partnership approach would help ensure testing methods, reference assemblies and guidance reflect real-world use across the full range of the UK building stock and prevent foreseeable safety and performance risks for historic and traditionally constructed buildings.

1) A distributed “hub and spoke” model
• Establish a central national facility (“hub”) to set standards, methods, quality assurance, data governance and publication protocols.
• Commission regional “spokes” (universities, specialist institutes, Catapult centres and other capable laboratories) to deliver agreed test programmes, increasing capacity and geographic reach.
• Ensure the network includes capability for hygrothermal and moisture performance testing and interpretation for assemblies relevant to traditional buildings (for example solid masonry walls, lime renders/plasters, timber frames and mixed-material interfaces), where performance is often determined by system interaction and moisture movement.

2) Formal partnerships that include Historic England and other heritage bodies
• Create formal partnerships with Historic England and other heritage/sector bodies and networks to co-develop test protocols, reference build-ups and interpretation guidance that reflect traditional building performance and conservation principles.
• This should include mechanisms for peer review, calibration of methods, and translation into practical guidance for designers, contractors and building owners, so that results reduce misapplication risk rather than adding complexity.

As set out in our response to Q3, Historic England has strong in-house technical expertise and an established network of academic and sector partners, and would be well placed to support peer review of outputs from a national testing and research facility. We commission and publish applied research to support evidence-based policy and practice, and would welcome continued engagement with MHCLG and regulators on the facility’s development and outputs, including exploring a more direct role to ensure heritage and traditional construction contexts are properly reflected in test design and application. This could include contributing heritage-relevant methodologies and, where helpful, drawing on our laboratory and research facilities at Fort Cumberland to support testing, prototyping and longer-term performance monitoring as part of a distributed national capability.

3) Targeted SME access routes (including traditional and craft producers)
• Introduce voucher schemes, subsidised test slots, and shared-method routes to support micro-producers and SMEs (including traditional and craft-based manufacturers) so compliance costs do not drive market exit or reduce availability of conservation-critical materials.
• Provide standard templates and advisory support to help smaller businesses participate effectively and consistently.

4) Evidence libraries and open outputs (public value maximisation)
• Publicly funded testing and research should generate openly accessible outputs (with proportionate protection for legitimate IP), including test context, reference build-ups, limitations of validity and clear statements about applicable construction typologies.
• A transparent evidence library would help the sector learn from outcomes, avoid repeated errors, and improve specification and installation practice over time. At present, concerns about product performance can remain informal or undocumented, and changes to products or specifications over time can make it difficult for the sector to learn consistently. Clear publication and governance arrangements (including appropriate legal review, quality thresholds, and fair processes for correction) would help ensure lessons learned can be shared responsibly and used to improve outcomes.

Chapter 9: Role and Responsibilities of Regulators

5 Would there be a benefit to enabling employment protections, for individuals reporting risks, bad practices and non-compliance within their own organisation, to the national regulator for construction products?

Yes

Please explain your answer.:

Historic England supports employment protections for whistleblowers reporting product safety risks, malpractice and non-compliance. Strong, protected reporting routes would help strengthen market surveillance and reinforce a culture of accountability across the supply chain.

For example, Historic England has previously engaged with the Office for Product Safety and Standards on concerns in the glazing supply chain where product compliance and transparency issues were being observed in practice; protected reporting routes help ensure such issues are surfaced early and acted on before problems become widespread.

From a heritage and retrofit standpoint, these protections are particularly important because issues are often first identified by practitioners “closest to the work” (manufacturing staff, technical representatives, installers and specialist suppliers), who may otherwise fear commercial or employment repercussions for raising concerns. In our previous consultation response to the green paper, we highlighted recurring problems where product information and marketing do not draw clear distinctions between intended use in modern construction and use in older/traditional buildings, and where inappropriate specification can lead to trapped moisture, fabric deterioration and indoor health risks. A protected route to report concerns would help regulators identify such patterns earlier and intervene before harm is repeated at scale.

Employment protections would also support reporting where:
• staff or installers observe misleading performance claims, incomplete instructions, or products being promoted for uses beyond the evidence base (including use on traditional substrates where compatibility has not been demonstrated);
• practitioners identify repeated failures in the field that are not reflected in product literature, including situations where concerns are dismissed with assurances that “minor design changes” have resolved issues but without transparent evidence;
• proprietary products are marketed as “like-for-like” or suitable for heritage/traditional buildings while their composition is not sufficiently disclosed to enable compatibility assessment, or where formulations change over time without clear notification—creating risk for both performance and future repair compatibility.

