

“I Can See Clearly Now...” – The Setting of Heritage Assets. A Day Conference.

The Northwest Branch Day Conference took place on 15th October 2014 at the Liverpool Medical Institute. Delegates were welcomed by Paul Hartley, the branch Chair, and the conference was chaired by Dr Julian Holden, from the University of Salford.

The day began with a keynote presentation by David Rudlin from URBED on “The Importance of Setting for Heritage Assets.” Rudlin made reference to the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood Network (SUNN), which was launched in 2009.

The questions and issues for the day conference could be illustrated by the master plan for a 1000 homes in New Bolton Woods urban village, where large sums were spent on professional fees and the environmental impact assessment. Work in the World Heritage Site at nearby Saltaire had included a costly Heritage Assessment.

Rudlin explained that in order to achieve good urbanism there needed to be more planning and design, which highlighted the importance of conservation and setting in World Heritage Sites. He said that nothing has done more harm to our towns and cities than Planners: he qualified this by referring to the days when it used to be ‘just bollards and cobbles’ and making sure that buildings “played nice”. Rudlin claimed that the main lesson we had learnt was not to make things worse.

There were problems with the concept of setting, however, for example there was a danger that context could be ignored or that buildings were viewed in isolation. So the question was: how could we design beautiful places. Rudlin questioned the approach that had been taken at Poundbury, which was had been built to look 200 years old.

URBED had developed the idea of the ‘climax city’. The central idea was that in every part of the world human culture has a ‘climax urbanism’, just as it has a ‘climax vegetation’. If places were left alone they would become meadows and woodlands: this would happen naturally. If human society was left to its own devices it would develop an urban culture that met its needs perfectly and this would take the form of buildings and spaces.

Rudlin explained that the problem was that often there were a number people involved in making the decisions and these decisions were taken one building at a time and taken incrementally.

He talked about the Northern Quarter, in Manchester, where things had happened in an organic, incremental and ad-hoc fashion. He cited Manchester cathedral and the adjacent buildings, some of which had been re-located and rebuilt here.

Under the theme of ‘neither accident nor disorder’, he talked about slum cities in Bangladesh. Here a hierarchy of streets - primary, secondary and tertiary - had been established. The slums were examples of planning by residents, and examples of people’s own vision. Some of these slums were 150 years old and, according to Rudlin, they were indistinguishable from heritage areas. In short they were climax cities.

In the UK Rudlin cited the growth of the cities of York and Chester, as similar examples. He also highlighted the walled city in Hong Kong: this ex-Chinese military settlement had become 'a medieval 20th century city'. If there were questions about this in terms of urbanism, Canary Wharf was an even worse case, he said.

Rudlin introduced the concept of the trellis and the vine. The trellis was the masterplan - the framework which gave the place its shape and roots; whereas the vine was the city - it was what grew on the trellis. Paris was used to illustrate this concept: Paris was a mixture of a planned city and an organic one – it had been planned by Georges Eugene Hausmann in the 19th century, but it had evolved organically through the medieval period. Rudlin also gave the example of New York where the Commissioners' Plan had been drawn up. Subsequently, activity at the waterside had led to the growth of the inner streets suburbs. These areas were now the sites of skyscrapers, so the city had actually grown organically.

This all illustrated the point that towns and cities were dynamic places, but unfortunately Planning did not understand this. Conservation planning was also part of the same problem. What we need to avoid is urban taxidermy. Instead, conservation areas should be places where we practice urban gardening: conservation areas should be living things.

Part of this was connected to the idea of the ship of Theseus, which is also known as Theseus' paradox, or (as Rudlin suggested) Janet's knife. The idea focusses on the situation where an object has had all its components replaced and so the question is whether this object is actually still the same thing it was originally or whether it has become something different. To paraphrase Rudlin, conservation is about achieving a balance: somewhere along the spectrum between taxidermy and total replacement is incremental change that manages to retain heritage authenticity. Rudlin offered an approach based on "the 3 Rs": rediscovery, repair and renewal.

The presentation finished with the example of Greengate Square, in Salford. Formerly this traffic junction had been a market square. The heritage of the square had been obliterated and a masterplan had been developed that sought to add to or renew the layout.

The next speaker was Richard Morrice from English Heritage and his presentation was entitled: 'Setting in the NPPF, PPG and English Heritage Good Practice Advice.

