



IHBC RESEARCH NOTES

Market Intelligence: Local Authority Conservation Specialists Jobs Market 2018

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Executive Summary

- The Institute's data set now covers about 1875 posts over 21 years since 1998.
- In 2018 there was a recovery in the number of posts advertised in England from a low in 2011 and 2012 (and after a dip in 2017) vacancies returned to approximately the level last seen in 2008-9. This may mark gradually increasing trend depending on the state of local government finances.
- The number of posts re-advertised within six months rose sharply to thirteen (fifteen if the survey period was extended to seven months) possibly reflecting difficulty in recruiting the staff of the right calibre.
- The average median salary advertised for advertised posts in 2018 was £32,501 a rise of 2.7% on 2017.
- It was noted with regret that during 2018 (as in 2017) only about half of local planning authorities considered IHBC membership as essential or desirable for applicants thus ending a recent rising trend of well over two-thirds of LPAs in 2016 notwithstanding the strength of IHBC membership as a benchmark for professional status and competence.
- Only 5.58% of local planning authorities continue to specify membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute alone but this rises to 19.3% when membership of any or all other allied institutions including RIBA, RICS and CIfA is included.
- Development management advice, appeals and enforcement continue to dominate prioritised job functions but with slightly less diversification of workload than in 2017.

- Fixed-term grant schemes supported by outside agencies accounted for a significant number of temporary posts, usually lasting 36 to 54 months.
- Variations in advertised posts and salaries in England in 2018 showed significant variations between Branches with only one post advertised in South (covering Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of White and Oxfordshire) while seven Branches had more than seven advertised vacancies each, part of a minor general expansion of recruitment.
- Notably higher salaries continued to be paid in London and the South East but median salary levels for new posts continued to be depressed in the East Midlands (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire) whereas most other areas returned to being close to the national median level.
- Fixed term posts were in a minority but particularly associated with the former HLF Townscape Initiatives and HE Heritage Action Zones.

NB although the IHBC is active across the United Kingdom the analysis in this Research Note relates solely to information gleaned about England's Local Authorities.

1. Background

1.1 This annual review aims to compliment the information gathered in the regular series of Local Authority Conservation Provision Studies undertaken since 2006 by IHBC with support from Historic England . [\[1\]](#)

1.2 The Institute's data set concerning advertised local authority conservation posts has been compiled since 1998. This now comprises data on over 1875 posts going back 21 years. [\[2\]](#)

1.3 The current Note summarises the job vacancies in the calendar year 2018 to assist the Institute to assemble a picture about the trends in the local government jobs market in some detail including workload requirements, qualifications, levels of remuneration etc., together with regional variations and other long-term trends.

1.4 The Institute monitors vacancies on a weekly basis and although this covers England, Scotland and Wales (but not Northern Ireland), the statistics in this Note relate to England only unless otherwise stated as the number of vacancies for the other Home Countries annually by comparison is statistically insignificant and insufficient to separately delineate the meaningful statistical trends defined for England.

1.5 Over the past three years the IHBC has captured data where local planning authorities were unable to fill vacancies at the first attempt and

needed to re-advertise posts within a six-month period - although in practice most re-advertisements took place within three months.

2. Size of the market

2.1 Posts advertised in England grew steadily in the late 1990s to a peak of 158 per year in 2003-4 before falling again year on year until the start of the Recession. By 2008-9 the annual level had fallen back to its 1999-2000 level (93 vacancies) but thereafter the decline was precipitous with only 26 vacancies advertised for all English local planning authorities in both 2010-11 and 2011-12.

2.2 By 2015 the local authority jobs market had recovered quite strongly (growing by 34% over 2014) but the market has fluctuated since but appears to be on a slightly upward trend. Although the number of posts advertised in 2016-17 slipped back again in 2017-18 there was a marked improvement in 2018-19, being up by about 27% on the previous year.

