Transcript: Why Do Historic Places Matter? webinar

17 September 2021

Barbara Cummins: Good afternoon everybody. I'm just going to start talking so that those who are already in the seminar and know that there's nothing wrong with their sound. We just haven't actually started yet as we wait for people to join us. So thanks very much for taking the time on a Friday afternoon when I know that's not necessarily the most popular time for these things. So I'll just give folk a few minutes to get in before we get started properly.

Okay, the numbers are not going up as fast as they were so I think now is the time just to get started. So, once again, good afternoon everybody to this seminar on Zoom on why the past matters. I'm the current convener of the RTPI [Royal Town Planning Institute] in Scotland and I'm just chairing the event today. Just for information, it is being recorded so you will be able to watch it back later on and there'll be a follow-up with email with the recording and links to the documents and the animation that we'll show at the very end so we're going to have a presentation first of all from Dr Rebecca Madgin on her report and her findings and then we'll hear from our three speakers: Chris Miele from Montagu Evans, Elizabeth McCrone from Historic Environment Scotland, and Henrietta Billings from Save Britain's Heritage. So three different, very different, perspectives but with a remarkable amount of common ground. And certainly one of the things that my involvement in this has brought out is that although we can often disagree on the outcomes for some of these things we all understand the passion that people feel for their places. In Scotland the purpose of planning has been defined as to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest and I think understanding what it is that the public feel about their places how they care about their places, and why, is really important. Rebecca said to me when we were starting on this journey some time ago - in fact we were due to launch in March 2020 we were reflecting before we started today - so this has been some time in the in the coming and she said she wanted to do something that was useful, not just academic. And I hope you agree from what you're going to hear today that indeed it will be useful for all of those of us who make decisions, who make policy, and who engage with communities about the things that affect their places.

So there's a live transcript that's happening as we talk. If that entertains you, great, if it annoys you there is actually a button on the bottom of your screen where you can hide that so please feel free to do that. Without any further ado I'll ask Rebecca to kick us off.

Slide 1: Cover of the project report and the words Economically, Environmentally, Socially and – highlighted - Emotionally

Rebecca Madgin: Thank you very much Barbara. These things never go off without any technical hitches and so best-laid plans and all the practices that we've done before aren't going to work so I'm going to ask Lucy Janes who's behind the scenes to press the next slide for me when we're ready. So it's a little bit clunky but hopefully you will you will bear with us.

So thank you ever so much everybody for coming. I'm really delighted to see you all here today and I guess that what I'd really like to do today is, as Barbara says, launch the project but launch the report that goes with the project. It'll be available on the University's website from now and certainly by the close of play today. Really what I wanted to do today was to ask the question 'why do historic places matter?' I think we all, as Barbara said, we all know that places matter to us but the exact reasons why are perhaps either taken for granted or perhaps not fully explored. So I think

now we have a robust body of evidence that suggests why historic places matter economically, environmentally and socially but I want to ask a slightly different question. I want to ask why we feel emotionally attached to particular historic places and therefore I'm going to focus this talk, and the report is also about emotional attachments to urban heritage.

Slide 2:

1. Why and how do we develop emotional attachments to historic places?
2. To what extent are emotional attachments to historic places considered with in heritage management policies and practices?

Thank you. So today's talk, and the report that accompanies the talk, conveys the findings of what has now been a four-year Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project that's been led by myself and also supported by the project partners, the representatives of which who are speaking here today. So that's Historic Environment Scotland, Montagu Evans and Save Britain's Heritage. And within that broader project we tried to ask two questions which you can see on the slide. The first one was really to gather evidence and understanding of why and how we develop emotional attachments to historic places.

Slide 3: One box with the label 'Place', and another with the label 'person' and a two-way arrow between them labelled 'emotional attachments'.

I think many of us feel it innately or inherently but we've never really, kind of, got the evidence to support these these innate feelings. And the second aspect really was, as Barbara alluded to in the quote about being useful, was to then take this information to try and feed it through into decision-making processes so to consider the extent to which emotional attachments are recognised and considered within heritage management, whether that's policies or practices. And to do this the research drew on a range of different documents such as Save Britain's Heritage's press releases and reports and a range of different interviews and workshops with people from across the built environment sector, local residents, campaigners, architects, developers, investors, planners, everybody really involved in urban change.

Slide 4: Place attachment

- Emotional bonds between people and place
- Desire to understand the relationships that people have with their environment, particularly the emotional aspects of these relationships (Proshansky et cal. 1983; Tuan 1977).
- By approaching historic places through a place attachment lens, our ambitions is to re-conceive of (historic) place as an emotional and value-laden construct, a material site and a geographic location (Madgin and Lesh, 2021)

So what I really want you to think about as I'm talking today is the connection between people and place. So I'm not so much interested on the place or even on the person - it's that relationship that goes together between the person and the place - so that's where I centre emotional attachment: it's in that connection between a physical environment and a sense of self, or individual, or even collective.

And in doing so, in placing that emphasis on emotional attachments I'm drawing very largely and very heavily on the place attachment field which largely comes out of environmental psychology. There's a huge field, it's been going for 40, 50 years. There's an awful lot of information there but very little of that research has attempted to engage with the historic environment. And so what we're trying to do here in the report and in the findings of the project is to explore those emotional

bonds between people and place and that's at the heart of the place attachment literature. So if you think about place as both a geographic or a physical space as well as being also an emotional reality - that's how we're framing place and place attachment today.

Slide 5:

1. Why and how do we develop emotional attachments to historic places?

So, as I said, the majority of the presentation is going to concentrate on two particular questions that have framed the research throughout and these are the two questions that run through the report as well. The first one is 'why and how do we develop those emotional attachments to historic places?' And to cut to the chase, to give you the simple one or two-sentence answer, essentially the project found that historic urban places have the capacity to provoke emotional attachments due to their dual nature. So it is this duality that we want to focus on here: both of being outward-facing symbols of historically significant events whether that's on a local, national or international scale. But also, and equally, because they become part of - a sentence I think that we don't use so much but certainly was important in the mid- to late 20th century - the familiar and cherished local scene. Whereby what was saying here is that whether they're architectural masterpieces or whether they're the everyday environment that perhaps aren't designated and given official protection, that people do and can develop relationships, emotional relationships, with these places.