Morrice began by reminding delegates about the hierarchy of guidance. At government level there was legislation, policy and guidance; this was followed by sector level advice and good practice/technical guides; and finally there were case studies.

The government view is that only government could provide guidance on legislation and government policy. According to Morrice this meant that sector level advice simply measured how useful legislation and policy would be in practice.

The hierarchy could foster a certain amount of scepticism regarding the value of guidance. Subject to the principles of the Taylor Report, it was important that any review of guidance or any new guidance should conform to the model whereby it was: brief, clear; and any

repetition and difference were minimised. Therefore the EH Good Practice Guide on Setting (version 3 (2014)) linked to previous web-based guidance and it replaced the 20011 version.

The NPPF defined the setting of heritage assets as: “The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve.”

Morrice pointed out that setting is different from curtilage, with the latter being a legal term. Views of or from heritage assets are only part of the setting and setting contributes to the character of an asset. However, setting is only part of the context, but context is a non-statutory term whereas setting is the key term in the hierarchy of planning legislation, guidance and advice.

EH had produced a technical guide in 2001 called: Seeing History in the View. This guidance focussed purely on ‘views’, but a much shorter version was being developed. The concept of setting was summed up in two paragraphs in the 2004 PPG. Since then it has become a much more extensive and complex concept. One of the issues is the increasing numbers of tall structures in the city and the countryside, for example: tall buildings and wind turbines. Morrice said the setting of Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings covered most of England and so it was not practical for setting to be about preservation.

Setting is only a statutory matter for listed buildings, currently. The 1990 Act requires that special regard is given to ‘the desirability of preserving the building or its setting’ and ‘the desirability of preserving the character or appearance of conservation areas’.

In addition to the definition of setting (see above), the NPPF states that: elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset. The way in which significance can be appreciated can be affected by elements in the setting and so the NPPF requires that the impact of development proposals is considered.

The EH Planning Practice Guidance (2014) stressed the importance of assessing the impact on setting in proportion to the significance. It says that setting goes beyond visual considerations and requires that other considerations should be assessed such as: environmental factors, e.g. noise, dust and vibration; and historical association(s).

The guidance points out that the contribution that setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset is not reliant on public rights and access. Another important issue it highlights is the impact of cumulative change.

The EH Good Practice Advice on Setting (2014) deals with the issues in more detail and suggests a staged approach to decision making, by establishing: the assets and settings that are affected; the contribution a setting makes; the impact on significance; maximising enhancement and minimising harm; and monitoring outcomes of decisions.

Morrice pointed out that we cannot draw a line on a map to define setting in perpetuity. He also reminded delegates that setting is not significance itself: setting is not a designation it is the heritage asset that is significant.

The second part of the morning was devoted to Structures in Historic Landscapes. It began with a presentation by Jonathan Edis, from Heritage Collective, entitled: Wind Farms in Historic Landscapes. He began by talking about the growing number of wind turbines in England, Wales and Scotland and their impact. The focus was often on visual impact, but there was also the question of possible physical impact on archaeology.

Between February and July 2014 there were planning applications for 101 turbines in groups of 2 to 10, in England alone. 16 of these were successful. The success rate with planning permission for turbine proposals tended to be higher in Scotland compared to England and consequently operators were focussing their plans and activities on Scotland.

Single turbines were also more likely to gain permission than groups of turbines. Certainly a single turbine was less visually intrusive than a group, but was it better to cluster them than to dot individual turbines around the country?

The effect of all of this did impinge on the historic environment, although Edis reported that less than half of approved proposals were near heritage assets. Protection did rely on heritage assets being designated, however. With listed buildings and the surrounding landscape, the impact would be assessed before a decision was made and when it came to scheduled monuments their 'setting' was often quite extensive.

In Wales there was a non-statutory Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest. These landscapes had been identified as having 'special interest' or as being 'outstanding' and they are important nationally. Edis referred delegates to CADW's Guide to Good Practice on Using the Register...in the Planning and Development Process. The revised second edition (2007) includes revisions to the assessment process: ASIDOHL2. ASIDOHL2 is a staged process for the Assessment of the Significance of the Impact of Development on Historic Landscape areas which are included in the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales. ASIDOHL2 is used to provide a grading system for historic landscape areas. Edis also mentioned the Natural Resources Wales Landmap project, which was assessing the diversity of landscapes within Wales using GIS.

