

# Conclusion



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**After half a century or more of decline, during which many crafts disappeared without trace or were reduced to a fraction of their former size and importance, the rural crafts have, since the 1970s, undergone a revival. In 1972, CoSIRA noted a 'considerable upsurge' in the craft industries. Hitherto, the theme of decline had been endemic; thereafter, a more positive view began to be taken as to their prospects.**



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The rural crafts today still use essentially the same techniques and raw materials as in the past, but in most other respects – outputs, end-uses, customers, practitioners – they are very different. Where formerly the crafts existed to supply the basic needs of agriculture, rural industries and the local cottage economy, their principal function today is to service the heritage sector and the lifestyle needs of green consumers, craft enthusiasts and the new genus of country dwellers. They produce added-value products instead of, as before, low-value commodities. Demand is fuelled by rural in-migration and by the greater social aspirations of the growing numbers of ABC1s in the UK population. The typical crafts person is no longer from a village or craft background, but a towns-person for whom craftwork combined with country living is a lifestyle choice.

The crafts make an increasingly important contribution to the rural economy and national life. They are living survivals of an industrial tradition dating back to medieval or, in some cases, prehistoric times. They play a valuable role in the conservation of the historic environment. They are an expanding source of income and employment in rural areas at a stage of economic development when agriculture and manufacturing are in decline. They are a safety valve and creative outlet for people looking for an alternative career in a non-urban environment. Some crafts provide 'an important creative space', especially for women, in which craftwork and family commitments can be combined. The crafts allow greater choice and flexibility than most other occupations.

The professional craftworkers in this study currently number about 30,000, which, when added to hobbyists and part-time, casual and seasonal workers, makes a total of 60–80,000 people. According to one estimate the UK community of functional, creative and artistic craftworkers might number between 250,000 and 500,000. The UK heritage building sector alone is estimated to be worth about £2 billion per annum and to employ 20–40,000 full-time equivalent workers, of whom between a third and a half might be classed as rural. If the relative growth rates of the two sectors continue to diverge, inside 15 years or sooner, the contribution of the crafts to the rural economy could exceed that of agriculture.

Craft incomes have tended in the past to lag behind average industrial incomes, but the last decade has seen an improvement in their relative position, with some groups of workers, notably in the building and metal-working trades, exceeding them. Income is not necessarily the primary motivating factor in an industry where job satisfaction transcends material reward. In some manufacturing crafts particularly, earnings from craftwork are meagre, and have to be supplemented by other jobs, pensions or working partners. Craftwork tends often to be a secondary employment or leisure activity. Millwrights, wheelwrights and building workers divide their time between modern and traditional work. The coppice crafts are combined with farm work, forestry or gardening. Being largely self-employed, craftworkers can continue working long past the official retirement age.

Some crafts hang on precariously: those with fewer than 100 workers of a high average age can be classed as 'endangered'. But overall, the numbers of craftworkers and average incomes are currently much higher than at any stage since the mid-1970s. In seven of the eight crafts surveyed, 90 per cent of respondents reported their businesses as steady or expanding; over 80 per cent said their work loads are 'about right' or 'too heavy'; and a significant proportion, typically 40 – 50 per cent, say they have to turn work away.

# The Future: Threats to Sustainability

The last quarter century has seen the emergence of a large and growing market for craft-goods and services. Looking to the future, the key question is how far this can be sustained. Will the late-twentieth-century revival prove to have been a mere 'blip', a temporary interruption of a century-old downward trend? Or does it signify a more permanent structural shift in the pattern of economic activity and consumer expenditure?

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## Market failure

Over the longer term the greatest threat is the collapse of the market due to changes in tastes and trends. A slow-down in consumer spending or a slump in the housing market could seriously reduce trading volumes, as happened in the recession of the early-mid-1990s. In the longer run, if the crafts are to survive in an increasingly competitive, consumer-led economy, they will need to develop new products and new markets.