Slide 6:

Word cloud with large words: sadness, enjoyment, pride, fear, anger, wow. And smaller words: anxiety regret, adoration calm, admiration, excitement, satisfaction, aesthetic appreciation , shame , fury, relief, pleasure, awe, love, guilt, nostalgia, disinterests, disappointment.

So I tried to break this down and say 'well, what is that relationship?' 'what is that connection that people are having to place that I see all around me on an anecdotal level?' and I saw coming through very strongly within the project. So I broke this down into two separate categories. The first one was a range of different emotional responses that different people would express towards the historic environment as I would work with the documents or indeed speak with them as part of the project. And just on the slide here you can see just a number, a few rather, of the many different emotional responses that people expressed either through those documents or through their spoken word, and I think this is the most visible aspect of these emotional attachments. If we weren't connected to something I'm not sure we would feel emotions in quite this way. But what I want to point out here are three key things: not just the number of emotions but also the most recurrent emotions and those are the ones that you can see slightly larger on the slide. They include anger, joy and pride, as well as sadness, fear, and a composite emotional response called 'wow' which was particularly relevant for historic environment because it included things like aesthetic appreciation, and admiration, and adoration, of the built environment, and there was a lot of that that came through. But these responses weren't static, they weren't fixed and nor did people feel just one or two. In fact these responses were often blended so you could feel happy and sad almost at the same time. They also varied in their intensity and so you could feel anger alongside slightly cooler emotions such as disinterest. But common throughout was that they were fluid and responsive to circumstance, and each of these responses were caused either by the look and feel and everyday experience of a place; by a comparison between what a place was, is, and is going to be; and also as a result of the process of urban change. So for me these are the most visible expressions of those attachments but they don't really tell us why we form those attachments, just that we have responses.

Slide 7: A diagram of cogwheels with labels look, feel, rhythms, memories, history, architecture, stories, uses, materials, and symbols

So here's the answer, the longer answer beyond the two-sentence answer. And this is that the interlocking components that all go together to mean that people form emotional attachments to historic places. Taken together as a whole what we're calling these interlocking components is the personalities of historic urban places, and it's those personalities of place that people form attachments to. So they don't just form an attachment to the way that something perhaps looks or its history or its architecture but moreover they form attachments to them, to their memories, their stories, and the way that they feel in and about place. So really what we're talking about here isn't the isolation of a particular variable but rather the interconnectedness of a number of different variables, again they vary in intensity but they're equally as important across the research. So here I'd like you to think about a particular place that you might feel an attachment to. You might feel an attachment to it because it looks nice but you'll also feel attachment to it because it's a place of residence or somewhere you use, somewhere you have meanings and memories attached to it, even just a point of orientation. So it's all of these different things that come together that tell us why we feel particular strong emotional attachments to particular places.

Slide 8: Diagram of buildings with social media style thumbs up and thumbs down, hearts and broken hearts.

The research also found the opposite and it wasn't set out to find this. You'll see from the first two questions we outlined that it very much was about who forms attachments and why and that was very much meant in a, kind of, positive sense of why we cherish the past and that local and familiar scene. But in the course of the research we also found evidence of people either feeling detached from historic places or showing few signs of attachment, or even that their attachment would waver over time as particular things happened. But luckily enough the same combination of interlocking parts was also found to form and influence this lack of attachment or sense of detachment and so the crucial point to take away from this slide really is that the personalities of historic urban places are fluid and they're malleable, and they can evolve in a whole range of ways which either ensures that they can be nurtured and sustained or they can be disrupted and broken. And often this evolution process of a person's attachment to place is often only unlocked and becomes, kind of, real to somebody during the process of change and in particularly urban change. So I'd now like to turn to answer the second question.

Slide 9: 2. To what extent are emotional attachments to historic places considered with in heritage management policies and practices?

So here I want to think very much about the ways in which these attachments to places are considered with an existing policies and practices.

Slide 10: the words: links, evidence, impact, associations

The key thing here to take away from this section is that it's implicit. It's not explicit but implicitly you could find a huge range of evidence for where emotion was used or influenced decision-making within the heritage sector. So the words you can see on the board, on the slide here, all come from key UK heritage documents. So Historic England conservation principles, for example, use the phrases 'emotional links', 'emotional evidence' and 'emotional impact'. They also use the phrase 'attachment' in their definition of social value so again you can see emotion and attachment being used in very few occasions but they are being used. And similarly in Scotland, the phrase used in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy 2009/2011 was 'emotional associations'. And in an international

stage the Quebec Charter actually uses the word ‘emotion’ when thinking about the ‘spirit of place’. So there's a growing recognition that emotion is important and we're seeing very very few examples of that within official rhetoric and policy and practice. But it is hidden behind those words as well and it is involved in decision-making. So here I’d like to move to one of my final slides.

Slide 11: Masterplanning, Debating Change, Community engagement, working on site, selling places and Building attachments**. Each has more detailed explanationswith**

And so here is a much simplified, believe it or not, diagram of just some of the places where emotional responses and emotional attachments could be seen very vividly within the process of urban change. So each of these stages involve thinking about, working with, and attracting people to historic places as well as respecting existing communities that live and work and play within historic places. And so therefore I found implicitly that emotion is located in the minds and actions of built environment professionals, including those planning the site, campaigning against loss and change, working with and on the buildings, and those who also communicate those changes in order to sell any new units or retrofitted units that might come on stream. Emotion was also located within the everyday practices of local residents as they both shaped and responded to the changes to their historic urban places. So the key point here again, is to say that emotional responses and attachments are at times implicit but a closer look shows that they become explicit during the process of change and they're evident in a number of different projects as well as throughout the development process. And also they're evident across a range of different kinds of communities which we're going to now call emotional communities.