Edis asked whether a process like ASIDOHL2 would work in England, where the focus was on listed buildings and monuments. He suggested the 'volume' would be low without designated historic landscapes. It would be difficult to protect non-designated assets like medieval field systems, for example. One problem would be that of defining the edges or boundaries. How much weight would there be for historic landscapes still in their original use? Edis suggested that they had a lower weighting than in Wales.

Edis also pointed out another problem: if wind farms were 'pushed away' from historic assets did that just mean they were being 'pushed towards' the countryside and farm land?

The next speaker in this part of the day was David Tomback, Development Economics Director at English Heritage. His topic was Enabling Development: setting issues.

Tomback explained that enabling development was development that was contradictory to established planning policy. It was permitted where the public benefit could be demonstrated to outweigh public harm. This was paid for by the value added to the land as a result of the consent.

In other words enabling development is a way of addressing conservation deficit, but it does not guarantee the viability of a scheme. It is simply a way of identifying the minimum number of houses that may be needed.

A new EH document (Enabling Development and the Historic Environment) was being published in November 2014. It had been produced to replace the previous green document. The (2014) document recommends that the impact of enabling development proposals on a heritage asset should be assessed against principal criteria, which it identifies as being: whether proposals avoid or minimise harm to the significance; whether they avoid detrimental fragmentation; whether they will secure the asset's long term future; whether the proposals are necessary to resolve the problems arising from the asset's inherent needs (rather than the circumstances of the current owner); whether sufficient subsidy is available from other sources; whether it has been demonstrated that the proposals are the minimum necessary; and whether the public benefit outweighs public harm.

Using the wording with respect to whether proposals "(avoid) or minimise harm to the significance" is a key change in that it recognised some harm is likely.

Tomback outlined the case of the Royal Holloway Sanatorium where the original number of houses that had been permitted, as part of the enabling development, had to be radically increased. He talked the delegates through the problems that could arise and the steps that needed to be taken in such cases.

He said that getting it right involved: the judgement that was made in assessing proposals; the accuracy of the development appraisal; phasing; securing the benefit (through Section 106 agreements); the level of developer profit; whether there were unforeseen additional cost; whether market surge/failure occurred; whether a developer wanted to re-negotiate "a second bite of the cherry"; and whether a developer went bankrupt half way through a development.

In summary Tomback stated that enabling development was a valid means of securing the future of heritage assets. It was an inefficient mechanism, however, and it was important that: the asset suffered no material harm; and the public benefits were sustainable, long term and they clearly outweighed any public harm.

The point to remember was that enabling development is irrevocable and irreversible once it has been permitted.

The final speaker in this section of the day conference was John Simons, from Donal Insall Associates. He called his presentation 'Historic Cities and Setting: Chester case study'. Simons pointed out that his approach would be more about buildings than being a case study per se.

The Insall City Report on Chester (1966) had identified certain issues: inner city decay; choking traffic; and threats to historic buildings. It had proposed the use of diagrams: employing a Gordon Cullen approach grounded in analysis of the “setting(s)” of historic buildings.

Chester had become part of the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC). CWaC had set up Chester Renaissance and they had published the Chester One City Plan (2011). The aim of the One City Plan was to promote the highest quality of design: but Simons’s question was how?

Simons said the Insall approach advocated ‘historic setting’ rather than ‘physical form and setting’. This was a way to avoid some historic elements being seen as negative, despite the advice of EH, in *Heritage Works* (2013) for example.

Whilst the cathedral and the work of architects Thomas Harrison and John Douglas were recognised, Simons suggested that it would be worthwhile identifying the Grade I listed buildings of the future, in Chester. Chester should secure buildings of the highest quality, i.e., world class quality. Insall Associates had produced *Appendix 3 Manifest of Contemporary Design* (2010), which accompanied the Plan, in which they stated that good design addresses the challenges that setting presents.

The One City Team had identified the main problem as being the development process and Simons said that there had been a number of mediocre buildings built in Chester and in other places in the UK, in recent times. The best design proposals were routed in a sense of place, he said.

There were a number of issues that needed to be considered when developing design proposals in Chester: archaeology; the Roman grid; the hierarchy of streets; street levels (and the Rows); density; building line(s); and quality and craftsmanship (i.e. an understanding of characteristics).