2.3 Currently it is difficult to determine what the effects of the continuing squeeze on local authority spending and the merger of district councils (or shared services arrangements) is having on front line heritage services and this may only become more evident as a long-term trend in due course. The continuing uncertainty regarding the economic effects of Brexit, on public expenditure and central government support for local government functions, is a further concern.

2.4 In 2018 the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced heritage professionals continued to be a challenge for local government. The monitoring of repeat advertisement of posts commenced in 2016 and it was clear that some authorities were struggling to recruit suitable conservation staff at the first attempt. In the last three years two authorities found it necessary to advertise twice within four months for the same post. In one or two cases the terms and conditions were varied either by shortening the hours or by proposing job-share arrangements, but the standards of qualification and experienced were not lowered.

2.5 While the number of re-advertisements halved in 2017, they increased again slightly in 2018 with most posts advertised for a second time within three months. Only one post was re-advertised within one month and again within three months. Overall it is not clear if after this, recruitment had ultimately proved successful or whether the post was held vacant pending reconsideration of how the service would be delivered.

3. General salary levels

3.1 Salaries are almost invariably expressed as a range. [3] Employers usually expect successful appointees to commence at the bottom of the

quoted scale and progress upward on the basis of qualifications and experience. [4]

3.2 Few posts set salary milestones in relation to career progression - such as gaining an additional post-graduate qualification or professional institutional recognition such as full membership of IHBC.

3.3 The average starting salary in England in 2018-19 was £30,022 with the average finishing salary £34,392 with the median salary level being £32,501. This is an increase of 2.7% over 2017-18.

3.4 National averages may potentially be distorted in two ways by:
(a) a small number of posts with unusually low starting salaries - typically "career grade" posts attracting newly graduated staff; or unusually high (typically senior management positions) mainly in London councils; and
(b) regional variations (typically higher salaries paid in London and the South-East IHBC Branch areas;

3.5 As the numbers of advertised posts increases the influence of such regional anomalies correspondingly decreases. The level of advertised posts in most IHBC Branches in England in 2018 gave a degree of assurance about the robustness of regional data but if overall numbers of posts falls again to those a decade ago this will be more difficult. [5]

3.6 Further comment about regional salary variations is made in Section 7 below.

3.7 As was the case in 2017-18 it was notable that the general advertised salary levels were lower in the last third of 2018 corresponding with a slightly higher number of part time and/or fixed term posts.

4. Balance of permanent posts to temporary & part time posts

4.1 Twenty years ago the vast majority of advertised vacancies in local planning authorities were permanent and full time. Where fixed term posts were advertised these were usually related to, for example, fixed-life grant-aid schemes that were often part funded by government centrally, of by the former English Heritage [6] or by the former Heritage Lottery Fund [7], or short-term posts that arise as, for example, maternity cover [8] (some of these posts also being part-time).

4.2 For a time a number of temporary or fixed-term jobs were also funded by the Planning Delivery Grant - particularly to meet the requirements of Best Value Performance Indicator 219 on conservation area appraisals. [9]

Table 1. Permanent, fixed term & temporary posts 2018 (<i>2017 in italics</i>)				
Permanent	58	65.91%	36	56.25%
Fixed term only	19	21.59%	15	23.44%
Fixed term and part time	5	5.68%	3	4.69%
Part time only	6	6.82%	10	15.62%
TOTAL	88	100%	64	100%

4.3 There seems to be less evidence than last year for a requirement that posts would be part-time but the overall numbers remain quite small and appear to fluctuate from year to year. The reason for specifying part-time working remains unclear.

4.4 There seems to be little evidence that local authorities are unable or unwilling to fund full-time posts but shared services between two or more authorities or the merger of two or more authorities may be responsible and this aspect will be kept under review in 2019.

4.5 It seems that unless the number of heritage assets to be managed is low -where a full-time specialist is considered unnecessary the other reason for part time working may be a general aim to improve the well-being and work-life balance of staff.