Slide 12: Circle labelled Emotional communities with five smaller circles labelled Practice, Interest, Everyday, Use, Memory

So I want to finish really on the people. I've talked a lot about place and a lot about process so far but now I want to finish on people. And to do so I’d like to use this phrase ‘emotional communities’. It's been used a lot in academic circles, particularly by Barbara Rosenwein but really this concept helps us to understand who's responding emotionally and who's forming emotional attachments to historic places. I found in the research there were five different types of emotional communities. Those of practice, perhaps built environment professionals who were actively shaping and changing place. Those who had a shared interest, perhaps history, architecture, sport, music, technology, whatever that might be. There are also people who through their everyday use and their rhythms and routines in a place also formed an emotional community - often not explicit but again an implicit emotional community. There are also emotional communities of use, particularly around going to work or to visit particular places. And finally there are emotional communities of memory, individual and collective, as well as intergenerational. And here I want to emphasise that it wasn't polarised; that you could be a member of one or two, or three, or four, or five of these particular groups and you could have, sort of, a dominant pairing and a minor pairing but the membership of these communities was fluid and again dependent on context, time and place. So, to finish.

Slide 13: Conclusion

Slide 14: three boxes labelled ‘Responses’, ‘Attachments to the Personalities of Historic Places’, and ‘Communities’, all with arrows pointing to a circle labelled ‘ Matter Emotionally’.

I posed a question at the start that said we have a lot of evidence as to why historic places matter economically, environmentally, and socially. I hope what you've now heard today is a little snippet of the report, of the larger project, that now explains why places matter emotionally. And that we can see why they matter emotionally if we look at people's responses, we look at people's attachments,

and we also look at those people who are forming those emotional communities. So I'd like to move to the next slide.

And say thank you very much for listening, thank you very much for your time and happy to take questions after the project partners have responded. Thank you.

Slide 15: logos of Historic Environment Scotland, Save Britain's Heritage, University of Glasgow, Montagu Evans, and the Art and Humanities Research Council.

Barbara Cummins: Thanks Rebecca. We're going to hear from each of the project partners in turn as I highlighted at the beginning and there will be time for Q&A at the end but in the meantime if you've got questions do use the Q&A function. If you've got one for a particular speaker then if you could make that clear in your question and please try and make them slightly brief because it makes it easier for us to get through them. If it's an essay I'll summarise and I may miss the point you're trying to make. And so first up, we have Chris Miele from Montagu Evans. Chris.

Chris Miele: Thank you very much Barbara. I'd just like to say as one of the senior partners at Montagu Evans - we're property consultants - that we were very pleased to help sponsor the application for funding and Rebecca's subsequent research and thank her too for the time she spent in our office. Our planning team learned a lot over coffee and she delivered seminars. I want to start by observing a point that I think Barbara touched on. That this kind of study really often fails because it asks the usual suspects the predictable questions and gets partisan answers. And Rebecca was, from the beginning, keen to get different perspectives and from, I guess my side of the table, and again, as Barbara indicated and Rebecca too, there's more common ground than I think she or others might have expected. Just as an aside it's really noteworthy that every client and every fellow property professional I introduced her to for interview, agreed, and actually wrote me after thanking me for the introduction. The reason for that is that the past does matter actually to the property industry and I want to give you four reasons why it matters. And some of these go directly to Rebecca's earlier commentary. I mean, first and obviously, is the importance which the planning system attaches to historic places and the care it shows to the views of local people when it's proposed to change a place. Now this is of course, down to the strength of legal provision and policy but that strength in turn reflects public sentiment so there's a circular argument there. So to put it at its crudest, we have to pay attention, not least because the historic environment is essential to planning. And that creates or limits the realisation of value in the land. Taking time to understand the feelings that people have when their cherished and familiar local scene changes can be used to ease a scheme through planning and, let's also realise, enrich its content. Now however negative a view you might, or someone might take of the development industry, in my nearly 30 years in it I have to say there's been a sea change in how the property industry communicates with the public in order to understand its feelings generally about their environment and uses, but in particular about the historic environment. Within my sector too there's a lot of sympathy with the general anxiety people feel about that pace of change because, after all, who wouldn't at the moment. Now I know this process of listening to understand attachments, and using Rebecca's language and analysis, could be better but the good news is that there is increasingly more emphasis on it and particularly in England through the end they were changed to the NPPF [National Planning Policy Framework] and the proposals for the Office for Place. Now I think Rebecca's work could influence that area of practice. The second reason why we in my industry value historic places is really more personal and also goes directly to Rebecca's work. Most of my clients and we professionals who advise them, you know, have feelings about historic places. Whatever you may think about one development outcome or another involving the historic building it is quite likely the individuals involved have developed or had some sense of attachment to the characteristics of the place. And more than that,

these associations and interests often play a role in a client's desire to get involved with a site or not. Of course it's not the only factor but it is a factor because it adds interest to the site. And alongside this most of us, and not just we planners, feel a sense of responsibility to the historic environment and stewardship for it. I think the third reason, and putting sentiment to one side, is that the conservation of a site's historic character can add financial value to developments. So I don't want to overstate this actually, as much of the research done perhaps by, you know, not-for-profit sector groups do. Yes, some prospective tenants and residents like old sites and they suit the needs of certain businesses but modern commercial offices really aren't suited to historic environments on any kind of large scale so it depends very much on the nature of the property, its location and the nature of the market. It's not a universal rule but it has some purchase. I think just reflecting generally it's very easy to take for granted the consensus that's established around all this but as a matter of fact our system has evolved to the point where we just assume that the obvious historic characteristics of a site will be retained, at least at the start, or tested. Of course because our cities are complex it's not always possible to do that. Fourthly, and I think staying with this point perhaps of sentiment, professionals involved in the planning and design of the built environment usually welcome the retention of old things because a site without influence can be very hard to deal with. The retention of historic features makes the design process easier actually, or should do because it sets parameters and it limits choices. A site without influence can be pretty dull and we professionals like an interesting life. So there are some reasons why those, so there are just some of the reasons why the past matters to my sector and why understanding people's attachment to it is important. And just to summarise they interlock and they reinforce one another. So you have the functional which is legal and procedural which has a basis in public interest. You have personal associations and shared interests around value which can sometimes fit into financial value. And then of course, you have the interest in sites which, you know, very often brings the best out in professionals because these sites are challenging. Now I have to say despite, to draw all this together with a few conclusions, maybe tending in the opposite direction just for balance, and particularly because I know I could be criticized perhaps for being a bit of a 'Pollyanna' on this point that, you know, the world I'm describing is probably the 'best of all possible worlds, isn't it Candide?' Well, I can't make any apologies for that. I believe in my profession as a planner. It isn't the perfect system but it's pretty impressive in reconciling competing interests and I go back to Barbara's initial point about outcomes. We don't always agree but along the way a lot of the main issues are aired. But the real word of caution is that for all the past that does matter, please don't think it's the only thing that does. Often the most contentious issues around change are actually not what happens to old buildings but impacts on local highways, schools, surgeries, climate change, ecology, drainage, social mix, even noise, and I've seen plenty of strong emotions expressed on these topics. In fact the only time I was ever assaulted at a public inquiry I was mistaken for the transport witness. Third and finally, I just want to point out that forming attachments to peoples and places, people, people as well as places, is an innate human response. What one day is new, is the next day familiar. All of which reminds me – and I declare my hand as a New Yorker here – of the anecdote that the famous New York social observer Fran Leibowitz recounts (and there is a wonderful series on Netflix at the moment directed by Martin Scorsese about Fran Leibowitz). So, one day over lunch with a friend in Midtown a local preservation campaigner approaches her and her friend – she's famous, everyone knows her in New York – this petition invites both of them to object with art to what are described as unsympathetic alterations proposed for Lever House. Now for those of you who don't know it, Lever House is a modernist icon in New York, a perfect slab-on-podium block from the 1950s and in its day an affront to the traditional urban blocks of Park Avenue in Midtown. Well after she and her companion signed the objection, her friend turns to her to say 'you know, I'm sure I signed a petition objecting to the construction of that building'. Well, there it is, like it or not. Development often

