

Icon

*Working to preserve the things
that people care about*

Strategic Plan 2012–16

November 2011



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

1 Introduction

- 1.1** The cultural sector in the UK is unified by a strong belief in the fundamental value of culture to society. The material heritage is the physical manifestation of knowledge, belief, creativity and vision. It constitutes evidence of real events and provides a sense of identity for both individuals and communities. Without it, society is without frames of reference and understanding, or sources of delight and inspiration.
- 1.2** Many forces contribute to making the material heritage accessible and understood. Conservation is one of these; it is not only essential to the continued survival of this heritage but directly helps to unlock its stories, reveal hidden meanings and encourage participation and emotional interaction. It is fundamental to defining cultural heritage for people and is crucial in interpreting and caring for the material world that they value.
- 1.3** Icon's mission is to raise public awareness of the cultural, social and economic value of caring for our heritage and to champion high standards of conservation in the UK.
- 1.4** Icon is the lead membership body for the conservation of cultural heritage. Icon is the only organisation that has the overview across all of the disciplines dealing with the conservation of moveable heritage. It also provides a focal point for all others who share a commitment to improving the conservation of our cultural heritage.
- 1.5** Icon is also the lead voice for the conservation of the moveable heritage. Icon builds on a very strong tradition and past record of working in partnership with other sectors, such as the built heritage sector, and traditional skills and crafts, by expressing key messages in a concerted way.

2 Drivers

- 2.1** This strategy has resulted from and is guided by several key drivers:
- 2.2** Icon's Charitable Objects: To advance the education of the public by research into and the promotion of the conservation of items and collections of items of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value; and To preserve and conserve items and collections of items of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value.
- 2.3** Recognition that Icon has a key role in terms of strategy, policy and advocacy in the heritage sector; crucially this includes taking the lead on the National Conservation Education Strategy.
- 2.4** Aside from its strategic and charitable role, Icon is also a membership body. The strategy must benefit members by fostering a climate in which conservation will thrive despite the current economic environment.
- 2.5** Icon needs to increase membership and income to ensure the funding exists to continue to fulfil its mission. We have to ensure the sustainability of the organisation so that we can continue to support the professional standards in the sector, without which cultural heritage is at risk.

3 Background

- 3.1** The Institute was created in 2005 by the merging of the following five organisations: the Care of Collections Forum, the Institute of Paper Conservation (IPC), the Photographic Materials Conservation Group, the Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration (SSCR) and the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (UKIC). The Conservation Science Group merged with Icon in 2007. All of the initiatives mentioned in this document – initiated, reviewed, tested and improved over the years – build on the strengths of Icon’s own heritage, going right back to the 1950s.
- 3.2** Icon’s membership is the heart of the organisation. There are approximately 2300 members of Icon, mainly individuals, with approximately 100 organisations, representing another 1000 individuals. Icon has 16 volunteer-run specialist groups that provide professional development for conservators and contribute to Icon’s governance and public outreach activities.
- 3.3** Icon operates with a Chief Executive and staff of seven full-time equivalents, who cover advocacy, governance, operations, finance, membership, training, accreditation, and information services.
- 3.4** In addition, volunteers – from group committee members to intern supervisors – estimated last year to be over 350 volunteers, provide essential support in delivering the many areas of activity, such as PACR and Work-based Training. This demonstrates the strength of commitment and loyalty of the conservation community to Icon as its lead body.
- 3.5** Icon has a Board of fourteen Trustees, including four co-opted Trustees, Executive Committees and a number of advisory groups that can be called upon as necessary.
- 3.6** Icon’s income comes from a number of different sources:
- 1 Unrestricted income from membership subscriptions, assessment fees, gift aid, advertising, Conservation Register subscriptions, and royalties. Approximately one third of Icon’s income comes from membership subscriptions. Membership funds the majority of Icon’s core costs.
 - 2 Restricted income from grants (foundations, trusts) and bequests for specified purposes.

4 Successes

- 4.1** Icon owns and operates, the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers, (PACR) This is the recognised national professional qualification for conservator-restorers. Since 2000, 834 conservators have been accredited.
- 4.2** Since 2006, Icon has managed, the UK-wide conservation training bursary scheme, funded with a £1.49M grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. By the end of the scheme in 2012, we will have delivered 72, six-, twelve- and twenty-four-month internships through HLF funding. In addition, funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation enabled Icon to roll out the internship monitoring and management framework (Skills in Practice) to other funders, thus transforming the landscape of work-based learning in conservation. To date the employment rate is just short of 100%. The HLF programme is coming to an end and Icon is seeking funding to sustain its work-based learning framework.
- 4.3** Also with funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Icon developed a Conservation Technician's Qualification, a level-3 qualification, delivered and assessed in the workplace by participating employers. 25 people in 17 organisations have achieved the qualification to date and 30 new partner employers have expressed interest in taking part in the future. The CTQ provides a widely accessible route into conservation and a first stage of professional practice. In the UK there is a high demand and recognised need for support for young people to enter the sector. Icon is seeking funding to roll out this programme.
- 4.4** Icon worked with Creative and Cultural Skills Sector Skills Council (CCS) to revise and build the Cultural Heritage National Occupational Standards, mapped against Icon's own PACR professional standards. All future qualifications in conservation training within the UK will be based on these standards, which have to be maintained and reviewed regularly by Icon.
- 4.5** Icon initiated and participated in a key series of meetings about the future of the conservation workforce in 2008-9 where Icon was charged with leading on conservation education and skills. Icon was also a key contributor to *It's a Material World: Caring for the public realm*, by Samuel Jones and John Holden, (Demos, 2008) which set out the main challenges facing the conservation sector.
- 4.6** Icon's recent national conference, *CF10: Conservation in Focus*, was a resounding success and achieved its three main aims: to advance and share knowledge about conservation issues in and beyond Icon's members; to leave Icon stronger as an organisation; to have an enjoyable conference where people have time to talk and network.
- 4.7** Icon's *Journal of the Institute of Conservation* is highly regarded and attracts 40% more submissions than can be published. It is now also available on line through the Routledge: Taylor & Francis website.
- 4.8** With a capacity building grant from English Heritage, Icon has transformed its Conservation Register, a public information service recognised by all of the main commissioning bodies in the UK, which it runs on behalf of a consortium of professional bodies.
- 4.9** Since 1995, the Conservation Awards have been the main conservation event of the year, raising public awareness of conservation and celebrating its successes. In 2010, Icon ran the third round of Conservation Awards that were supported by Sir Paul McCartney, in partnership with Digital Preservation Coalition and The Anna Plowden Trust, and with funding from The Pilgrim Trust.