4.6 Of the 19 fixed term posts advertised in 2018, six related to a decreasing number of Townscape Heritage Initiatives [\[10\]](#) while five related to the Heritage Action Zone programme instigated in 2017. [\[11\]](#) Only one post was for maternity cover and one was a trainee appointment of 12 months duration while the remaining six of 18 to 24 months duration were for the performance of general heritage functions.

4.7 In 2017 two temporary posts of 24 months and 36 months duration respectively were created to deal with Heritage at Risk initiatives but this short-lived trend did not continue in 2018.

5. Qualifications and expertise

5.1 The stated educational requirements for posts varied significantly in 2018 as set out in Table 2. These posts almost usually but not always referred to full membership of the IHBC without necessarily making explicit if this was essential or merely desirable.

Table 2. Educational Requirements (where IHBC uncategorised membership was also a consideration)				
	2018		2017	
Degree	18	20.45%	17	26.56%
Degree + Post Graduate Qualification	9	10.22%	4	6.25%
Degree + Post Graduate Qualification + IHBC	9	10.22%	5	7.81%

Degree + IHBC as the principal standard	39	44.32%	26	40.62%
Degree + RTPi membership only	5	5.68%	2	3.12%
Qualification	3	3.41%	2	3.12%
Qualification + IHBC	2	2.27%	4	6.25%
Post Graduate Qualification + IHBC	1	1.14%	1	1.56%
Diploma standard + IHBC	-	-	-	-
Other: A-Level, B.Tec., NVQ etc. only	2	2.27%	3	4.68%
	88	100%	64	100%

5.2 In addition to the requirements shown above, many local government recruiters specified the requirement of education to degree standard in any one of a range of disciplines (e.g. Planning, Architecture, Urban Design, Conservation, Surveying); but as in past years, over half the advertised posts did not state the need for qualification in a heritage related subject.

5.3 Some of these job descriptions solely stated that education to degree standard was required while the majority of the remainder specified IHBC membership instead. One post specifically stated without further explanation that the applicant should not be an IHBC member.

5.4 It was noticeable that several of the Heritage Action Zone posts required a project management qualification (with or without reference to Prince 2).

5.5 As recently as 2016 the Institute was able to draw some satisfaction from the fact that 71% of posts expected suitable applicants to be a full member of IHBC (or less commonly to be working towards full membership) suggesting strong brand recognition for IHBC and the significance of a recognised set of competences and professional status. In the last two years however, the figure has fallen back to about 58% and this is a matter of some disappointment - but it is not clear if problem of recruitment are having an influence on the standards of professional competence being demanded by local authorities from candidates when endeavouring to fill vacancies.

5.6 Some recruiters to conservation posts in planning departments continue to specify membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute alone [5.68%] but this rises to 19.3% when membership of any or all other allied institutions inc. RIBA, RICS and Cifa is included.

5.7 In recent years the proportion of posts specifying the need for a post-graduate qualification in conservation has increased slightly with more recruiters in 2018 specifying this a requirement but not necessarily with associated membership of IHBC.

5.8 While a post-graduate qualification can reflect validation of a specialism in an increasingly fluid job market, given the nature of changing career paths, this does not necessarily seem to indicate added value to employers.

6. Roles & responsibilities

6.1 Evaluation of the workload priorities as set out in job descriptions always needs to be approached with caution. The allocation of percentages of time to individual tasks is rarely stated, nor are these priorities necessarily adhered to in practice.

6.2 The priorities set out in the job advertisement do not always tally with those in the formal job specification – which is inevitably more wide ranging and may express overall long-term management objectives for the service rather than just immediate short-term priorities.

6.3 When new recruitments are made the opportunity is sometimes taken to update the job description to enables specific priorities to be refocused. However, in practice it is inevitable that short-term, time-limited, high priority workload such as development management advice will usually takes priority over large-scale, long-term workload such as the heritage-at-risk issues, new conservation area character appraisals or compliance and enforcement.