Protections should be paired with:
• confidential reporting channels (including options for anonymous reporting where appropriate);

• clear triage processes, feedback loops and published regulator criteria for how reports are assessed and prioritised; and
• safeguards against misuse (vexatious reporting), while ensuring genuine concerns are acted on promptly and proportionately.

Taken together, protected reporting would improve the regulator's ability to detect systemic issues early (including those that disproportionately affect older and traditionally constructed buildings), strengthen evidence for enforcement action, and help prevent repeated harm to building users and historic fabric.

Chapter 10: Environment and Sustainability

6 We would like to raise awareness and encourage the use of EN 15804+A2 as the methodology for producing an Environmental Product Declaration. What other opportunities could support best practice for products not covered by a designated standard? Please explain your answer.

Please explain your answer.:

Historic England supports the aim of improving environmental data quality and comparability and recognises the value of a common methodology such as EN 15804+A2. However, environmental assessment should also support safe and durable outcomes, ensuring that products do not create unintended risks through inappropriate application.

In our response to the green paper, we emphasised that many traditional materials have strong environmental credentials that are not always captured by standard "new product" reporting routes. These materials are often locally sourced, minimally processed, highly durable, and routinely repairable and reusable. Their long service life can significantly reduce whole-life impacts by avoiding repeated replacement. Yet many are produced by SMEs and micro-producers who may not have the capacity or resources to produce full EPDs, and a one-size-fits-all requirement risks penalising low-impact products simply because they are small scale.

Opportunities to support best practice for products not covered by a designated standard include:

1) Proportionate, SME-friendly routes to environmental declarations
• Provide standardised templates, sector "defaults", and light-touch reporting routes for small producers where processes are stable and well documented (for example, traditional lime products, thatching material, natural stone, handmade brick and tile, and timber products).
• Offer practical support (guidance, worked examples, advisory help) to reduce cost and complexity barriers for SMEs.

2) Recognition of service life, repairability and reuse in environmental assessment
• Ensure best practice guidance explicitly accounts for durability, 'retain-and-repair' approaches and reuse, which are central to conservation and the circular economy.
• Incorporate approaches that reflect whole-life performance and avoid incentivising premature replacement of long-lived traditional fabric with "new" products that may have higher embodied impacts and/or shorter lifespans.

3) Alternative evidence pathways where full EPDs are impractical
• Allow robust non-EPD evidence to demonstrate environmental aspects for low-volume or craft-based products, including field performance data, peer-reviewed research, case studies, and conservation-led assessments.
• Where appropriate, enable "grouped" evidence (for example, sector-wide declarations for comparable products produced using consistent methods) to reduce duplication and cost.

4) Public sector testing, shared datasets and open guidance
• Use public sector capacity to generate shared datasets (for example, typical impact factors for common traditional materials) and publish guidance that helps producers and specifiers apply consistent assumptions.
• Encourage transparency and comparability by publishing clear rules on scope, assumptions and limitations, while keeping administrative burdens proportionate for low-risk, low-volume products.

5) Procurement levers and recognition schemes to reward best practice
• Use public procurement to incentivise verified low-carbon and durable solutions, including repair-and-reuse approaches and the continued supply of traditional materials.
• Consider voluntary marks or recognition schemes that reward higher-quality environmental reporting and durability/repairability outcomes, without making entry to the market unworkably complex for SMEs.

Overall, best practice should promote good environmental information while recognising the value and characteristics of traditional materials (long service life, repairability, local sourcing and reuse). A proportionate framework with practical SME pathways and alternative evidence routes will support environmental goals without reducing the availability of conservation-critical products or creating perverse incentives away from repair-first, low-waste approaches.

Chapter 11: Competence and Accountability

7 Are there any specific roles or points where you think accountability is not clear?

Yes

If yes, please explain your answer and include who should be responsible. :

Accountability can be unclear at the interface between (a) product safety and performance claims (the responsibilities of manufacturers and other economic operators), and (b) product suitability and safe outcomes in context (the responsibilities of those who design, specify, procure and install products). This can create uncertainty in how responsibility for safe outcomes is understood and applied in practice. This lack of clarity is most acute in existing buildings and traditional construction, where performance is highly dependent on system interaction and on how a product behaves when applied to specific substrates and assemblies. In our previous consultation response, we noted that products are often marketed and specified without a clear distinction between intended use in modern construction and use in older/traditional buildings, and that this has contributed to inappropriate specification and avoidable harm.

