



IHBC Petition for Royal Charter: Briefing to Council, 30 March 2023

Background

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) is a charity registered across the UK (including listing in Northern Ireland), and the professional body representing historic and built environment conservation practitioners in the public and private sectors.

In recent years the Institute has been advancing a wide-ranging modernisation that includes a reform of our governance. This has been advanced in line with [principles agreed at the IHBC's 2019 AGM](#) that specifically referenced both charity and charter models and standards of governance. They were also shaped by lessons from our previous [IHBC+ programme of modernisation, launched in 2014](#).

In December 2020 the [IHBC AGM adopted new Articles of Association](#), available [HERE](#). These Articles were designed first to comply with current standards for UK charity regulators, a primary consideration throughout the genesis of our new governance given our charitable status. However they were drafted also to accommodate any decision on a progress towards a charter. This included the decision to, for now, set aside the formalisation of constitutional Bylaws and supporting regulations, as these would depend on the IHBC's consultation on any position on a petition for charter.

That same AGM, in 2020, also adopted the [Corporate Plan 2020-25](#) (CP25) which committed the IHBC to:

Explore and test chartered status internally and externally, including through a cost-benefit analysis, and in accordance with any new constitution ([CP25](#), Object B, Key Action c.ii).

Together these developments frame the current investigation of a 'Petition for Royal Charter' for the IHBC, the process through which bodies apply for charter.

Current position

The principles of chartering the IHBC has been touched on in recent years at a number of IHBC events, not least our Councils. The current stage in the IHBC's wider modernisation of its governance is focussed on the formal exploration and investigation of the full range of issues involved in chartering.

In line with all the above, the IHBC is:

- Reviewing impacts, benefits, enhancements, risks, costs and other consequences of petitioning for a Charter as a professional body and charity
- Examining the processes that it will and might entail, including engaging with the Privy Council Office ([PCO](#)) – the administrative lead in advising on and managing the chartering process – as well as undertaking an independent research process operated by consultant [David Williams](#)
- Exploring the resources that might be required and generated under the process, including with regard to our charitable ambitions and status.



As yet we are at an early stage in this process. The IHBC's Council on 30 March 2023 marks the start of the most substantial member-wide consultation on the issue to date and, suitably, takes place at the close of our 25th anniversary celebrations: [#IHBC25](#).

Anecdotally there seems to be a good degree of member support for the proposal to advance towards regulation by charter. Yet there are substantial questions yet to be answered about the impact the process and outcomes might entail, including changes that might be required, before IHBC members can undertake an informed assessment of the case. These cover such core issues for the viability of the IHBC and its charitable objectives as:

- Up-front and on-going costs and any potential uplift in member fees, including future options for chartered and/or non-chartered members
- Member demand for the options and costs of chartering through the IHBC, should that become an option, noting the high proportion of members already chartered or with options to charter through other bodies and routes
- The likely adjustments to our operations and infrastructure required to make a successful petition, and any attendant cost assessments and impacts.
- Any implications for our charitable status or otherwise, including constraints.

References

On IHBC charity and the petition for charter: See the relevant parts of the [IHBC Corporate Plan 2020-25](#) (CP25), notably (but not only) Object B, Key Action c.ii, page 7.

On applying for a Royal Charter: See the guidance on the [Privy Council Office website](#), noting in particular the four 'main criteria' and the 'Preliminary Steps', these last outlining the 'Letter of Intent' to petition as the first formal steps in the process.

On charities seeking a charter: See government guidance on processes [HERE](#).

IHBC National Office, SOR v.Final
© IHBC 2023