6.4 In recent years it has become evident that local authority conservation specialist appointees are being required to prioritise a distinctly limited range of functions than a decade ago (and earlier). This no longer represents what the Institute would necessarily consider would constitute a well-balanced service essential for the proper exercise of statutory functions and/or the effective management of the local historic environment.

6.5 Development management advice or direct DM casework continued to be given the highest workload priority with 57% of job descriptions identifying this as the key priority – usually in association with appeals and enforcement.

6.6 In 2017 there appeared to be some recognition that a rebalancing of functions and priorities was required leading to more broad-based heritage services and the possibility of more proactive than reactive output but this seemed not to be so obvious in 2018 but two aspects are worth further comment.

6.7 More Heritage Action Zones were declared in 2018 than in 2017 but this initiative required additional fixed-term recruitment and it is unclear (to what extent these, along with Townscape Heritage schemes, would

benefit on-going local authority skills and infuse better heritage management practices once these schemes are concluded.

6.8 Only a low percentage of conservation areas have any form of appraisal and/or management plan [\[12\]](#) and an even fewer number have documents that meet current best practice standards [\[13\]](#) notwithstanding 2017 being the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Civic Amenities Act and the first designations.

6.9 In 2018 only 9.1% of appointments identified conservation area designation, review or appraisal as the principal priority, and only 34% of posts identified this work as any sort of priority notwithstanding, or perhaps because what is usually large-scale, long-term workload requires a consistent level of resource commitment. These figures remain virtually unchanged from 2017.

6.10 Notwithstanding Historic England's prioritisation of heritage-at-risk initiatives in 2017 (including the training and use of voluntary groups to undertake surveys) taking action to address the findings of these was not widely reflected in job descriptions in either 2017 or 2018. Only 17% of job specifications (marginally more than the previous two years) identified this as a notable workload element. This is unlikely to be addressed properly other than by affording it a high priority for an extended period.

6.11 As noted in past years, this outline evaluation of local authority specialists' workloads does not necessarily imply that these specific activities are not already being done or that a wide range of other tasks are never undertaken i.e. those generally regarded as necessary in conducting a balanced conservation service. [\[14\]](#)

6.12 Full job descriptions accompanying vacancies often include multifarious miscellaneous heritage management tasks required of the new post-holder. These can encompass offering technical and policy advice to owners and occupiers, providing heritage input into local plans, identifying buildings for local listing, preparing Article 4 Directions and so on, but they may not necessarily represent the actual priorities as seen by the authority's professional management team or elected councillors.

6.13 Several authorities quite specifically, but somewhat ambiguously required appointees to identify undesignated heritage assets for listing without making it clear this was a role for the Secretary of State on advice from Historic England. It would appear that some local authorities are unaware of the procedures under which Historic England will now respond to requests to list buildings when this is not in response to specific urgent threats,

6.14 There was a noticeable if small trend in 2018 to specifically identify the generation of income by appointees including the provision of pre-application advice - despite this aspect being dependent on the market

and not being within the candidate’s control (and was the 7th priority out of 14 in the case of one local planning authority).

6.15 It is worth noting in passing the inventiveness of some local authorities in rebranding heritage services in their advertisements for specialist staff such as one West Midlands authority branding its service CLAUDE [Conservation of the Historic Environment, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Ecology].

7. Regional variations

7.1 The IHBC’s data sets make it possible evaluate regional variations in salaries for local authority conservation specialists and these figures for 2018 are set out in Table 3.

7.2 During the year there was a steady turnover of posts in six of the seven English IHBC Branches [\[15\]](#) the exception being South (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of White, Oxfordshire) where only one vacancy was advertised in 2018.

7.3 *The number of advertised vacancies generally ranged from a low of five in The North (Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Northumbria, Tyne & Wear) to a high of sixteen in East Anglia (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk) with a similar pattern to that of 2016 and 17.

**NB: caution on some small sample sizes*

7.4 The median variations in salaries between Branches are shown in Table 3 but where there were small numbers of vacancies (e.g. the single vacancy in South) the sample sizes obviously need to be treated with caution.