creates places which themselves become historic and in my experience in the blink of an eye and certainly in the span of a generation. My daughter, age 26, has attachment to places I turned my nose up at when I was newly minted, coming here in London as a PhD student in 1987. She can't see the point of many places I stopped in London back then. So one generation's monstrosity is probably going to become the next generation's beloved icon. I think by way of conclusion there is a more serious point in all that and that's to reflect on how our propensity to form attachments to our physical environment and the people who use and live in them can somehow be given more weight in the planning decision-making process. And I think many on the call will be very familiar with the policy requirements to give great weight to design which is distinctive and creates place and adds to a local environment positively. But I wonder how much real weight gets attached to that consideration as against the weight that gets attached to the preservation of certain parts of the historic environment which may even actually compromise the creation of distinctive places for all their interests. So that's all I have to say, and just finally a thanks for the opportunity to address you all, and really endorse Rebecca's work. Thank you.

Barbara Cummins: Thanks Chris. So that's the perspective from the property industry. We now have Elizabeth McCrone from Historic Environment Scotland who's going to give her perspective. Elly.

Elizabeth McCrone: Thanks Barbara. Well, thank you for asking me here today to help support the launch of this important research. I'd also like to thank the other sponsors of the project who helped to make it a reality. My job at Historic Environment Scotland is, I'm Director of Heritage and that means that I'm responsible for deciding which parts of Scotland's rich heritage become designated. So, for instance, deciding if buildings become listed or not and we also give advice on changes to designated sites and places within the planning system. We also record Scotland's historic sites and places and make that information available on our website. So, when the opportunity to be involved in this project came along we were absolutely delighted to facilitate this piece of work. What's critical to all the areas that I work in is the people of Scotland. It's as simple as that. How do we know that we're designating or listing places that people value and want to see recognised? What is it that makes people either delighted or appalled about the idea of changes to our historic sites and places? And while many of these subjects often attract, at the very least, lively debates, more often with the things that cross my desk strongly held and polarised views. I believe that it's a fundamental part of our role as a public body to listen to people and to understand what makes places special to people. Those views help to shape our policy and guidance. With research like this project adding to our bank of knowledge about significance and how people feel about the places around them we can create better policy and guidance that is responsive and reflects the lives of people today. So I'd like to say congratulations to Rebecca, well done. And congratulations to everyone else who worked on this project, and I'm really looking forward to seeing how it's used now and in the future. So thank you.

Barbara Cummins: Thanks Elly. And finally we have Henrietta Billings from Save Britain's Heritage. Henrietta.

Henrietta Billings: Thank you very much, I hope everyone can hear me okay. Good afternoon and thank you very much indeed for inviting me to speak at today's event.

Slide 1: 'The past before us, who cares? Henrietta Billings, MRTPI, Director, Save Britain's Heritage.' Photo of campaigners with placards.

It's been a real pleasure taking part in this research and particularly to provide Dr Rebecca Madgin with access to our archive. It's literally, it now is full of, literally vintage Save reports and press

releases dating back to the 1970s and I know that Rebecca's used a lot of this for her primary research. You can actually see some of them, some of a small selection that we use actually quite a lot in our everyday research now for our projects and campaigns here behind me in the office but I wanted to share with you a couple.

Slide 2: Covers of two reports entitled 'City Centre Carve-up' and 'Cutting The Heart Out Of Derby'.

This is a couple of slides of covers of the reports which I particularly like. 'City Centre Carve-up' from 1982 and this 'Cutting The Heart Out Of Derby', a report that we did. It particularly stood out to me is that we even printed it all in pink and if that's not designed to pull at your heartstrings I don't know what is. So how people feel about the historic environment around them has always featured in the work of Save Britain's Heritage.

Slide 3: Covers of two reports entitled 'The Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?' by David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney and 'Who Cares Wins. The Buildings At Risk catalogue 2004'

The title of my talk today, my reflections, is 'The Past Before Us: Who Cares.' It's really the amalgamation of two previous Save reports that you can see here on the left: The Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It? by David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney, printed in 1981, and 'Who Cares Wins'. This was a Buildings At Risk catalogue that we printed in 2004. Back in the '70s we knew that people cared about the historic environment but we also wanted to make sure that they knew in time to save Britain's heritage and it's a sentence that's written in to our original manifesto document. During my research for this talk I was alerted to the book that I've just mentioned - 'Our Past Before Us' - which showed we were considering this question about why people care even then. This book is a collection of essays edited by Marcus Binney who is the founder of Save and also our Executive President. It specifically has a chapter in it entitled 'Living places, workplaces and historical identity'. Here the authors note that the confines of conservation to buildings of aesthetics or historic importance, rather than the everyday which form an important role in the historical memory of a community; the life stories of ordinary people, and buildings they used in the past should be given more respect, they argue. I think this really couldn't be more pertinent to Rebecca Madgin's work that we're discussing today.