Where clarity is needed (and who should be responsible):

1) Suitability statements for construction typologies (manufacturer responsibility)
Manufacturers should be responsible for stating clearly:
• the product's intended use and any reasonably foreseeable uses;
• what the product has and has not been tested/assessed on (including construction typologies and substrates); and
• where and how the product should not be used, including where compatibility with traditional substrates/assemblies has not been demonstrated.
This should include clear statements on limitations and applicability, to prevent inappropriate extrapolation of performance claims across different construction typologies.

2) Final specification decisions in existing and heritage contexts (designer/specifier responsibility)
The Principal Designer (or lead designer/specifier) should be responsible for:
• ensuring that the selected product is appropriate for the actual building context and existing fabric; and
• documenting the rationale where products are proposed for use outside the scope of stated testing/assessment, including the risk assessment and mitigation measures adopted.
This is particularly important where outcomes depend on system interaction and moisture behaviour, and where inappropriate product selection can lead to downstream defects.

3) Installation interfaces, information continuity and workmanship (principal contractor/installer responsibility)
The Principal Contractor and/or installer should be responsible for:
• competent installation in accordance with product information and project design intent;
• ensuring that critical safety information, limitations and installation requirements remain associated with the product on site (and are not lost through repackaging, splitting of batches, or substitution); and
• recording relevant product identifiers and installation details so that products remain traceable for future inspection, maintenance and (where necessary) corrective action. This should be complemented by clear expectations for handover information, including operational and maintenance manuals, an updated health and safety file, and updated (as-built) floor plans or schematics where relevant.

Chapter 12: Implementation Plan

8 Do you have views on appropriate lead times or transition periods relating to specific reforms set out in this white paper?

Please explain your answer.:

Yes. Historic England urges phased implementation with adequate lead times that reflect the realities of SMEs, traditional materials supply chains, and professional bodies who will need to make reasonable adjustments to ensure those within accredited schemes can be trained, informed and updated before roll-out. This is to ensure that reforms deliver intended safety improvements without introducing avoidable risks through disruption to supply chains or established repair and adaptation practices. The White Paper recognises that lead times of 18–24 months will be necessary for some measures, with shorter periods sufficient for others; this principle should be applied in a way that reflects the varied capacity of the sector and the risk of disruption to essential repair, conservation and adaptation activity.

Repair, conservation and adaptation projects often rely on niche supply chains, small-batch production and reclaimed materials. Sudden compliance changes could reduce availability, create scarcity, delay urgent fabric repairs, and increase costs. Historic England has previously highlighted that imposing a uniform, high-cost testing/validation burden would be prohibitive for many small traditional material producers and risks undermining the continued supply of materials essential for traditional repair.

Lead times should therefore be structured around capacity building and proportionality:
• Where reforms introduce new expectations for product information, labelling, documentation and traceability, SMEs and micro-producers will need sufficient time, guidance and practical support to adopt new systems consistently and affordably.
• Longer transition periods will be necessary for any measures that would, in practice, require new testing routes or extensive new evidence for traditional products. These should be paired with a proportionate "deemed-to-satisfy" pathway that allows existing credible evidence (including documented long-term performance and established good practice) to be used where appropriate.

This approach would support the intent of reform while avoiding unintended disruption to conservation activity and ensuring essential repair and adaptation works to historic buildings are not delayed by avoidable supply-chain impacts. Where delays do occur, they may, in some cases, increase risks by allowing continued deterioration.

9 What should we take into account when developing the proposed tranches and sequencing?

Please explain your answer.:

Historic England recommends a sequencing approach that prioritises public safety and is explicitly risk-based, recognises the distinct characteristics of existing and traditionally constructed buildings, and avoids disrupting essential repair and maintenance activity; this should be developed through early and sustained engagement with the full range of stakeholders, including heritage and traditional construction expertise alongside mainstream construction product capability. This should ensure that foreseeable risks across the existing building stock are addressed effectively. The proposed Tranche 2 timetable (aiming to introduce regulations by end 2026 and bring them into force later) is ambitious and will only be deliverable without later rework if sufficient time is built in for structured engagement, cross-government technical input, and early peer review of the underpinning approach (including test methods, guidance and interpretation) before regulations are finalised; sequencing should therefore ensure that technical co-design and peer review happen early, and that guidance and practical tools are prepared well in advance of commencement, particularly for SMEs and micro-producers.

