



ONLINE HISTORIC BUILDING RESOURCE LAUNCHED

Online consultancy the Historic Building Advisory Service (HBAS) (www.historicbuilding.co.uk) is a comprehensive resource to support anyone involved with historic property.

The website provides information and advice relating to any UK manmade structure or landscape dating from before 1945. For a £55 annual subscription, users have full access to the website, including a database of FAQs and case studies.

The subscription also includes two free question-and-answer sessions, where subscribers can email a question – regarding legislation, specification, material failure, services, structure or

archaeology – and receive a fully researched, written response from HBA's specialists.

'Heritage,' says Robert Hill, the building surveyor fronting the HBAS project, 'is low on the agenda. People ignore it until it is too late.' One way in which the HBAS can be used is to support planning applications – a service that pre-empts the changes proposed in the new Heritage Protection Bill, expected to be passed next year. The new bill will require relevant applications to supply detailed information about the measures being taken to protect the historic building or landscape concerned.

'Currently a planning application will come in and the heritage aspect will not have been adequately considered' says Hill. 'Interest groups get involved and the whole process gets protracted. English Heritage only becomes involved in very special circumstances and tends to tell you what you can't do, not what you can.'

An extension to the current services is also planned next year, which will provide a database of architects, contractors, suppliers and craftsmen who have a proven track record working with heritage projects, 'and not' says Hill, 'a firm which once just replaced a window in a listed property, badly.'