CWaC had aspirations to see design excellence in the city, but these aspirations were hampered by hurdles or barriers, which included: client issues; design quality (on submitted drawings); a lack of pre-application consultation; changing personnel in design teams; gatekeeper with respect to historical advice; and pressures on Conservation Officers. Simons reminded the delegates about national guidance with respect to design quality, namely NPPF (S7) and the ‘toolkit’ in *Building in Context* (CABE/EH).

CWaC was producing guidance which contained a number of proposals to encourage good design. The aim was to promote the premium that good design offered and promote an awareness of this premium. CWaC was including good design in the local strategy document and they were encouraging the local press to be positive about design quality. The guidance sought to recognise Chester’s unique heritage and the local authority believed developers needed this understanding. Urban design input was recommended for large development proposals. Design quality depended on clarity and confidence. Design briefs

should make reference to quality, but it should be remembered that there was no one-size-fits all: design quality was site specific.

Simons referred to Places Matter: the NW design review. He talked about the way in which consultation helped to promote confidence and the need for design champions. Decision makers needed to understand and expect good design and Simons made the point that the aim was good design rather than pastiche. He suggested that the aim of good quality design could be supported by awards and that bad design should be named and shamed.

This was all work in progress at the moment, Simons said. CWaC's local framework was in progress and Chester has its own design review panel.

The third section of the morning programme focussed on Urban Setting. The first speaker was Rosemarie MacQueen, the Strategic Director Built Environment at Westminster City Council. Her presentation was called: Protecting Historic Views - A Westminster Perspective.

The context of Westminster was one of quality in the built environment. There were 1100 listed buildings in the city and a World Heritage Site. There were also the conservation areas, which covered 70% of Westminster. Actually, most of Westminster was subject to heritage designation or was within the setting of a heritage asset. The extent of these designations gave rise to 'a generally low-scale settled townscape'. In addition there were a number of sensitive environments including: the river and canal frontages and the Royal Parks. Ten out of London's twelve most popular 'postcard' views were within the city, along with conservation areas, high quality historic townscape and local landmarks.

Modern development in the 1960s had had an impact on the river, the serpentine and the Royal Parks. This impact on the views in Westminster had led to the system of protecting views historic at regional and local level.

Strategic views are protected in the Mayor of London's Plan. These include: the London Panorama and Linear views, which includes Westminster World Heritage Site and St Pauls; and the River Prospects and Townscape views, which include protected silhouettes – 12 of which are within or towards Westminster.

On a local level there was the Westminster Policy Framework: the Unitary Development Plan identified local views and metropolitan views; and the City Plan - Strategic Policy included overarching strategic policy for heritage and views – at the strategic, metropolitan and local level. The emerging City Management policies were intended to create a combined approach based on that of the UDP and the Strategic Policy, so that responses to development proposals were proportionate and based on the nature and significance of views: the approach balanced view protection against the importance of seeking opportunities to enhance views. The approach would also ensure Westminster policy was in line with the Mayor of London's policy.

The steps involved first identifying a view then assessing its significance. Local views could be divided into two categories: views of metropolitan importance - as per the proposed strategic policy; and views in conservation areas.

Policy had to respond to development pressures by accommodating growth at the same time as protecting views. Tourism was a key consideration here, because it was a vital business that made a significant contribution to the local economy. Tourism, however, was reliant on maintaining views. Consequently the London Plan directed development towards Opportunity Areas, although some of these were located in sensitive areas (such as those mentioned above).

View protection policy had been informed by the Westminster High Buildings Study (2000). A 'sieve analysis' had identified that there was very little scope for tall buildings on the city apart from sites in the vicinity of Paddington and Victoria.

MacQueen then gave delegates a series of examples starting with the Victoria Transport Interchange. She considered the impact of the development on the World Heritage Site. The Mayor of London had designated one Opportunity Area across the river in Lambeth and another at Nine Elms in Vauxhall. The Palace of Westminster is a protected silhouette, but the Shell Building and the Elizabeth House development could be seen from certain points in Parliament Squares and the St George's Tower at Vauxhall would impact on the views within and from conservation areas in Westminster.

In conclusion, MacQueen said that identifying significant views was crucial in understanding setting: identifying different types of views and their value also underpinned the understanding of significance. In order to appreciate what the impact of development proposals would be on views it was important to carry out mapping exercises and 3D studies. Cross boundary cooperation with adjacent boroughs was vital in order to promote joint working and policy that considered cross boundary impacts on views. It could often be difficult in practice to balance competing priorities but cross boundary cooperation was the only realistic means of achieving mutual benefits and protecting views.