Key considerations

1) Risk-based tranching
• Begin with genuinely high-risk product categories, systems and use contexts where failure can present a clear risk to life.
• Avoid early “one-size-fits-all” requirements that inadvertently capture low-risk traditional materials used routinely for repair (often in small quantities and well-understood applications), without commensurate safety benefit and potentially creating unintended risks through substitution or delay.

2) Heritage dependency mapping (protect essential supply chains)
• Identify the products and materials that are essential to conservation and traditionally constructed building repair, and assess how proposed requirements could affect their supply.
• This should include traditional and conservation-critical materials and components such as lime products, thatching material, handmade brick and tile, natural stone and slate, timber repair products, earth mortars, and specialist heritage metalwork and joinery items.
• The use of locally sourced construction materials contributes greatly to the distinctiveness and significance of many historic buildings and areas. The availability of suitable materials for maintenance and repair is a key aspect of heritage management. The supply of certain traditional materials is already fragile, and some products are difficult to obtain; reforms should avoid adding burdens that further reduce availability or increase lead times for essential repairs (for example, as set out in Historic England research and guidance on sourcing traditional materials https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/conservation-research/sourcing-traditional-materials/).
• Many of these products are produced by SMEs and micro-producers, often in small batches or bespoke forms. Sequencing should therefore ensure that reforms do not unintentionally undermine these supply chains or price them out of reach for routine maintenance and urgent repair.

3) Support before enforcement ramp-up (capacity building first)
• Introduce guidance, templates and accessible compliance routes before enforcement and sanctions tighten, particularly for small firms.
• Where new requirements involve documentation, labelling or traceability, provide practical tools and a clear “what good looks like” standard early, so the sector can adapt without disruption.
• Consider targeted support measures (for example, advisory help, model documentation, and proportionate routes for small-batch/traditional products) to reduce the risk of market exit.

4) Integration with existing-building and retrofit policy (address foreseeable harm pathways)
• Sequencing should recognise that safety risks in existing buildings are not limited to “headline” hazards, and that foreseeable harms can arise from inappropriate or incompatible retrofit and repair interventions.
• In traditionally constructed buildings, outcomes can depend heavily on system interaction and moisture behaviour. This includes situations where retrofit or repair interventions which do not fully account for these factors may create secondary risks such as damp, mould or reduced resilience. Reforms should therefore prioritise early improvements to product information and limitations of use (including clear statements about what has and has not been tested, and where products should not be used), to reduce inappropriate specification while the wider regulatory framework is phased in.

Overall, sequencing should be designed to deliver early safety improvements where they matter most, while providing proportionate pathways and sufficient lead-in so that conservation practice and the continued availability of traditional materials are not inadvertently undermined.

Regarding 12.5.6 (Government commitment to work collaboratively with all stakeholders), Historic England welcomes the commitment to collaboration and would be open to supporting this work through our range of technical experts.

Chapter 13: Next Steps

10 Do you have any views, evidence or insights regarding the impact that reforms might have regarding the costs and benefits to businesses, as well as any wider impacts?

Please explain your answer.:

Yes. Historic England expects the reforms to deliver substantial public benefits, including improved confidence in construction products, stronger safety outcomes, and clearer, more reliable product information. This is particularly the case where the regime effectively addresses how products perform in real world use rather than in isolation. However, there may be wider impacts if the regime is not designed and implemented proportionately, particularly for the heritage sector and for small and specialist supply chains.

Potential unintended risks:
• Market exit and reduced availability: Disproportionate costs and administrative burdens—particularly where requirements assume mass-production testing models or high-cost certification routes—may lead SMEs and micro-producers (including craft-based suppliers of traditional materials) to reduce output or withdraw from the market. This would constrain the supply of materials essential for conservation repairs and maintenance and could increase reliance on unsuitable or less-sustainable imported substitutes.
• Increased repair costs and programme delays: Heritage projects frequently depend on niche materials, small-batch production and sometimes

reclaimed components. If reforms inadvertently restrict supply, the result could be higher costs, longer lead times, and delays to urgent maintenance and repair—potentially accelerating deterioration where defects cannot be addressed promptly.
• Continuing mis-specification risks unless information is fit for existing buildings: Benefits from stronger product information will not be fully realised unless obligations explicitly address construction typologies and system interactions. In existing and traditionally constructed buildings, performance is often driven by how products behave in a particular assembly and substrate, including moisture behaviour. Without clear statements of intended use, tested contexts, limitations and "do not use" scenarios, products may continue to be misapplied, leading to fabric harm and avoidable health impacts.

