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Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP  
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport  
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Dear Mr Burnham

### **The Heritage Protection Bill**

I have read with interest the draft Heritage Protection Bill and the comments by the committee now posted on line. Like them I am pleased the government is looking so carefully at heritage protection, and it is high on their agenda. However, after reading the committee responses, that echo my own reservations, I hope you will put this bill to one side for a time. My worries about it are that it is not yet properly prepared and it will have unforeseen and adverse consequences.

My main concern is that heritage protection will be handed over almost exclusively to Local Authorities. At the moment Scheduled Ancient Monuments are administered by English Heritage on behalf of the government. The legislation has protected these most important monuments well, for over one hundred years. Once their curation is given to Local Authorities, vested interests and local politics are bound to have an effect, and whittle away these monuments. I would like to distance the local authorities further from heritage protection, not bring them in closer. L.A.s are always strapped for cash, they are always balancing development against conservation, and will listen to the loudest voice or the most politically expedient voice, rather than protect these precious monuments that have lasted literally thousands of years.

With every year that passes ancient monuments are more vulnerable due to growing pressure on our landscape, combined with advanced machinery and locating devices. Because of the pressure on the landscape monuments will be more important than ever to future generations. Local Authorities strapped for cash, keen to develop their patch, wanting to respond to the business community, will not see it this way. Some might, even most might, but not all of them and not all of the time. One way the monuments will become more vulnerable is with re-designation. No longer a Scheduled Ancient Monument or Listed Building, that Local Authorities know and generally respect but a different classification such as 'national importance', of 'special archaeological importance' etc etc. Moreover, it will be a classification that could possibly change with negotiation. This won't demand the same respect from planning authorities. They will perceive that it is not quite so important, and possibly could, in certain circumstances, be changed in a bargaining process.

Having the protection one step away, under the auspices of government, has protected monuments well up to now (with a few exceptions). Why change it.

There are other problems with this bill. I don't think anyone knows how it will work in practice. While it might seem logical to merge listed buildings with conservation areas, with scheduled ancient monuments, actually these distinctions are there for good reasons. They have developed over the years and with them has grown a body of people versed in their protection and the legislation. In my experience the distinction and legislation work well. My one reservation is that English Heritage have almost stopped scheduling new monuments, I am not sure why.

My experience is as eight years Sites and Monuments Record Officer dealing with scheduled and non scheduled monuments in Herefordshire. I left this job in 2006 and no longer work for Herefordshire Council but continue to work in the heritage sector.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Roseff