The final speaker of the morning session was John Hinchliffe, of Hinchliffe Heritage - formerly the World Heritage Officer at Liverpool City Council. His presentation was entitled - World Heritage Sites: Buffer Zones and Beyond.

Hinchliffe began by providing a series of 'views': the Mona Lisa, cars (old with new wheels), canal buildings and city centre houses dwarfed by taller buildings. He cited England's 100 Best Views by Simon Jenkins (2013), which included the Liverpool Waterfront. The point he was making was that views were important in forming first impressions.

To reinforce the importance of views for World Heritage Sites, Hinchliffe gave three examples: Cologne Cathedral, which had been on the list of World Heritage in Danger in 2004 due to the Deutz Quarter proposal; the Historic Centre of Vienna, which had been threatened by the ring road and the Wien Mitte Proposal; and Dresden, where the construction of the Waldschlosschen Bridge had been supported in a referendum, but its impact on the WHS led to it Dresden being removed from the list in 2011.

Liverpool had appeared on list of World Heritage in Danger in 2012 due to development pressures. The World Heritage Committee had been alerted to the problem due to the fact most proposals in the UK that are likely to have an impact on a WHS are referred to UNESCO.

Hinchliffe outlined the factors that can lead to a WHS being “in danger”, which included uncontrolled urbanisation. He reminded delegates about the three main bodies involved, UNESCO, ICOMOS and ICCROM, before discussing international philosophy and guidance.

He cited the ICOMOS Venice Charter (1964) which focussed on individual monuments and their urban or rural setting. The Charter actually predated the establishment of the World Heritage Committee. Next he considered the ICOMOS Washington Charter (1987) which addressed urban issues like pollution and degradation and the importance of townscape and morphology. This charter also made the case for good contemporary design that was in harmony.

A discussion of guidance from 2005 then followed, including: the ICOMOS Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structure, Sites and Areas; and the UNESCO Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes. The former included a definition of setting and the need for ‘planning instruments’ to prevent inappropriate visual or physical encroachments on significant settings. The latter made reference to facilitating socio-economic changes and growth whilst respecting inherited townscape by contextualising contemporary architecture.

Hinchliffe also referred to the UNESCO Recommendations on the Historic Urban Landscapes (2011), which emphasised the point that cultural and natural values and attributes spread beyond the historic core. Similarly the UNESCO Operational Guidelines (updated regularly) recommended the use of buffer zones. Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal WHS was given as an example where a defined view towards Rippon Minster had been maintained.

Liverpool was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2004 as the supreme example of a commercial port of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The WHS was divided in six zones and was surrounded by a buffer zone. One of the borders of the buffer zone ran up the middle of the river between Liverpool and the Wirral peninsular.

Liverpool City Council’s Unitary Development Plan (2002) (a pre-WHS document) had emphasised the importance of the setting of listed buildings. The World Heritage Site Management Plan (2003), which was part of the preliminary preparation for WHS status, emphasised the importance of the setting of the WHS and identified landmark buildings and the buffer zone.

Tall Buildings in Liverpool An urban design and policy analysis (2006) was drafted but had not been adopted. Generally Liverpool’s planning policy was encouraged by UNESCO and a Supplementary Planning Document for Liverpool WHS was adopted in 2009. Setting was emphasised again in the SPD. It also contained a views analysis which identified different aspects of views such as kinetic and dynamic views and the foreground, the middle-ground

and the background elements of views. The SPD also proposed the clustering of opportunities for tall buildings.

Hinchliffe identified key areas within the WHS as case studies: Liverpool 1, the Kings Dock, Mann Island; and Liverpool Waters. Through these case studies the issues relating to the contribution and impact on views and setting in the WHS were discussed.

The Liverpool Waters proposal had caused concern at UNESCO. The proposals were submitted in 2010 along with three Heritage Impact Assessments. The Joint UNESCO/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission visited the city in 2011. In their view the Liverpool Waters proposal represented a massive redevelopment of the historic dockland north of the city and it would 'visually modify the comprehensive morphology of the townscape.'