5 Challenges

- 5.1** The broad challenges facing Icon over the next five years include:
- 5.2** Maintain a high level of public awareness and support for conservation and for the role and responsibilities of conservation professionals. Some of the recommendations of *It's a Material World: Caring for the public realm* (Demos 2008) crystallized the challenges that Icon is facing.
- 5.3** Ensure that conservation stays at the heart of cultural heritage policy and continues to demonstrate value to policy makers and cultural heritage institutions (Demos 2008).
- 5.4** Increase and broaden membership. Icon has a committed membership and in order to be a vibrant body, we need to broaden and diversify our membership.
- 5.5** Continue to play a lead role in developing and disseminating standards. Supporting members to develop the skills they need and to transfer their skills to others, when the economic climate is leading to losses in staff through redundancy and early retirement.
- 5.6** Operating the business of Icon in a sustainable way, specifically increasing income, building up reserves, and ensuring our governance structures are appropriate to meet Icon's needs now and in the future.

6 Icons Aims and Objectives 2012 to 2016

- 6.1** The aims that will guide the activity of Icon for the next five years are outlined below:
- 1** To champion and support **professional standards** of heritage conservation in the UK
 - 2** To seek out key **partners** to achieve our mission
 - 3** To build the long-term financial and operational **sustainability** of Icon

Professional standards

- 6.2** Professional standards are fundamental to ensuring that there will be an appropriately skilled and diverse workforce to conserve and make accessible the UK's rich cultural heritage so that it continues to provide the full range of benefits to society.

Aim 1. To champion and support professional standards of heritage conservation in the UK

- 1a** To finalise and lead a collaborative National Conservation Education Strategy that will map a more coherent framework of career paths, widen access to, and raise awareness of conservation education and skills.
- 1b** To strengthen and ensure support from conservators, employers and the public for professional accreditation as the recognised industry quality mark.
- 1c** To strengthen a continuing professional development programme for members and deliver a national conference in 2013.
- 1d** To promote the newly revised Conservation Register as the nationally recognised source of conservation expertise in the UK.
- 1e** To continue to build the academic standing of the *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*.
- 1f** To recognise and promote excellence in heritage conservation in the UK.

Partnerships

6.3 Through leadership and working in partnership, Icon will be in a position to make the most of our limited resources, advocate more effectively by expressing key messages in a unified voice, and encourage collective responsibility for the conservation of our cultural heritage. We add value to others' initiatives by contributing as a partner.

Aim 2. To seek out key partners to achieve our mission.

- 2a** To strengthen and develop current key partnership initiatives in the wider heritage sector: amongst which are the National Heritage Science Forum; Heritage Alliance; Creative & Cultural Skills.
- 2b** To identify and develop new partnerships that are key to strong initiatives in the wider heritage sector.
- 2c** In partnership, to influence and respond to government policy relating to heritage conservation.
- 2d** In partnership with others, to influence and respond to EU policy relating to heritage conservation.

Sustainable organisation

6.4 In order to achieve our objectives we need to build a financially sustainable organisation.

Aim 3. To build the long-term financial and operational sustainability of Icon.

- 3a** Put in place a staff management structure that encourages efficient operation of the business and income generation
- 3b** To co-ordinate and direct fundraising towards achieving this objective, increasing income and building up reserves.
- 3c** To develop a strong membership strategy and improve membership services in order to maintain, increase and broaden membership of Icon.
- 3d** To broaden and strengthen our means of communication with the public, members and stakeholders to attract members and funding.
- 3e** To ensure that the quality of governance continues to serve the needs of the organisation as it grows.
- 3f** To ensure that Icon continues to reduce its carbon footprint even as the organisation develops.

Conclusion

Icon has achieved a great deal since convergence in 2005. Building on the work of our predecessor bodies that have existed in one form or another since 1950. We have made a mark in a very short time. The sector has demonstrated its confidence in Icon, and with its future support we will be able to continue in this leadership role. We have huge potential as an increasingly strong organisation to ensure the conservation of the cultural heritage, potential which will be realised by the energetic implementation of this strategy. Now, when resources are under pressure, it is more important than ever that we work in a concerted way with others to promote our professional standards in conservation, education and training. By increasing Icon's capacity to contribute to this effort, we will go a long way to ensuring the future appreciation and conservation of our cultural heritage.

Icon Board of Trustees October 2011

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