

PUBLICITY PROFORMA

Dr Ben Cowell: Director General of Historic Houses

Historic Houses today: Keeping them meaningful for future generations

Historical Association Talk: Saturday 4th December

During the 20th century, hundreds of country houses were demolished for a variety of reasons, connected with agricultural depression, wartime use, and new levels of capital taxation. But since the mid-1970s there has been something of a country house revival. Many houses in private ownership are now better protected than ever before and generate funds for essential repairs and maintenance through their own enterprise. However, although the risk of further physical destruction may now have receded, other threats continue to emerge to challenge the position of the country house as a cultural force. The talk will be illustrated with examples from different Historic Houses properties, including in Essex.

Ben Cowell is the Director General of Historic Houses, which represents 1,500 independently owned country houses across the UK and has 57,000 general members. Ben has previously worked for both the National Trust and English Heritage. Ben has published numerous books, articles and scholarly studies on aspects of history and heritage. His areas of specialist knowledge are: eighteenth- and nineteenth- century landscape history (the topic of his PhD); the history of common land and its enclosure; and the history of the heritage sector in the UK including the history of the National Trust. Publications include: *'Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles': Social activism and the remaking of British Society* (Essays on Octavia Hill, ed. with Elizabeth Baigent, IHR, 2016); *Landscapes of the National Trust* (with Stephen Daniels and Lucy Veale, National Trust, 2015); and *The Heritage Obsession: The Battle for England's Past* (The History Press, 2008).