The proposals were re-submitted in 2011 with three more HIAs. In March 2012 Liverpool's Planning Committee resolved that it was minded to approve the proposals. In June 2012 the World Heritage Committee decided that Liverpool Waters constituted a potential danger to the WHS and inscribed Liverpool in the list of World Heritage in Danger, with the possibility of deleting it from the World Heritage list if the project was approved and implemented. Negotiation had been continuing from March through to September 2012 when the Planning Committee reaffirmed its position that it was minded to approve. There were still some outstanding objections from English Heritage and UNESCO, so the application was referred to the Secretary of State in October 2012. Rather than call a Public Inquiry, Eric Pickles decided in March 2013 that he would allow LCC to determine the application. In September 2013 the application was approved.

Currently, Liverpool Waters has been approved but it is not on site. Hinchliffe explained that it was the later stages of the development proposal that had concerned UNESCO and those elements were not likely to be constructed until well into the 2030s: so although Liverpool was on the "in Danger" list it was unlikely to be removed from the World Heritage list for years to come.

The whole of the Liverpool Waters proposed development rested either within the WHS or in the buffer zone, so LCC will have to monitor the on-going situation carefully. The UK Government prepared a State of Conservation Report for UNESCO in 2014, which gave assurances that representatives from English Heritage had been invited to work with the developers, Peel Holdings, to promote development that sustained the outstanding universal value of the WHS.

Hinchliffe ended his presentation by telling the delegates the Liverpool WHS illustrated the point that conservation was about the management of change and continuity.

After Lunch two alternative tours had been arranged under the theme of Experiencing Setting. Liverpool World Heritage Site (from the perspective of the Radio City Tower) was led by John Hinchliffe; and Liverpool Biennial - historic city, future plans, was led by Rosie Cooper, from Liverpool Biennial.

Once the delegates had returned, the IHBC NW and RTPI conservation Award was presented to members of the project team of Manchester Central Library.

The final session of the day Conference focused on Rural Setting. Chris Mayes, a Heritage at Risk Landscape Architect from EH, gave a presentation on Setting - Registered Parks and Gardens.

There were over 1600 sites on the Register of Parks and Gardens. There were 134 sites in the North West: 5 Grade I, 30 Grade II* and 99 Grade II. There were currently 7 sites in the North West that were "at risk".

Mayes started by discussing views and viewing: by focussing on a painting. He explained how the painter had arranged the people in the picture so that the sight lines created the view we were presented with.

Mayes then moved onto the topic of language and reading landscapes. He explained that people exhibited learnt and instinctive responses to landscapes and they experienced landscapes on the basis of expectation, anticipation and surprise. Places are a source of disinterested pleasure, he said. This idea can be traced back to the philosopher Kant who considered to be our pleasure to be 'disinterested' because we took pleasure in something because we judged it to be beautiful rather than judging it to be beautiful because we found it pleasurable. Mayes went on to say that when someone expressed a view that something was 'beautiful' or 'ugly' they would tend to expect that other people would agree with them. Landscapes had associative, spatial and temporal dimensions and that was how people read them and described them. As people moved from the known to the unknown readers would try and make sense of what they were experiencing and make up their own 'story' as they travelled.

With landscapes, Mayes said, spatial setting could be understood by considering context, 'set in' and 'setting'. He defined context as being about the way the site takes advantage of geophysical properties: topography, aspect, prospect, availability of water, distance to/from features, river crossing, soil and fertility of land. 'Set in' referred to motivation: a site was located in the landscape as a deliberate act or intervention; one location was chosen in preference to another; and the location of a park or garden was chosen because of the advantage it offers and its aesthetics - but choice was linked to the landowner's status and by the social structure at the time. Mayes said that setting was: a product of an act of intervention and the sum of the advantage, choice and action. It was the modification of the interpretation of landscape and a modification of social/cultural relationships. So setting was about putting change in motion, i.e. it was a catalyst. Setting was also about accretions and loss and about aesthetics and perception.

Examples were then considered. The first example was Philip's Park in the Medlock valley, in Greater Manchester. The park had been established on the rural fringe with a number of restored buildings. The building of a gasometer adjacent to the park had had a significant impact on its setting.

The next example was called “a tale of two football grounds”. Mayes cited Stanley Park in Liverpool, which was built as a green space with playing fields. It is located between the rival football grounds of Liverpool FC’s Anfield and Everton FC’s Goodison Park. The development of these football stadia has had an impact on Stanley Park as has the Anfield cemetery which is located immediately adjacent to the park. The other park in this tale was Leaze Park in Newcastle upon Tyne. The park has a grade II* terrace, but St James Park, the home of Newcastle United FC has been built adjacent to the park and has had an adverse impact.

