



Department
for Culture,
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27 February 2026

Dame Caroline Dinenage MP
Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Select
Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

INT2026/01888/DC

Dear Dame Caroline,

PROTECTING BUILT HERITAGE: 10 FEBRUARY EVIDENCE SESSION

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on 10 February. I was pleased to attend this session and to talk about what this Government is doing to protect and enhance our nation's built heritage. I committed to provide further details on some issues raised and will address the outstanding questions asked by specific Committee members in turn below.

Financial or other incentives available to promote the repair, reuse and conversion of heritage buildings into new homes.

Government funding in relation to housing is generally provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). In June 2025, MHCLG, announced the creation of the National Housing Bank, backed by £16 billion of financial capacity, which will be the Government's investment arm for housing. Subject to the scheme's criteria, vacant heritage buildings can benefit from this funding stream and this will complement the work of the National Housing Delivery Fund.

As part of this Government's commitment to delivering 1.5 million new homes, this financial year, MHCLG has allocated £150 million to 9 Mayoral Combined Authorities, as part of their Brownfield Housing Fund, to unlock around 4,000 homes in sites across the country. This builds on the £600 million previously allocated to Mayors via this fund to unlock 40,000 new homes, that was allocated under the previous administration and has already unlocked 22,000 home starts so far. Funds are allocated directly to Mayors, supporting them to boost the supply of homes by bringing under-utilised brownfield land and sites, which could include heritage properties on those sites, back into use. It addresses viability issues commonly associated with brownfield land, including contamination and land remediation, to enable transformation of blighted brownfield sites, unlocking the supply of new high-quality homes in our towns and cities.



From the next financial year, the Brownfield Housing Fund will be absorbed into the National Housing Delivery Fund, launching in April 2026 with an additional £5 billion of capital grant funding. This will be deployed across the country by Homes England but also by Mayors to support housing delivery in their areas. This will enable development on sites that would otherwise not be possible without grant funding, and bring forward large, complex and transformative schemes.

In terms of other incentives to promote heritage regeneration for housing, Historic England provides advice and guidance for developers and owners of heritage properties. The Heritage Investment Prospectus showcases historic sites and buildings across England where owners are actively seeking investment partners or buyers. This helps connect existing owners of heritage development sites with potential investors, all part of Historic England's work to support community regeneration, housing delivery and economic growth. The recent call for submissions closed on 16 January, and Historic England is now compiling the 2026 edition, which will focus on housing specifically. The Historic England website also has pages on "Support for Property Developers". These hold information on finding suitable properties and alternative sources of funding for projects. More information can be found at Historic England's website here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/our-planning-services/support/>.

Historic England also produced Heritage Works for Housing in 2024, which, through providing direct advice to developers, supports the proactive reuse of historic buildings to deliver more homes. More information can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/housing/heritage-works-for-housing/>.

Given the significant opportunity that heritage buildings may be able to contribute to the housing agenda, I will meet with the Housing Minister to discuss the role for heritage in helping us to meet our housing targets.

How the independent valuation process will work in practice for assets of community value.

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will introduce a new community right to buy, empowering local people to bring community spaces back into community ownership and helping end the blight of empty properties on our high streets.

Community right to buy gives communities the right of first refusal on the purchase of registered assets of community value when they are put up for sale by their owner. If a community group expresses their wish to purchase the asset and they are able to raise the required funding to meet the sale price within a 12-month period, the owner must sell the asset to the community group or else they will not be able to sell their asset at all.

There will be eight weeks at the start of the offer period for the asset owner and community buyer to negotiate a sale price. Where parties are not able to agree the sale price through negotiation, the local authority will be required to appoint an independent valuer who will have eight weeks to determine this price based on market value. This will be the final price that communities will have to meet to purchase the asset and asset owners will be required to sell at this price if the community group is able to meet it.

The government will publish full statutory guidance to support local authorities ahead of implementation of the policy. This will include details on the listing process, the definition of an asset of community value and other aspects of the policy.

A breakdown of Historic England's estimation that 670,000 homes could be created through heritage regeneration, and how many of these sites are in the publicly owned estate.

In March 2025, Historic England published a study on “New Homes from Vacant Historic Buildings”. This identified an opportunity to provide 560,000 to 670,000 new homes in England by repairing and repurposing existing historic buildings. Historic England calculated the number of potential new homes by looking at floorspace data from vacant historic non-domestic properties such as retail, office and industrial spaces, from underused retail units such as empty spaces above shops, and from vacant historic homes.

The report provides further detail on the properties and the methodology behind the figures can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-insights/vacant-buildings-to-new-homes/>.

The analysis does not provide a breakdown for how many of these sites are part of the publicly owned estate. These figures were identified by looking at potential new homes from existing buildings, and not land generally. There are opportunities for housing both from existing assets and the wider available land, with scope to use heritage principles to support both high quality conversions as well as new builds.

Signposting for funding schemes available to volunteer stewards of historic buildings.

All Government departments are responsible for ensuring that funding information is published on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk), alongside any funding announcements. The Grants Management Function “Find a Grant” webpage is a search function which allows the public to search all government grants and includes information on eligibility and application processes. Please see here: <https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/>.

Historic England is currently developing the Community Advice Hub, which will become a one-stop-shop for stewards of heritage sites to understand what funding may be available to them. Historic England hopes for the platform to go live during the Summer. In addition, Historic England publishes information on the types of activities they fund to help people understand and champion the historic environment. This can be found at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/what-we-fund/people-activities>.

Historic England works with Skills England to embed heritage skills within the local skills improvement plan and the regional workforce strategy.

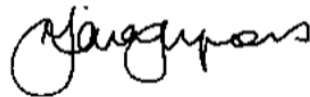
Historic England's engagement with Skills England has focused on ensuring it understands the needs of the heritage sector at a national level and can reflect this in its approach, including on Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). In particular, Historic England has discussed how to ensure skills related to heritage construction are included in Skills England's plans for the construction sector, which the Government has identified as key to achieving its growth ambitions and will be a priority for many LSIPs.

Whilst Skills England does not dictate the content of LSIPs directly, which reflect local need and engagement, it does have an important role in guiding how they are developed and in setting national direction for skills policy. Beyond Skills England, Historic England has been engaging other parties who will be influencing LSIPs, such as the Construction Skills Mission Board, through their membership of the Repair, Maintenance and Improvement Working Group, and the Construction Industry Training Board, through its work on Sector Plans for Heritage and Domestic Retrofit.

Historic England has also sought to influence the development of LSIPs at a local level in a number of ways. This includes presenting at an all-LSIP meeting focused on construction, comprehensive engagement with those producing LSIPs and sharing local data on the need for skills to retrofit historic buildings.

I hope my response has been helpful to clarify these points, and I look forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations in due course.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Baroness Twycross', written in a cursive style.

Baroness Twycross
Minister for Museums, Heritage and Gambling