

Jewish Heritage UK Preservation Programme

Advice regarding Historic Jewish Buildings and Sites

Jewish Heritage UK will fill an important gap in providing independent professional support to individual congregations, trustees, and synagogue organisations which are responsible for historic buildings, sites and collections. They will be able to turn to Jewish Heritage UK when faced with the challenges posed by the maintenance and management of historic buildings, the practicalities of carrying out repairs to recognised conservation standards, for guidance through the Listing and Planning process and, above all of finding imaginative ways of keeping fine old buildings usefully alive.

Representation and Liaison

On behalf of the Jewish community, Jewish Heritage UK will liaise with official conservation agencies, especially English Heritage, the Royal Commissions on Historical Monuments, National Amenity Societies and Local Planning Authorities on all matters pertaining to historic Jewish buildings and sites. Jewish Heritage UK will maintain and widen links with conservation bodies outside the Jewish community, in Britain and abroad.

Within the Jewish community Jewish Heritage UK will liaise and work with existing umbrella organisations with cognate concerns, such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews (which is Trustee of a number of disused historic cemeteries), regional Representative Councils, Synagogue Burial Boards and Societies and the Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Europe.

Education and Research

Jewish Heritage UK will promote the Jewish material cultural heritage, and the Jewish community's responsibility to care for that heritage, through both scholarly and popular publications, public debate and via the media (electronic, radio and TV).

Supervision of Synagogue Closures

Over the past few years about a dozen synagogues around the country have been closed down. These include both Listed buildings and synagogues dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. The [Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage](#), set up in 1997, has ensured that those synagogues dating from before the Second World War have been methodically photographed, recorded and documented. Jewish Heritage UK will adopt the voluntary [Code of Practice](#) drawn up by the Survey. Jewish Heritage UK will seek to ensure that, when a synagogue closes, this Code is adhered to. In the absence of more formal structures like those that exist, for instance, in the Church of England, Jewish Heritage UK will offer practical guidance and help in:

Finding Suitable Alternative Uses for "Redundant" Buildings: preferably within the Jewish community. When former synagogues are sold out of the community Jewish Heritage UK will endeavour to make sure that this is on condition that an appropriate alternative use is found for the building, which has not always been the case in the past.

Recycling of Fixtures and Fittings: Not only valuable objects such as *Sifrei Torah* and *Rimonim* but also furniture, stained glass, metalwork, plaques and textiles. Jewish Heritage UK will assist in drawing up an Inventory of contents and will arrange for the salvaging of furnishings and archives and storage in a suitable repository. In the case of Listed buildings, appropriate consents may be applied for (e.g. permission to remove stained glass). At a later date, items in store may be recycled in a new synagogue where they can be used and cherished as a link with the former community.

Creation of an Anglo-Judaica Provenance Register: Jewish Heritage UK intends to initiate a central register of artefacts and furnishings from redundant synagogues. Subject for security reasons to restricted access, this database will assist the responsible safekeeping of valuable pieces, insurance claims in the event of theft, and will be of use to academic art historians.

Protection of Disused Jewish Burial Grounds

Jewish communities have a clear obligation in Jewish law to maintain their burial grounds as sacred places in perpetuity. However, the numerical decline of many smaller communities and the shift in population to suburbs of large cities (mainly London and Manchester) has led to a growing problem of disused burial grounds that are threatened by neglect, vandalism and redevelopment.

Jewish Heritage UK will:

- Help monitor the condition of Jewish burial grounds around the country
- Highlight "Sites at Risk"
- Draw up a nationwide strategy for good cemetery management
- Encourage the sharing of the financial burden on a city-wide and regional basis. Beyond the Jewish community, local authorities and general conservation agencies will be enlisted to assist with security, maintenance and environmental concerns.

Tourism and Public Access

Jewish Heritage UK will promote British Jewry's cultural heritage to the wider public through encouraging participation in The Civic Trust's Heritage Open Days and in the European Jewish Heritage Day, organised by B'nai Brith, which since 2000 has become a popular annual event. Making historic synagogues better known is a key to unlocking vital grant aid for conservation of their fabric.

Facilitating Fundraising

Several Listed historic synagogues have recently received grant aid for repairs from public sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. Jewish Heritage UK will highlight the pressing need to raise match funding from inside the Jewish community and the financial responsibility of the Jewish community to its historic heritage. Jewish Heritage UK will work towards the establishment of a Community Conservation Fund in order to secure the future of major historic synagogues and sites nationwide.

Strategic Planning for Long-Term Jewish Heritage Management

Jewish Heritage UK will report and make recommendations regarding the future management of Jewish communal property on a nationwide basis. Overall population decline and shift in settlement patterns means that the current surplus of buildings will inevitably have to be rationalised. However, the decision to dispose of valuable real estate must be informed by an awareness of the architectural merits of the building in question and its heritage potential. *Heritage is an investment and makes sound economic sense!*

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