The final example was Woolsington Hall, which had suffered ‘non visual impact’. The hall is a Grade II* listed country house in a 92 acre parkland on the outskirts of Newcastle upon Tyne. The House and park suffered ‘non visual impact’ on its setting when Newcastle Airport was located nearby. The house was abandoned for decades and became uninhabitable: it has been on EH’s at Risk register since 2002.

Mayes ended his presentation by highlighting the precursors that can lead to a registered park or garden becoming at risk. He cited the following issues: change in the geophysical context or the expectation of change; change commensurate with the original use or with current use; change complementary to or at odds with associations, historical accretions and loss and spatial relationships. Whether a site did end up being ‘at risk’ all depended on what the aesthetic and perceptual outcomes were and the likely responses to changes.

The final speaker was Kim Wilkie, a landscape architect and environmental planner. The topic of his presentation was the Historic Landscape and he was looking particularly at significance and change. Landscapes constantly change, he explained. What is important is how they are managed, because without management change accelerates and is very radical.

Wilkie took the Thames Landscape Strategy as an example. The strategy took a range of elements into consideration, including listed buildings and registered parks and gardens. Responses were recommended with respect to geology and views.

The Thames Strategy identified different elements of the landscape. There were sites within this landscape that had been seats of power and there were various key sites such as Kew Gardens and Richmond Hill, as well as St Pauls, the Tower of London and Greenwich.

An important aspect of historic landscapes was the consideration of views and vistas. Wilkie explained that there were different kinds of views. He discussed how views were different to panoramas and he also proposed the notion that ‘vistas’ were actually narrow fixed or enclosed views: because vistas were views that had been created. He also highlighted the concept of moving, dynamic and kinaesthetic views and he made the contrast between key-hole views and the wider countryside.

Wilkie said that views were important because they invoked emotional responses. He explained that although the setting of a park was important some of our ideas relating to views were even more important, because these ideas could be traced to the heart of the English Landscape Movement.

Of course, further down the river there was the Thames Barrier, which had been built to protect London from tidal flooding. Whereas in some parts of the river fluvial flooding was a problem: fluvial flooding occurs when rivers overflow and burst their banks, due to high or intense rainfall which flows into them.

In locations where there were water meadows adjacent to the riverside then these features helped to absorb the water and they were also part of the historic landscape. On the Thames, water meadows were more likely to be found up-stream: there were quite a few in the vicinity of Kew, for example. Fluvial flooding was more of a problem in urbanised areas where water meadows were no longer a feature: in places like Westminster. In some parts of the country water meadows had been restored. Winchester was a good example of a place where original water meadows had been restored, whereas Twyford was an example of a place where some modern interpretations of medieval water meadows had been introduced.

At Boughton Park, in Northamptonshire, there was a massive formal landscape, spreading over 8-10,000 acres: an early eighteenth century garden of land and water, avenues of trees and vistas, rhythm and reflection. The design framework had been based on the golden section. Wilkie had been commissioned to create a new feature on empty space opposite the great Mount. The new space had been inspired by the scale, mass and elements of the historic landscape. So the landscape featured restored and modern interpretation. Truncated earth pyramids had been restored and there was a new converted pyramid celebrating the golden section.

Wilkie also talked about a new site where the Vitsoe Furniture Factory was located. He described this site as an iconic landscape where there were areas of remaining ridge and furrow and there was the factory.

He finished by saying that historic landscapes were always changing. Working with the landscape was all about understanding: you needed to understand where it had come from and this proposed should inform any interventions.

There was a short discussion period to conclude the Day Conference. One theme that had been highlighted was the difference between setting and fixed views: setting was something in which you experienced heritage compared to viewing fixed views (vistas) of or from heritage assets. It was pointed out that ideas on views in UK (WHS) sites were informed by UNESCO and were based on views in other cities abroad. The point was also made that the experience of landscapes and their settings was about movement, whereas there was often this preoccupation with fixed views. This related to a point in English history where there had been a shift from fixed viewpoints to moving views. Of course an EH view that had been expressed was that: views of or from heritage assets were only part of the setting and setting itself contributed to the character of an asset.

Keith Parsons
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