Region	Sample	Median (£)	Variation (%)
East Anglia	16	31,848	+ 1.10%
East Midlands	14	29,990	- 4.79%
London	9	38,432	+ 22.00%
North	5	32,367	+ 2.75%
North West	7	32,862	+ 4.32%
South	1	28,209	- 10.45%
South East	12	33,422	+ 6.09%
South West	10	31,932	+ 1.37%
West Midlands	6	32,001	+ 1.58%
Yorkshire	8	31,325	- 0.55%
Total (& Average)	88	(31,501)	

7.5 As might be expected median salary scales in London have generally been consistently higher than in other regions, reflecting higher living and travelling costs. These have consistently influenced the national averages since data was first collected in 1998.

7.6 While pay in the South and the South East over the long-term has also been consistently somewhat higher than the national average (possibly influenced by the proximity to London and high numbers of designated heritage assets) the overall figures for 2018 have been distorted by the large number of vacancies in the East Midlands (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire), which for the second year in a row was below the English median, and the single vacancy in South. In West Midlands where the median in 2017 was sharply below the England average [-16.33%] there was a rebalancing in 2018 much closer to the median.

8. Concluding Note

8.1 The jobs market for local authority conservation specialists in 2018 has grown again slightly after contracting in 2017. This may mark a gradual rebuilding of capacity from the low point of 2011-12 onward.

8.2 It remains to be seen what influence the merger or joint management arrangements for district councils will have on the provision of specialist conservation services in 2019 and beyond and whether this results in merging of existing heritage service provision or the reduction in posts as had been seen in recent years as part of the economies sought by such reorganisations and rationalisations

8.2 The Institute intends to web-publish a further market intelligence report on the local authority conservation specialist jobs market 2019 in early 2020.

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Endnotes

1. Prior to April 1st 2015 this support came from English Heritage.
2. Between 1998 and c.2009, information concerning local authority vacancies were drawn principally from the weekly pages of *Planning* magazine. Thereafter the decline in planning related posts, the switch to a fortnightly publication of *Planning* coupled with the development of the IHBC's web-based jobs pages (jobs.ihbc.org.uk) saw the advertising of conservation posts move almost exclusively

- from the former to the latter. Although posts may occasionally be advertised elsewhere, the data in this Note drawn from these two sources is thought to be near definitive.
3. Occasionally only a fixed starting of finishing salary is stated. Ranges are usually given even where appointments are short-life or fixed term.
 4. In the past in salary progression was also on the basis of an annual increment within the overall scales but the steps within the quoted range is usually short.
 5. To compensate for the effect of unusually low or unusually high ends of salary ranges a comparative analysis is also made by subtracting the three highest and three lowest starting and finishing salaries during the year from the overall sample. This nevertheless generates very similar figures to the overall averages above i.e. generates a typical "smoothed" starting salary in 2018 of £30,005; a finishing salary £33,920; and a median of £31,962.
 6. Such as fixed term Buildings at Risk Officers
 7. Now the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)
 8. Some of the posts covered being part-time in the first place.
 9. This national performance indicator was trialled in 2004-5 and introduced in 2006 but abandoned by central government in 2010. Some authorities undertook a programme of appraisals in anticipation of a future national requirement for service uplift, while others simply used the indicator as a pretext to justify additional resources for conservation services. The problems with the indicator were various, not least it not actually being an indicator (as it did not encourage service improvement). Many authorities also had such a backlog of appraisals to complete do they could not justify the long-term resource commitment.
 10. Projects ranging from 18 to 54 months duration
 11. Generally of 48 to 54 months duration
 12. Estimated to be about 25%
 13. Estimated to be in the order of 10%
 14. See IHBC Guidance Note: Annual Conservation Management Statements – Best Practice [GN2014/2 Sept 2014](#)
 15. Corresponding in area to the relevant government/RTPI etc. regions.