Benefits if designed and implemented well:
• Reduced failures and better outcomes: Improved transparency on product performance, limitations and appropriate applications should reduce inappropriate specification and installation, helping to avoid retrofit failures and prevent harm to historic fabric and building users.
• Innovation and a stronger evidence base: Increased public sector testing and research capacity could support independent evaluation, improve confidence in product claims, and provide accessible routes for SMEs to generate credible evidence. This can enable innovation (including low-carbon and climate-resilient solutions) while maintaining safety and supporting the needs of existing buildings and the heritage sector.

There is also a wider economic and skills dimension. Analysis has suggested that retrofitting historic properties could require tens of thousands of additional workers annually over the period to 2050 and could support tens of billions of pounds of annual economic output. Disruption to specialist supply chains or disproportionate burdens on SMEs would therefore have knock-on impacts beyond individual projects. References: PwC, 2024 https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Assumptions-for-retrofitting-residential-buildings-pwc-2.pdf and Heritage Counts, 2024 https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-environment/low-carbon-economy/#ref1, citing research by Capital Economics: retrofitting the UK's stock of historic properties could require between 57,000 and 166,000 additional workers annually between 2021 and 2050. Significant need is projected for jobs such as scaffolders, planners/designers, plasterers, and window glaziers/fitter. Furthermore, the UK economy would need almost 3 million additional workers by 2050 (relative to 2021 levels) to retrofit traditional properties in the UK. Retrofitting traditional buildings will benefit the wider economy by stimulating firms in the supply chain and generating revenues for businesses in construction and associated sectors. An additional £35 billion of economic output could be supported annually through retrofit works to historic properties in the UK; this includes an estimated direct output of the construction sector valued at £14.2 billion yearly.

Overall, the costs and benefits will depend heavily on proportionality, the practicality of compliance routes for SMEs and specialist suppliers, and whether product information requirements are sufficiently specific to prevent foreseeable misapplication in different construction typologies, including traditional buildings, where context dependent risks are particularly significant.

11 Do you have any other useful information that you wish to share that is not covered by your previous answers?

Please explain your answer.:

Yes. Historic England recommends the following additional measures to support effective implementation and improve safety outcomes and ensure risks in existing and traditionally constructed buildings are appropriately captured:

1) Establish a heritage and traditional buildings advisory group
Create a standing advisory group (or formal stakeholder forum) focused on historic and traditionally constructed buildings to inform:
• the development of guidance (including "products critical to safe construction" in existing buildings);
• interfaces with standards and associated guidance;
• proportionate compliance routes for SMEs and micro-producers; and
• transitional arrangements and sequencing.
This would help ensure reforms are workable across the full range of the UK building stock and that avoidable risks to sector and historic fabric are identified early.

2) Make "tested context and limitations" explicit in product information and any central product information library outputs
To prevent foreseeable misapplication, require that product information and any central product information library clearly state:
• the construction typologies and substrates on which the product (or system) has been tested or assessed;
• limitations of validity and "do not use" scenarios, including where suitability for traditional construction has not been assessed; and
• any assumptions made in testing or assessment that affect transferability to other contexts.
Clear statements of tested context and limitations are especially important for products commonly promoted for use in retrofit and in traditionally constructed buildings.

3) Embed recognition of 'retain-and-repair' and compatibility principles in reform delivery
Ensure reform delivery recognises the UK's older building stock and the central role of repair and maintenance in managing safety, resilience and sustainability. Implementation should avoid perverse incentives that drive unnecessary replacement of traditional fabric with products that are "compliant" in a generic sense but materially incompatible with traditional construction, creating new risks relating to deterioration, compatibility or long term performance.

Historic England would welcome continued engagement with MHCLG and the regulators to support these measures, including by contributing technical expertise to the development of guidance, evidence frameworks and transitional planning, so that reforms strengthen safety and confidence without undermining heritage outcomes.