Slide 4: Image of a press release with the headline ' Listing success as Victorian Manchester Engine House saved from demolition' and a Twitter feed.

For those of you who don't know us and aren't familiar with Save Britain's Heritage we're a campaigning organisation established in 1975 to defend historic buildings from demolition or deliberate neglect and decay. We've been described as the most influential conservation group to have been established since William Morris set up the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings over a century ago. Save was created in 1975, Year of European Architectural Heritage. And it was set up by a group of journalists, planners, architects and historians to campaign for endangered historic buildings. Through press releases, reports, books and exhibitions we've championed the cause of decaying country houses, redundant churches and chapels, disused mills, warehouses, blighted streets and neighbourhoods, cottages and town halls, railway stations, hospitals, military buildings, and asylums. From the start we've always placed a special emphasis on the possibilities of alternative uses for historic buildings and for major campaigns we work with investors, engineers and architects on alternative schemes. This makes us stand out from other organisations in our field. Where we have the resources and when we have legal advice, we also take legal action and take part in public inquiries to stop demolition and unnecessary loss. The phenomenal success of TV series like BBC's 'Restoration' programme or George Clarke's 'Restoration Man' or David Olusoga's

‘House Through Time’ really demonstrate what Save has always believed and indeed known to be true - that there are hundreds and thousands of people who care passionately about historic buildings and find their neglect and decay an agonizing and often outrageous sight. All buildings have long exercised a place in people's minds akin to buried treasure. Most of us, of course, are highly unlikely to find that stash of Roman coins or a Viking necklace even if we knew where to look but we can feel the thrill of discovery at a forgotten or forlorn building begging for tender loving care. What appealed to me about Rebecca Madgin's work is that about 95% of the cases that come across our desks at Save unsolicited from the public are triggered by an emotional response from people to buildings or places under threat. Quite a lot of the cases come from our own research and networking too. These buildings are... these are buildings that people read about in the paper, walk past in the street or stumble across through social media. While fabric and history play their part, the majority of cases that come to us are from local neighbourhoods in towns and cities. People's experiences of these buildings are mainly personal. They are where they went to school, visited on holiday, where their grandparents worked, where they were born. These places are about people's memories, use, local legends sometimes handed down through generations, and they're also about personal experience. The trauma of losing these landmarks through demolition or decay is very deeply felt.

Slide 5: Photo of a building with trees and foliage growing close to it. ‘Minley Manor farm, Hampshire, 1896. Unlisted (application pending) under threat from MoD demolition plans’

And I wanted to share with you a couple of recent and current campaigns that we're working on at the moment to give you an example of the types of buildings that people bring to us. So this is Minley Manor Farm in Hampshire. Built in 1896, it's unlisted and under threat from a Ministry of Defence application to demolish. This was brought to our attention by local people who walked past this building, which is off the beaten track overlooking an absolutely stunning view of countryside. But people who are walking on their daily walks noticed this building over many years gradually deteriorating and came to us to ask for help. Someone even last week heard about the campaign and wrote to us saying that they actually lived in these buildings in the 1980s and wanted to do anything that was needed to help they felt so strongly and so warmly towards these buildings.

Slide 6: photo of people with signs and placards outside Victorian building. ‘Old School, Garway, Herefordshire, 1877, unlisted saved from demolition via a permitted developments rights’

Another example is the Old School in Garway in Herefordshire. Built in 1877, this is an unlisted building that was saved from demolition via a permitted developments rights application. And here we had a really active local group who felt passionately about this building, came to us for advice and different ways to raise the profile of that campaign. But it was a great successful outcome to a really hard-fought campaign.

Slide 7: Photos of derelict industrial buildings. ‘Cosalt Buildings, Fishdock road, Grimsby, unlisted, outside Conservation Area, owned by Associated British Ports. Demolished 2017. Family connections and memories of more prosperous town, with docks at its heart.

And I also wanted to share with you the coastal buildings in Grimsby. These are buildings hugely important to the history of Grimsby Docks, once the most important and busiest docks in the world. These this was a street of buildings from the late 19th to the mid-20th century they were once busy with banks, warehouses, offices, post offices, cafes - different uses - and have been neglected by their owners for a long time. This was an application that ended up unfortunately being lost. It was a big campaign for Save and we took legal action but we were not successful. But we were really

struck by the people who came forward to support us in this campaign. This was both people who worked, whose family had worked, in these buildings and worked on the docks but also people who had very strong memories of a different life in Grimsby when the town had been more prosperous and when the docks were at the heart of its industrial activity. Cases tend to come across our desks as a result of urban change, or dereliction and decay, and, in particular, in England people invariably come to us because they feel unheard and let down by a planning system which continues to suffer from underfunding and de-skilling. There's a feeling of powerlessness when faced with the might of developers or building owners, sometimes working hand-in-hand with councils who are the developer and the decision-maker. There's a perception of David and Goliath and of standing up for the underdog, a feeling of professional planners and financial weight versus voluntary community groups. People come to us because they feel they must do something. We respond to these appeals with letters, campaigns and press releases and, as I said before, alternative schemes.