## Foreign competition

This is a greater threat to the manufacturing than to the servicing trades. Even so, growing numbers of building workers from Eastern and Central Europe, highly skilled in

the use of stone and wood, now work in the UK, and more are likely to do so following the enlargement of the European Union. There is talk, but no concrete examples, of a first influx of Polish farriers and thatchers. Basket-makers have long been subject to European and Asian competition, and, like saddlers, are having to counter lower prices with higher-quality goods and novel, more appealing designs. Wattle hurdles, willow wares and thatching wood are imported from Poland and Belarus, but as yet not on a large enough scale, nor of a high or consistent enough quality, to pose a serious threat to domestic producers or to force down prices. The British market for these products is under-supplied. A firm of brewers is reported recently to have taken on several Polish coopers because of a shortage of local craftsmen. Ninety-five per cent of barbecue charcoal is imported. English makers specialise in premium charcoal made from sustainably managed local wood. Walking sticks are imported from Germany, and ready-made spoked wooden wheels come from Canada and the United States. Tool handles are now almost all imported, as is the raw material used by turnery factories which, in the mid-nineteenth century, was supplied from English coppices. In Southern Europe, coppiced chestnut is extensively used in construction; in England this is still at an experimental stage.

Imports are two-edged. On the one hand, they threaten local livelihoods; on the other, they fill gaps in the market and help mitigate skills shortages. If, in the longer run, wages in the exporting countries rise to Western European levels, the balance of advantage could shift once again in favour of British producers, assuming that any remain.



## Raw materials

The supply of raw materials is of particular concern in the greenwood crafts, where, in many parts of the country, shortages of coppice wood of craft quality, especially hazel, reduce productivity and discourage expansion. 'Multi-purpose forestry' – in which wood production is combined with (but in practice is usually subordinated to) other objectives, such as nature conservation or shooting – does not produce stem wood of the desired standard. To this end, we recommend planting new coppices in preference to restoring old neglected ones. It remains to be seen how far the Forestry Commission's England Woodland Grant Scheme, scheduled to begin in 2005, addresses this problem.

Basket-making suffers occasional shortages of home-grown willow. Problems with thatching materials persist: spars are in short supply and are having to be imported, as is long straw, the basis for a number of regional thatching styles. Looking farther ahead, there is the threat that imports of water reed could dry up if climate change and agricultural expansion destroy the wetlands of Eastern Europe and Turkey, the main overseas suppliers.

Imported woods are widely used by wheelwrights, and French and North American oak in timber-framing. The building crafts are in some cases afflicted by shortages of local materials, such as stone and certain qualities of brick, although a number of brick companies now produce heritage ranges for use in conservation. In farriery, experiments with plastic shoes are currently being conducted by the Royal Veterinary College, while a Wiltshire farrier has recently developed a mouldable plastic shoe. Supplies of cast-iron goods for construction are improving. Whether the quality of malleable iron that is currently available is equal to that of the Swedish and Spanish charcoal irons, so popular with English smiths in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is questionable.

## Recruitment crisis

A crisis in recruitment is an ever-looming threat; already, it accelerated the collapse of large parts of the industry in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This could recur if craftsmanship were to lose its philosophic appeal, or if the gap between craft and non-craft incomes becomes unbridgeable, or if rural living costs

rise prohibitively. An underlying difficulty, and a powerful deterrent to entry, especially among school-leavers, is the belief that, as a career, the crafts are low-status and poorly paid. Many crafts, especially in the building and greenwood industries, currently possess fewer than a hundred practitioners. Larger crafts, such as farriery and saddlery, could quickly fall into the endangered category if entry levels decline significantly.



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## Rural housing

Currently, the most serious threat is the high cost of rural housing. The Countryside Agency's *State of the Countryside 2004* shows access to affordable housing to be a major social problem, not only in the 'hot-spots' of the south-east, but also in remoter rural areas, including large parts of the south-west and East Anglia, hitherto relatively immune. In the greenwood crafts, there are signs of a slow-down in recruitment, and in some areas even shrinkage, due in part to the gathering crisis in rural housing. Local authorities are being asked to relax planning regulations so as to allow greenwood workers to live in the woods, in caravans or other temporary accommodation.

## Recruitment and Training

The sustainability of rural crafts is closely bound up with access to training and, in the early stages of a career, business advice. On both counts, the provision is, in the main, deficient, and in many crafts seriously so. The rural crafts are seriously disadvantaged compared to the mainstream crafts in the urban areas. The typical enterprise is a small micro-business with a self-employed worker, few of whom can afford to take on trainees or to mentor, or cope with the bureaucracy of the Modern Apprenticeship. Older workers complain about the poor quality of young trainees, especially school-leavers, and high wastage rates. There is thus a serious shortage of suitable and relevant workplace training and qualified trainers.

