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# Environmental Policy

## AHF Environmental Policy

Climate change is one of the most significant and fastest growing threats to people and their cultural heritage worldwide. Responding to climate change requires action and historic building reuse can help society address the dual challenges of adapting to new climates and helping communities move more quickly towards a low carbon future. As research from Historic England highlights, building reuse can play a significant and ongoing role in addressing climate change:

*Research demonstrates that when taking a whole life approach, the sympathetic refurbishment and retrofit of a typical traditional building will emit less carbon by 2050 than a new building (Historic England, Heritage Counts, 2020)*

The heritage sector, like others, needs to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to help minimise the most harmful impacts of climate change. Charities and social enterprises operating from regenerated historic buildings can also act as exemplars for how communities can take action to address the issue – this could be through their activities, how they procure goods and services and by providing information on the actions they have taken.

Many of our partners within the historic environment sector are also prioritising addressing climate change, including through the allocation of funding, and working to ensure that the needs of future generations are taken into account when developing and implementing policy. For example, the Welsh government has put in place the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act:

*The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The 2015 Act puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' whereby listed public bodies must make sure that their decisions take into account the impact on people living in Wales now and in the future.*

### How the AHF intends to address climate change

We recognise that the historic environment has its part to play in:

- **mitigating** climate change by making its contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and
- **understanding and adapting to** the challenges presented by a changing climate, and
- **communicating and engaging people** with climate change and actions to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to changing climate.

In particular, we are committed to:

- Developing an action plan for the AHF as an organisation to reach carbon net zero before 2050<sup>1</sup> with a series of interim targets to achieve that goal. This will be reported on through our annual action plans and in our Annual Review. We will look to use our own learning to help inform the development of other's approaches.
- Working with our clients and partners to help them understand the actions they can take in addressing climate change through their projects. We will make this part of our assessment criteria in making funding decisions.

- Collaborating with our partners to agree a set of measures aimed at understanding the effects of climate change on the historic environment, and how best to adapt to those changes, and mitigate the impacts where possible.
- Ensuring The AHF's assets and investments should be invested in line with the aims of the organisation and take account of ethical, sustainability and governance standards. We therefore expect our external Investment Manager to adopt an approach that ensures that investments are in line with these aims.

We are now working in [partnership with Fit for the Future](#), to help the charities and social enterprises we support to access objective advice and guidance on sustainability questions. As we are often the first stage funder of many projects, we believe it is important to get good advice early on in the process of developing a capital project. We also recognise that for inexperienced groups the subject can be complex and developing the 'right' options for a building (of which there may be more than one) can be challenging.

We intend to review this policy annually and will report on progress against our action plan through our Annual Review.

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<sup>i</sup> Our ability to meet the target before 2050 and exactly when will partly depend on the government's improvements and targets for a variety of infrastructure, particularly transport and energy supply. However, our aspiration is to meet the target before the 2050 date and to keep this under annual review, enabling us to take account of wider changes.

The Architectural Heritage Fund

[ahfund.org.uk](http://ahfund.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7925 0199

Email: [ahf@ahfund.org.uk](mailto:ahf@ahfund.org.uk)

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