Slide 8: Drawing of a façade of building with a square and people in front. Entitled 'The four threatened Strand frontages brought back into use' with ' SAVE alternative scheme for The Strand, central London by architect John Burrell'

I've included this scheme, this image, as one of as an example of one of our alternative schemes. It's done by John Burrell, the architect from Burrell Foley Fischer and it's a simple and very beautiful drawing of four houses next to Somerset House and Covent Garden in Central London. It shows how these four buildings - which were scheduled to be demolished by King's College London and were in a very dilapidated state - it shows, this picture is designed to show them brought back to life with cafe and retail uses on the ground floor and then offices and other uses in the floors above. This image was actually the spur for our campaign to save them from demolition that attracted, in the end, thousands of signatures to a petition which resulted in the planning application being withdrawn. Incidentally the pedestrianisation that you see in the foreground here was championed by us when this same campaign was running in 2017 and I'm very pleased to say that, as we speak, those works, those pedestrianisation works, are being implemented by Westminster City Council. Our alternative schemes are intended to inspire. To inspire a sense of what these places could be like in the future, a sense of pride and hope, and also imagination. They are emotive and they're deliberately emotive. They're designed to bat back the 'eyesore', 'irrelevant', 'ugly', or' beyond repair' responses and to imagine a future from the present. They show that hope is vital to bringing these buildings back from the brink. What's clear to me is that Rebecca's work is so successful at reinforcing the point that people and buildings go together and that the emotional bond is as strong as it was in the 1970s and beyond. Building a place for that response and attachment into the planning system is long overdue.

Slide 10: quote from 'Our Past Before Us: Why We Save It', editors Marcus Binney and David Lowenthal, 1981.

And I want to leave you, having talked quite a lot about this book, I now want to leave you with a quote from 'Our Past Before Us: Why We Save It'. "The preservation movement opens up our eyes and hearts to what lies around us, enhancing our own surroundings by encouraging concern about them. As we save what is good from the past we realise we need to not be passive passers-by but to be active participants both in securing and remaking the world we have inherited."

Slide 11: 'Thank you'. Twitter @SAVEBrit, Instagram @savebritainsheritage, facebook @save.heritage, www.savebritainsheritage.org

That's the end of my response. If you'd like to ask me any questions about any of the projects that I've mentioned here or to follow our work, please come to our social media platforms and do get in touch. Thank you very much.

Barbara Cummins: Thanks Henrietta. Thanks to all of our speakers, to Rebecca, Chris, Elly and Henrietta. We've got quite a few questions and we've not actually got that long for questions so apologies if I miss yours out. But I'm going to start with one we've got from John Duffy around modernism and how that's now viewed as a historic style, we don't just want to save the Victorian. And wondering for many of the speakers, do you detect a difference between the attachment to modern and pre-modern places? Maybe Chris, if that's something that you could address from the development industry, if you, if you, see that any appreciable difference between how people view the modern and the pre-modern?

Chris Miele: I think, yeah, I think if anything I've noticed stronger emotional responses to some of those buildings than to the more - I just call them ordinary without meaning to disparage them - kinds of townscape that Henrietta was illustrating in the Strand scheme. That might be because of the sense of living memory associated with either their parents, or themselves, depending on their age. So, yeah, I mean the, the irony is that they can often be quite challenging to reuse as we know just by nature of their materials and plan form and so forth but, yeah, that's a good question, I do detect that.

Barbara Cummins: Elizabeth, what about from a designator's point of view because obviously you look at all eras for designation. Do you see a different emotional response?

Elizabeth McCrone: Definitely, and I suppose in an ideal world I'd wish that there wasn't such a different emotional response. I think it actually depends a lot, interestingly, on who you talk to and perhaps how old they are. So if you talk to young people, talk to people under 20, they don't see this kind of stuff as being modern, for them it's already old. But people who've seen it built and have grown up with it - 'oh that's modern' , you know, so that that's how they view it. Certainly I see part of my role as being championing all parts of our heritage. So, you know, there are some more old-fashioned views shall I say, which might think, you know, after the 1930s was nothing ever good was built and that was it, that was the end of everything. And that's just not right. There are amazing buildings built throughout, you know, every decade of our history. So I think we should be listing buildings like that but undoubtedly they attract very, very strongly held views and part of what I'd like to do is to try and break that down a bit and get people to think and see why those buildings are important. They're part of our history and heritage. Yes, they're not thatched buildings, they're not 'cute' ones that people might automatically think of as listed buildings but they're part of our history and our heritage. It's also very easy to see the past with rose-tinted glasses and to think that everything was wonderful, you know, say in the 1950s, but it wasn't always wonderful. Some housing was terrible, some housing was failing, you know, so we had to build other things and build new things and use different materials and all the rest of it. So I think it's important and I hope that people will embrace that part of our heritage more in the future.

Barbara Cummins: Henrietta, do you get people coming forward, looking to save more modern buildings now as well?

Henrietta Billings: Yeah, absolutely and I just wanted also to make a point about perception because I think what's really interesting about more modern buildings that we don't - and we don't get this perspective so much on older buildings - is the change in generations actually that Elizabeth is also alluding to. The change in perception of these buildings. You have, for example, like huge heritage

icons, let's call them that, in London, like the St Pancras Hotel above King's Cross Station. Once, you know, in the 1960s there were MPs in the House of Commons calling for it to be demolished. Now it's restored, meticulously restored, and no one would ever dream of knocking it down. It's the same with the Midland Hotel in Morecombe in Lancashire. Once, you know, a total eyesore in many people's eyes. It was surrounded by barbed wire and boarded-up hoardings. People were waiting for it to be demolished so that the area could improve but now you look at it. Now it's a restored hotel, initially by Urban Splash, an absolutely fantastic developer, that has brought so much character and identity as well as prosperity and economic development to the town. So I think when we're talking about modern buildings, what's really important to remember is that opinions do change and that's why we should not set our opinions about the architectural merits either in stone or concrete, excuse me using a pun! But it's a fascinating topic and really important that we remain as open-minded as possible to the emerging research that's coming forward and the way that our appreciation as a society and over time is changing.

Barbara Cummins: Thanks for that everybody. Just one for you Rebecca. Just based on what we've all been talking about people reacting to things and just maybe a little more on the level of community engagement and talking to, dare I say, real people. Were you involved in this project?