The rural crafts are geographically widely dispersed, and the numbers who wanting training are mostly very few. Low numbers distributed over a wide range of skills means that for many crafts nationally accredited qualifications, Learning and Skills Council funding support and further education-based training courses may not exist. Intakes of trainees funded under the Countryside Agency's New Entrants' Training Scheme (NETS) in 2002–3 were normally fewer than 25 for crafts such as blacksmithing or thatching, and in the case of wheelwrighting just 6 (see Table 1). In the more remote rural areas, and even the southern counties, students may have to travel up to 25–30 miles to the nearest FE or land-based college offering appropriate instruction. For some crafts, such as thatching, saddlery and wheelwrighting, there may only be a few specialist training providers in the UK, making the cost of access prohibitive for many rural micro-businesses.



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**Table 1: Countryside Agency NETS take-up and age range, 1999 – 2003**

Craft	Annual demand	Annual take-up	Age range	Average age
Forgework	25 – 30	25	18 – 57	37
Furniture-making	15 – 25	18	16 – 43	29
Saddlery	up to 12	12	18 – 55	32
Thatching	25 – 30	20	16 – 43	29
Traditional upholstery	15 – 25	18	17 – 52	34
Wheelwrighting	5 – 6	6	20 – 54	38
Wood-machining	20 – 30	25	17 – 22	20

NB: Annual demand is achieved with no direct marketing. Demand has normally exceeded the places available. Age range and average age have increased over the last ten years. In the 1980s, with full commitment to NETS, numbers reached 550 a year.

# Conclusion

The social and occupational profile of the typical new entrant is itself problematic. The crucial distinction is between the 'old' and 'new' traditions: the former, mostly in their 60s and 70s, constitute a small and rapidly diminishing proportion of the workforce; the latter, entering the industry since 1980, now make up the overwhelming majority (see Table 2).

**Table 2: 'Old' and 'new' traditions** <sup>(1)</sup>

	Old tradition	New tradition
Present age	50/60–70/75 yrs	25/30–40/45 yrs
Age of entry	16–20 yrs	25–40+ yrs
Educational standards	Basic	Advanced (GCSE - degree)
Background	Rural, craft	Urban, non-craft
Previous occupations	Normally on or soon after leaving school	Farm-work, environment conservation, teaching, professional, managerial
Training	3–4 year trainee/ apprenticeship, practical	Self-taught, short courses

Older entrants, aged over 25, may not be a priority for training support under the government's Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. The present system of skills training is geared towards school leavers; this is reflected in the funding allocated for Modern Apprenticeships, which leaves insufficient funding for more mature entrants, even assuming that a Modern Apprenticeship exists for their chosen craft skill. In any case, few school leavers actively seek a career in the rural crafts. In addition, the new Sector Skill Councils, with responsibility for their sectoral workforce development, recruitment and skills, are designed to be 'employer led'. As such, they are largely irrelevant to the needs of an industry dominated by small businesses, self-employed craftsmen, and with a high percentage of older recruits.

The hereditary tradition, by which skills are handed down through the generations, 'from father to son', is very largely dead. Training, when available, is expensive: either the costs are borne by the trainees themselves or, in the case of the former Countryside Agency NETS scheme, where much of the formal training is in residential centres, they are subsidised. In almost every craft, there is a shortage of apprenticeships, of affordable workplace training and of mentors.

(1) This applies most specifically to the greenwood crafts, basketry and pole-lathe turnery, and to most of the other crafts to varying extents.



# Personal and Occupational Craftworker Profiles

These vary from craft to craft. The following characteristics are most often found in the manufacturing crafts, but to a greater or lesser extent are common across the industry.

