

The Society's March lecture, which was held jointly with the Archaeological and Historical Society, was given by Dr Sarah Staniforth, Historic Properties Director, National Trust, on "Current Challenges for Conservation in Historic Properties".

The National Trust has 55,000 volunteers and 3.7 million members and looks after 50,000 built structures, including 213 mansions.

The Trust aims to look after its properties for ever for everyone. Conservation means the careful management of change, so that the structures can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

Dr Staniford discussed the main principles of conservation, the significance of places - why they are valued, the integrated approach - the protection of the surroundings to great houses, change - the need to work with change and access - the need for sustainable access.

The speaker considered climate change in terms of impact, adaptation and mitigation. Effects included warmer temperatures, drought, coastal erosion, storms and flash floods. Examples included the 1987 hurricane which destroyed many trees e.g. at Chartwell, and a major fire at Uppark House requiring salvage work. More recently Boscastle was severely damaged by flash flooding and in 2007 Calke Abbey suffered damage arising from a flash flood which overwhelmed the clean guttering leading to water in the second and first floors. During the 2009 flood of Cockermouth, the basement of Wordsworth House was filled with silt and a stock room ruined.

Dr Staniford concluded that these happenings were becoming more frequent and outlined steps being taken to adapt NT properties to better withstand extreme weather. Examples were regular inspection of gutters, and improved drainage around buildings.

The Trust's carbon footprint was being reduced by replacing coal and oil fired boilers by ones using biomass and by the use of photovoltaics e.g. on the roof of the Swindon office. The Trust aims to reduce its carbon footprint by 20% over the period 2008-2020.