Rebecca Madgin: Yeah, so there was a range of different people involved. So there was a range of different residents living in conservation areas across Scotland. There was a range of people who were involved in campaigns, some of which, you know, Henrietta's talked about. And then there was obviously people who were involved in delivering change, and property professionals that Chris alluded to as well. So there was a range of different voices and the project was deliberately set up to think about bringing these different voices together and to try to see where attachments lay and if they differed between each other. My sense of it was very difficult to split people into boxes and just to put them into a box and say, 'well, they feel like this because they're a resident', or they feel like this because they're a professional architect'. Actually what seemed to happen is that the blur between the person and the professional came through quite obviously. Not just in terms of the built environment professionals as in their personal lives but also people who had other professions who were thinking about, perhaps, the way that their profession, whether they worked in a particular environment then had a sense of their attachment to that as well. So there's a whole range of different people involved, and very deliberately, and I think, you know, what's been surprising to me has been the shared sense of emotional communities that's come through that and that wasn't what I was expecting. It wasn't perhaps the rhetoric that's in the news

Barbara Cummins: You alluded, in what you were talking to things changing over time, so we've a question from Euan Leitch asking about, we've obviously had the Black Lives Matter campaigns in recent times and when links with slavery are emerging through different buildings, do you think that's going to change people's emotional responses to particular properties?

Rebecca Madgin: Do you want me to go first on that one? Absolutely. Okay. So the bulk of the research was carried out just before Black Lives Matter and I think if that hadn't been the case I would have had a very different set of findings so I think that's an important point to note there. But, yes, as Henrietta said emotional responses change over time and attachments change over time. There are lots of decisions that we've made about the marketing of particular places that perhaps we wouldn't make today. And I think that this sort of take-home message from me, from the project really, is that it doesn't really matter what that response is, whether it's conventionally positive or conventionally negative or whether there's a strong or weak attachment. It doesn't matter what it is - we should still be cognisant of it when we're thinking about changing places. And so from me that's the message. It almost doesn't matter what kind of building it is, whether it's a modernist building or

what period it's from, or whatever it might be, but actually that within the process of change that there is genuine understanding of those emotional responses and attachments and emotional communities that form themselves around particular historical places. I'll open up to anybody else who wants to comment on that.

Barbara Cummins: I wonder about the, you know, from the property industry's perspective whether that does actually change your approach on sites?

Chris Miele: Well, I mean, I'll just give you one example which is kind of interesting that. I'm working on a big site in Lewisham at the moment which has got an address which is Plassey Drive. And when we did a little bit of digging about the Battle of Plassey in the mid, during the Seven Years War in the mid-18th century it was pretty clear we had to change the address of the development because it's not very enlightening. And I think I think we are sensitive to it, very, very sensitive to it. I mean, not least because even within our sector, which is kind of a hold-out in terms of diversity - well, maybe not any worse than the other is perfectly honest - but you know, certainly our intake cohorts and change there has been marked gender and ethnic diversity increase in our organisation and that's probably true - it's quite true in ours - it's probably true in others too. For example, more clients of mine come from Asian or Black communities now that never came, 10 years ago for the sake of argument. I think we are really sensitive to it. I think particularly when we're doing developments in areas that, like Lewisham, which are ethnically diverse. But the question is a really interesting one and I just throw it out there. I mean, Rebecca's work has talked about emotions and that's quite right but we all, on this call, I'm sure, know that the history of the preservation movement, which is my sort of special subject, has been loaded with political considerations. You know, since it started at the time of the French Revolution when it was a sort of Tory undertaking for one of a better word. Morris flipped it into a kind of Communist undertaking and, funnily enough, I think as a matter of fact, it's done pretty well under Labour governments as opposed to Tory ones notwithstanding the sort of handelian stuff you're meant to think about when you look at a country house or stately home, should play to the Tory homeland. I don't know about, just that personal offering: I mean there are plenty on the Left who wouldn't be caught dead in a stately home and I have to say I feel pretty uncomfortable in them too even before the whole kind of Black Lives Matter thing. Just because of the lack of interpretation of social class, the source of wealth that created these unbelievable piles, all that sort of thing. And the National Trust, in England anyway, does very little to socially to contextualise collections and properties and so forth. It's all upstairs, downstairs, really it goes back to the 1980s. And it's pretty unsophisticated and we probably have to ?prove it if heritage has a future that isn't elitist. So I'll get off my soap box there, sorry!

Barbara Cummins: That's okay because we don't actually have much time, I think that does actually lead to, sort of, the mental health issues associated with place and the health and wellbeing agenda and whether or not actually you think there's a greater role for the consideration of our relationship with places and the emotional responses to it, in actually tackling the health and wellbeing agenda as part of the work that we all do. I'll pick on Elizabeth to come first with this one.

Elizabeth McCrone: I wasn't expecting that! Yes, I think it is important and I think the way that we look at how we design sites and places today we can do a lot to help increase health, health and wellbeing. I think there is, when you talk about emotional attachments to places, there are some, you know, in the field that I'm in, when you're looking at sort of historic sites and places there are places that I certainly look at and have an emotional response to and they might make me feel 'oh wow, that's amazing, that's lovely', 'that gives me pleasure to look at that, to walk past, that to go inside that building, to use it' and I think, you know, that does add to our health and wellbeing. Of course there is a big initiative now on looking at 20-minute neighbourhoods so 'what have people

got in their local urban area?' and 'how can we ensure that people have the facilities that they need?' and that should include historic buildings within that. We should be open to having them re-used, repurposed and for ways that people want to use them today.

Barbara Cummins: Henrietta, you must have seen through the campaigns where communities rally round these sites that, actually, in a way, that is contributing to that health and welbeing agenda for that community?

Henrietta Billings: Absolutely, and when you think of the range of uses that you find historic buildings are put to, whether it is a stately home that people can go and visit and enjoy, or railway heritage attractions, as well as everyday streets and landscapes all in within a historic environment, there's no doubt that it adds to a sense of wellbeing and interest and character to a place. It's really important that that is recognised and built into how we conserve and adapt and model our historic environment for the 21st century.

Barbara Cummins: We've got a quirky question here from someone who's asking about a point that was raised by Chris about the different things that you've got to weight in the system. So you've got noise and transport, all the rest of it. What do you think about weighting emotion in terms of emotional reaction side-by side with those other factors and - how you might do that, let's just set that to one side - but what about that as a material consideration?