**Table 3: Personal and occupational profiles: summary (per cent)**

	Chair-seaters	Basket-makers	Greenwood workers	Pole-lathe turners	Farriers	Saddlers	Wheelwrights	Smiths
Average age (years)	60	48	52	47	40	47	59	47
Moved from other part of the UK	70	72	56	64	41	70	43	43
Residing in:								
city	21	20	0	0	0	0	0	9
town	19	22	23	20	13	26	8	25
village	49	35	29	40	53	30	52	38
countryside	11	23	48	40	33	44	40	28
With former occupation	[60]	[55]	65	[70]	24	57	67	80
With another occupation	28	38	49	48	3	26	54	15
Age of starting (years)	44	35	29	38	21	27	32	31
Apprenticeship and extended training	4	23	40	4	83	70	42	39
Qualification in craft	13	40	0	0	100	90	36	41
Degree/HND	30	51	40	44	0	8	29	40
Business								
growing	49	58	65	56	43	52	50	49
steady	49	34	17	40	57	39	36	41
declining	2	3	7	0	0	9	14	10
Trading profits								
growing	53	63	62	64	54	52	43	62
steady	43	20	31	32	33	24	33	21
declining	4	8	7	0	13	24	24	17
Workload:								
too light	11	17	12	4	10	9	15	17
about right	70	62	58	88	62	57	55	58
too heavy	19	20	30	8	28	35	30	25
turning work away	17	42	73	48	0	43	55	49
Would like business training	28	60	43	60	37	41	50	79

Source: Craftworkers' questionnaires

# Conclusion

The rural crafts are not normally a first choice of career. New entrants are typically aged between 25 and 45; school leavers are in the main very few. They would have been employed previously in unrelated, usually non-manual, occupations or, in the case of the building crafts, they would usually have been employed in general construction before transferring to heritage work. The majority of recruits come from non-rural backgrounds, are well educated, but possess few, if any, technical qualifications or craft experience.

In the 'old tradition', new entrants underwent some form of extended traineeship, of 3–5 years, under a master craftsman. Today, apart from the few 'village' crafts that have been assisted under the Countryside Agency's craft training programme, and farriery where a formal training is mandatory, the majority are largely self-taught, and have limited or no access to supervised workplace training.

Training should embrace more than just technical skills. The modern worker is also a businessmen, who must make decisions along the supply chain from sourcing materials and product development, to promotion and marketing, sales and distribution, account-keeping, compliance with health and safety regulations, and the use of IT systems. A training in business methods and, in the creative crafts, in innovative design, is increasingly part of the requirement for the successful craftsman entrepreneur of the future.

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# The Current Training Provision: Summary

**The range and quality of the training provision vary enormously, from very good to very poor. Some crafts have apprenticeship schemes of a very high standard, including residential training, all funded. Others have little or no certificated training, or access to funding for trainees or trainers.**



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The New Entrants' Training Scheme, piloted by CoSIRA in 1973 and subsequently developed and funded by the Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Agency, provided the practical and productive skills needed by small rural businesses as they took on new employees.

In 1999 the Rural Development Commission's functions were divided between the regional development agencies and the Countryside Agency. The government agreed with the Agency Board at that time that the direct provision of practical national training should not be a function of the new Agency. The Agency therefore followed an exit strategy to develop the NETS in a way that would make it eligible for mainstream funding from the LSC. This strategy was aimed at

ensuring that the future of the crafts supported by the Countryside Agency would be secured by having access to national funding and being included in mainstream training programmes.

The present position is that the Saddlery NETS continues to be delivered by the Saddlery Training Centre with Modern Apprenticeship funding from the Wiltshire LSC. Herefordshire College of Technology delivers the remaining NETS in thatching, wheelwrighting, blacksmithing, traditional upholstery, furniture-making and wood-machining, with funding from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire LSC but under their category of 'other provision' funding.

## Greenwood crafts

Apart from NVQs in timber harvesting and extraction delivered by land-based colleges in association with Lantra, and a small handful of providers offering NVQs in Green Woodwork, the greenwood crafts have very limited access to formal or extended training, and are almost entirely outside the national skills training and qualifications frameworks. The training on offer, mainly short courses, is designed for hobbyists rather than professionals. Current initiatives include a proposal to create an industry-led apprenticeship scheme validated by the Open College Network.

## Basketmaking

This too lies outside the national training and qualifications frameworks. A part-time programme of teaching at all levels is available through the Basketmakers' Association, and for artist-craftsmen basket-makers there are City & Guilds courses from beginners to degree level available at colleges of art and design. For the working basket-maker there is no regular provision of apprenticeships and training, and no national recognition of professional standards. The future for the trade appears to lie in the setting up of industry-led courses, apprenticeships and qualifications.

