



THE LISTED PROPERTY OWNERS' MANIFESTO 2017



Thousands of listed properties across the country are cherished and protected by owners who spend precious time and resources keeping them in good repair. They contribute to the great national asset that is Britain's built heritage.

Yet many of these owners are struggling to find the resources to maintain these properties and constantly have to battle the challenges posed by the UK's complex and inconsistent planning rules and regulations.

87% of owners surveyed said they considered the cost of upkeep of their listed building to be significantly greater than that of an unlisted building.*

To help protect the very fabric of our heritage The Listed Property Owners' Club (LPOC) is urging all political parties fighting this election to support the following four-point plan:

- 1 Introduce a new VAT rate of 5% for all repairs and pre-authorised alterations to listed buildings;
- 2 Give local councils a duty to provide professional conservation advice to the owners of listed properties;
- 3 Reform planning regulation to ensure better consistency in deciding listed building consent across the country;
- 4 Remove unnecessary red tape by establishing nationally set exemptions on minor works that should not require listed building consent and introducing a more routine less bureaucratic method for securing consent for minor works.

A listed building is one that is included on the National Heritage List as a property of "special architectural or historic interest". They range from churches and grand houses to small terraced homes and country cottages.

Whatever the type, owners are required to preserve their buildings at their own expense and any alterations, however small, have to be the subject of a formal application to the local planning authority, a process which takes a minimum of 8 weeks.

Listing protects the complete building – inside and out, the immediately surrounding area and any existing extensions. It can include garden walls, garages and even statues. There are around 374,000 listed buildings in England, almost 48,000 in Scotland and more than 20,000 in Wales. Some are multiple listings covering several properties.

Listed buildings are not just bricks and mortar but home to well over one million voters. And they are far from being the homes of the wealthiest in our society: 50% of owners are in the lowest socio-economic groups (C1, C2, D and E).

Ordinary working families are therefore carrying the responsibility to maintain a significant proportion of Britain's built heritage, protecting it and preserving it for future generations. We call on all parties to support the proposals in the Listed Property Owners' Manifesto.

1. A NEW VAT RATE

In 2012 the Government dealt a huge blow to listed property owners by removing the zero rate of VAT for pre-authorised alterations to listed buildings.

Not only has this been a financial blow, it has also prevented many people adapting their properties for modern day living.

Since 2012 there has been a noticeable decline in the number of applications for listed building consent. Removing the zero rate of VAT has proved to be a real disincentive for owners of listed property to improve their homes as well as a disincentive for owners to apply for consent.

80% of owners surveyed said the 20% VAT rate was a disincentive to them when carrying out alterations and repairs.*

Introducing a 5% VAT rate for all repairs and pre-authorised alterations to listed buildings is a sensible and practical change that could do much to help these homeowners as well as charities and churches who play an important role in protecting our heritage.

91% of owners surveyed said that if VAT was reduced to 5% for repairs and alterations, they would be more likely to undertake work even if it meant formally applying for Listed Building Consent.*



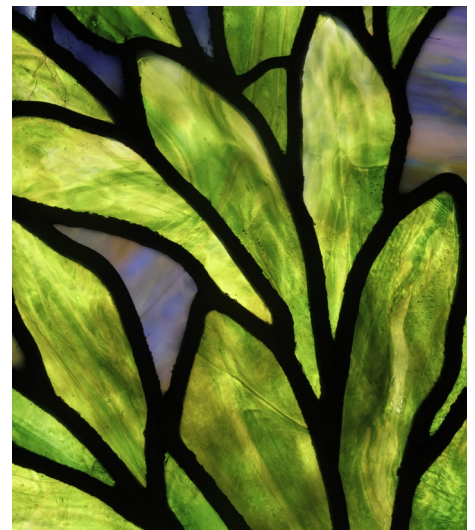
2. A DUTY TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATION ADVICE

Local authority conservation expertise has reduced by 36% in the last 10 years and continues to fall (source Historic England and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation). LPOC members frequently report that their local council no longer provides any conservation advice at all, or that the conservation officer is simply too busy to be able to help. Many of those that do provide conservation advice now charge for it.

59% of owners surveyed who had dealt with their local planning authority said service was either indifferent or poor. Of those that had been charged for this advice, when asked if the cost represented value for money 84% indicated indifferent or poor.*

This lack of support is posing a significant threat to listed buildings. Repairs and alterations are being carried out without proper supervision or oversight. Some members of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation estimate that more than half of listed buildings have suffered from unauthorised alterations.

Local councils should be required to provide professional conservation advice to the owners of listed buildings.



3. ENSURE GREATER CONSISTENCY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING

Inconsistency in decisions between neighbouring authorities is creating a postcode lottery in heritage conservation. Listed building owners expect consistent decision making on subjects like double glazing in listed buildings but many councils choose to ignore national guidance published by Historic England.

68% of owners surveyed said they didn't consider there to be any consistency between local planning authorities.*

The requirement that applicants provide heritage statements to accompany applications for listed building consent (required in the National Planning Policy Framework) is applied inconsistently across authorities.

LPOC calls for a reformed and simpler system of planning that ensures consistency in decisions on Listed Building Consent applications across local planning authorities.



4. REMOVING RED TAPE

LPOC calls for the introduction of nationally set exemptions on minor works that should not require listed building consent as well as a more routine method for securing consent for minor works.

In addition, unlike most householders, listed building owners are required to apply for planning permission for the smallest greenhouse, garden shed, fence or pond within the curtilage of a listed building.

In most circumstances this level of control is unnecessary, over restrictive, frequently ignored and bureaucratic. It places an unnecessary burden on listed building owners to make a planning application and pay the planning fee (normally £175).

In consideration of the above, LPOC also calls for a review of the General Permitted Development Order (which determines which development requires planning permission).



ABOUT THE LISTED PROPERTY OWNERS' CLUB

The Listed Property Owners' Club is Britain's only advice service dedicated to helping listed property owners get the most from their homes. The Club provides detailed advice, information and support for all issues associated with ownership and operates a dedicated telephone helpline for members. The Club provides the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Listed Property and actively campaigns on behalf of its members.

Peter Anslow, founder of The Listed Property Owners' Club, says
"I urge all political parties to take on board the four-point plan in our Manifesto. Creating a positive framework for the nation's listed buildings is essential not only for those who live in them but for all those that appreciate them. We must preserve them for all the generations that follow."

Owners of listed property have had a particularly bad deal in recent years and it is time to reverse the trend."



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