



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION



IHBC@COP26 Helpdesk+

'Conserving our Places Conserves our Planet'

Some observations on moving forward after COP26

'All it takes to work is a little imagination, and a little incentive'

Background

The [IHBC@COP26 Helpdesk+](#) outlined 6 statements on how *'Conserving our Places Conserves our Planet'*, informed by our *'Climate and Conservation Podcasts'*, [YouTube postings](#) and linked discussions.

Now the [Helpdesk+](#) offers observations on ways all can help after COP26

Sustainable: *Historic buildings and places, including historic gardens and landscapes, constitute non-renewable resources and their conservation is a key component of our sustainable future.*

Observations

- a) Adjusting national policy, investment and practice could get us closer to COP26 ambitions, but we must work together to succeed
- b) Successful implementation demands quality practice in all aspects of care, conservation and enhancement, including especially building retrofit, with competent trade and professional specialists following established guidance and standards.

Care: *Conserving buildings and structures – which includes their care and maintenance – controls the carbon already captured in their construction and minimises the climate-unfriendly waste of demolition and landfill.*

Observations

Making demolition subject to planning permission, and embodied energy a material consideration in planning, would together support sustainability as a priority in the planning and management of our places.

Repair: *Repairing, caring for and adapting existing buildings encourages low-carbon traditional construction practices, skills and materials, reducing the need for carbon-heavy concrete, steel and new-build materials and their associated transport and production impacts.*

Observations

Reducing or eliminating VAT on repairs – and, ideally, maintenance – would ensure that our current building stock, and all its embodied energy, is properly managed.

Adaptation: *Adapting existing structures to suitable new uses typically is the best way to offer low-carbon, climate-friendly and environmentally sensitive new facilities and places, as many construction awards testify.*

Observations

Investing and encouraging investment in the maintenance, renewal and revival of fabric and structures, rather than reproducing, replacing or relocating them, is the best way to give our planet a fighting chance.

Nature: *As with caring for gardens and landscapes, traditional design and materials – from eaves overhanging walls that encourage nesting birds to earth construction – support the natural environment and encourage biodiversity.*

Observations

Planning policy that encourages traditional design solutions and, where appropriate, materials, gives nature more of a fighting chance than policies led by personal taste.

Community: *Historic and traditional places are inherently sustainable, being designed to facilitate pedestrian and other low-carbon traffic, all of which also brings health, well-being, social and community benefits.*

Observations

Investing and encouraging investment in our existing local areas and places gives communities more of a fighting chance than wholesale redevelopment or new build.

See also from the IHBC and partners:

- [Sustainability and Conservation of the Historic Built Environment - an IHBC Position Statement](#)
- [Joint Conservation Professional Practice Principles](#)

Copyright IHBC 2021 v.231121TA2