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## Millwrighting

There is no formal professional training available for millwrights. Apprenticeships are restricted to the very few larger firms, but are, in the main, not much favoured by employers. Many millwrights have come into the trade from a broad engineering or crafts background. Amateur millwrights and mill enthusiasts, mostly self-taught, play an important role in the repair and running of mills, and in mill restoration. No initiatives are planned, but there is growing realisation of the need for organised training while there still exist experienced specialist millwrights who can pass on their knowledge.

## Historic Gardening

Universities, land-based colleges and colleges of further education offer a wider range of courses and qualifications in general horticulture from NVQ to degree level, including Modern Apprenticeships. Specialised training in the restoration and maintenance of historic gardens is limited. Though growing, what there is of variable quality and does not meet the pressing demand for a more practical, garden-based training. In association with the National Trust and English Heritage and the Professional Gardeners' Guild, the Royal Parks offer a limited number of traineeships involving practical experience in historic gardens. Many gardens, but still a

minority, offer supervised work experience, but very few offer an apprentice-type training. The general complaint is shortage of placements. The older generation of gardeners, who are rich in experience and had undergone a traditional training, are dwindling in numbers, and fewer and fewer are prepared to act as trainers or mentors.

There is no general agreement as to the way forward. The Sector Skills Council and the National Trust see the future thinks in terms of NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships in heritage gardening. The Royal Horticultural Society, together with most head gardeners, favour a more loosely regulated industry-based programme, with the emphasis on practical experience rather than college-based learning. The Garden and Landscape Heritage Trust sees an important role for a specialist organisation that advises gardeners and owners on technical and training matters at the point of need.

## Heritage building trades.

In the heritage building trades, as with gardening, the underlying skills and knowledge needed are not developed specifically for application to the heritage sector. In all but a few highly specialised areas – an amalgam of generic skills is taught as part of a Modern Apprenticeship or NVQ programme, and specific skills acquired later through short courses and work experience. NVQs in their present form do not provide students with the necessary skills to work on historic buildings without some form of work-based training. Specialised apprenticeships are limited to just a few trades, such as thatching and stone-masonry.

The CITB, NHTG and the Heritage Lottery Fund have all identified access to high-quality workplace training and shortages of trainers as major issues. The training available tends to be fragmented, uncoordinated and with as yet no one body charged with overseeing it. Although most occupational areas now have frameworks of standards-based qualifications, the take-up rate is very low, due in part to a lack of funding, which impinges particularly on small businesses in rural areas, where the lack of effective demand for courses (especially in the more localised skills) and distance from training centres are major constraints. These and related issues are currently being addressed by the National Heritage Training Group.

# Recommendations for the Future of Craft Training and Support

**The rural crafts are at a crossroads as regards training. Many lie outside the national training framework but important changes are in train, and it is vital that they are engaged actively in the present restructuring process.**

A new sector-based approach underpins government thinking about the way that workforce development should be addressed, namely the Sector Skills Councils, eighteen of which are fully licensed, while another five are in various stages of development. The Countryside Agency no longer funds craft training. National training policy is now the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council. This is currently funding the NETS, but the scheme's longer-term future is unclear. While mainstream programmes such as the National Apprenticeship have a secure future, a plethora of local training solutions exist outside the national framework. This is cause for concern for the rural crafts because in many cases there are no 'outputs' that qualify for LSC funding, nor provision for workplace training.

The Countryside Agency's NETS should be nationally funded as a 'rural' Modern Apprenticeship aimed specifically at meeting the training needs of the rural crafts micro-business sector with the aim of providing a 'foundation' apprenticeship for all new entrants. This would act as a stepping-stone to the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship, if required. It would ensure that new employees, regardless of age, would have access to suitable and appropriate training that will help develop the wide range of skills and techniques needed by the crafts sector to run a productive business.

The training and developmental needs of the crafts sector should be met by the remit of the Sector Skills Councils – that is:

- strategic workforce development
- strategic labour market intelligence
- occupational standards and career pathways
- investment in skills
- recruitment and retention for the sectors covered

There is, however, a concern that the employer-led approach of the Sector Skills Councils may not be entirely appropriate for the micro-business dominated crafts sector, even allowing for the scope that exists for 'trade organisations' to represent employers. It is

therefore recommended that SSCs that have included rural crafts in their 'footprint' adopt a more proactive approach by working more directly with trade associations and individual craft firms to ensure that their business and training needs are both understood and acted on.