Chris Miele: We should have evidence-based planning and my concern, and it is a concern around concept of community value, is how is that established objectively? I mean, if there can be an unbiased questionnaire and a lot of, let's be honest, a lot of them aren't unbiased, that establishes those things in a neutral format before a development begins then that would be great. You know, that would be absolutely great. How a local planning authority does it as part of its plan evidence base, I think, is what it boils down to. Probably neighbourhood planning, which is big in England, and the Government seems to find a lot of money to do neighbourhood plans and the dropping of the Planning Bill, I think, is going to return them to embracing neighbourhood plans again as a vehicle for housing delivery. So I think they're probably pretty good, they're the best planning forum I know about for doing it in a neutral way and a lot of them are pretty good actually in my experience.

Barbara Cummins: Rebecca, I'd be interested to know how you're using this in your teaching for students because you're producing the next generation of planners and built environment professionals and so what are what are you going to be telling them to make them make them better and more effective at their jobs?

Rebeca Madgin: Well, I know some of them are on the call and they're amazing enough by themselves. So good luck to all of the ones who are going out into the world of work as of now, congratulations, that's just a personal note to the ones on the call. And the ones that are coming in, this is the kind of teaching you're going to get so I hope you've enjoyed today! So, yeah, in terms of thinking it through, a slightly different answer to that Barbara. I think - and I'm conscious there are students on the course so they might put something in the Q&A and say 'that's not what you said in the class!' - but I think one of the things we have to think about here is not to have emotion as a category. So somebody said to me ages ago - I think it was actually in the classroom – 'wouldn't it be great if we just had emotional value as a category of listing or as part of communal value or social value or something' and I said 'no, it wouldn't actually' because then what you start to do is you start to put things in boxes and say 'well, we'll tick that box there' and we'll deal with it. But actually when you think about noise or you think about community or heritage or green space or whatever it might be, if we had a better evidence basis as Chris said, understanding how people form

attachments and how the change of place and what makes good place and design terms, if we had a better understanding of that we wouldn't need a box for emotional value because it would be something that was captured in our decision-making processes. So in the courses that I teach at Glasgow we talk about things like local place plans and the way in which they might have something similar to what Chris has suggested in England, neighbourhood plans, to sort of front-load it and to get your kind of feelings and lived experiences into the system early enough so that it's upstream and it's not in this, sort of, sense of, 'there's a threat, we're going to lose it, then respond'. So that you can bring it in earlier into the system so that would be my, kind of, way forward I think. I hope that was okay.

Barbara Cummins: No, that was great. I think that's a really good point to end the discussion. Many apologies, I highlighted to folk earlier on that I wouldn't be able to get through the questions because of the time that we had available but thanks again to all of our speaker. To Dr Rebecca Madgin for a fantastic piece of work. I would commend the report, it's actually not that long, it's an easy and entertaining read so don't be put off by the fact that it's an academic report, it's really, really good. Thanks to our speakers, to Chris, Elizabeth, and Henrietta, and thanks to Lucy behind the scenes who kept everything going and who's kept us on track and on time and up to speed with everything. She'll be in touch with all of our participants around the material that's available, the video that you can watch and we're now going to hand over to Rebecca for the not-quite-world premiere but certainly its first major public viewing of an animation that was produced to try and explain these concepts. Which is a fantastic little thing, really creative, and something that I hope you will share with others once you're off the call. Rebecca.

Rebecca Madgin: Thanks very much Barbara, and, yeah, thank you Barbara, I just wanted to extend my thanks to Barbara and to all the speakers as well. Not just for speaking today but for being fantastic project partners and working with me on this and also making me think differently, and I really massively appreciate you for everything you've done in help and support and advice for the project. Aand a massive thank you as well, just to reiterate what Barbara said to Lucy. Lucy, this event couldn't have happened without you and so thank you so much for all that you've done. I know your screen's not on so I won't embarrass you by asking you to put it on but a huge thank you from all of us and especially from me from everything you've done on this project. And so on that note, I also want to say thank you very much to all the audience for coming along and for putting in the questions. Thank you so much and I hope that you'll finish off with us playing out the animation of why people form emotional attachments to historic urban places. It's because of the personalities of historic urban places. So I hope you enjoyed the last 60 minutes and I also hope you enjoy that as you go into the weekend as well. Thank you very much everyone and goodbye. Lucy, hit play I think, if you can.

Animation plays

Voiceover: We all have historic places that we love.
Scene: Woman and child walking along a street with an outline of city buildings behind

Voiceover: It's usually somewhere that feels just right – a place we enjoy visiting, looking at or going into.
Scene: Expanded buildings – with walls, windows, clocks

Voiceover: Or perhaps it's a place we miss now that it's gone…
Scene: Lorry goes along the street with rubble and an old broken clock in the back

Voiceover: We feel like this because we develop emotional attachments to places.
Scene: Woman and child looking at a doorway or pathway where a heart shape coalesces and swirls

Voiceover: But what exactly causes an attachment? Is it the physical fabric of a building or place?
Scene: Expanded buildings – with walls, windows, clocks

Voiceover: Is it memories?
Scene: Inside a room – woman remembering studying in a library

Voiceover: Stories?
Scene: A camera and photo of a group of people

Voiceover: History?
Scene: Inside a room with a person looking at a painting and 'On This Day' written on the floor

Voiceover: Current uses?
Scene: Inside a café with several people at tables

Voiceover: Future potential?
Scene: Inside a theatre with someone on stage and audience clapping

Voiceover: The answer is that it's all of these things and more and that they combine in a variety of ways to produce the unique personalities of historic places.
Scene: Four hexagons appear labelled Architecture, Look, Materials, History.Lights streams through a window and illuminates five more hexagons labelled Fell, Stories, Uses, Memories, Symbols and Rhythms.

Voiceover: This is why they are special to people.
Scene: Four people talking while cogs go round together above their heads. The cogs say Architecture, History, Uses, Stories, Memories. Then a sentence appears above the cogs which says ' Acknowledge and nurture emotional attachments'.

Voiceover: Understanding these personalities can help us acknowledge and nurture emotional attachments as historic places change.

Voiceover: So, here's a question…. How might such an understanding help with managing change in the historic urban environment?

Slide:

- Logos of University of Glasgow, Historic Environment Scotland, Montagu Evans LLP, SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Web address https://www.gla.ac.uk/whydohistoricplacesmatter
- Logo saying 'Scribe by We are Cognitive. www.wearecognitive.com'