Another concern is that the crafts sector covers more than seventy different and discrete skill areas, each with varying degrees of creative, functional and service roles. The allocation of sectors by Standard Industrial Classification means that micro-businesses have been distributed across a number of SSCs – this could continue as new Councils come into being and define their 'footprint'. The concern is that they may not receive the priority that larger industries with full and active employer representation will receive.

For example, the recent publicity about the shortage of qualified plumbers and electricians is now being addressed by employers and training providers. This contrasts with the shortages in some of the rural crafts and the lack of suitable training that regrettably still exists, despite the importance of the contribution made by the rural crafts to the economy and heritage of the country.

A key recommendation would be the establishment of a Vernacular Crafts Council to complement the fine arts and contemporary crafts remit of the Crafts Council, and to serve as an umbrella organisation for all crafts operating in the heritage sector. Like the Crafts Council, it would promote and nurture public interest in traditional crafts, support their products and services by extensive exhibition and educational programmes and work to secure business support and training. The Council could initiate and fund research in, for example, raw materials, and set up advisory networks, especially for the smaller crafts.

Responsibility for the crafts could be vested in just one Sector Skills Council, or in sub-groups of Councils whose remit includes traditional crafts. A good example is the National Heritage Training Group, a joint venture

between the Construction Industry Training Board and English Heritage, which was set up in order to ensure that employers and the training needs of those working in the heritage construction sector were represented and linked with training providers. Whether the remit of the National Heritage Training Group could be extended to include more or all traditional rural crafts is another action that could be considered. Alternatively, the aspirant Creative and Cultural Industries Sector Skills Council is well placed to take the lead, as many traditional rural crafts have a heritage/cultural connection and would fit within its remit.

On the grounds that the craft industries consist mostly of small firms and the self-employed, a strong case could be made for a dedicated Sector Skills Council to meet the needs of the craft-based micro-business sector, with a rural dimension. Crafts with the same industrial structure may often have more in common than crafts in the same industries as defined by the Standard Industrial Classification.

The recent announcement by the Heritage Lottery Fund of £4 million to assist with training in the 'ancient' crafts is most welcome, but at the same time it raises questions as to how the funding will be allocated, what the eligibility criteria will be, who is to provide the training and how standards are to be assessed. The HLF-proposed network of 'Expert Advisers' who will assess applications and monitor the quality of training provision, should go some way towards addressing these concerns. They may also play a vital role in linking school-leavers, more mature entrants, trade organisations and craft businesses to a range of training opportunities appropriate to the rural crafts.

The much acclaimed (but over-regulated) German Dual System contains a number of elements that are relevant to training needs in the UK rural micro-business sector. Of these, the most applicable is on-the-job workplace training under the supervision of a registered master craftsmen. To qualify as a 'Meister', and to be entered on the list of accredited trainers, a craftsman must undergo formal training and assessment.

The Farriery Training model in the UK already follows the German example. Working farriers are registered as Approved Trainers; trainees receive on- and off-the-job training, and work to nationally recognised standards – in this case NVQs. It is recommended that other crafts follow this approach, using the National Vocational System to record the profile of skills for a particular craft, and standards of competence defined for each skill unit. This would mean that craftsmen taking on trainees would need first to be registered as 'master craftsmen'.

Although small businesses might regard registration as excessively bureaucratic, the main benefits are (a) they would be eligible for Learning and Skills Council funding support, and (b) they would be accessible to new entrants through the Approved List of Registered Trainers, which could be held by a central body, such as a Sector Skills Council or the proposed Vernacular Crafts Council.

Not all crafts will be able to, or necessarily wish to, qualify for formal recognition as part of the national framework, preferring instead to develop their own industry standards and industry-recognised qualifications. Greater flexibility of qualifications is needed to ensure that they too qualify for LSC funding support, especially for apprenticeships. Exceptional standards of craftsmanship and teaching ability should be recognised and registered.

A number of crafts are currently endangered, and could cease to be commercially active within a generation. These should be identified and steps taken to record them for posterity. A national data bank of skills and products – a point of reference for practising craftsmen – should be established as a matter of urgency at a specialist museum, such as the Museum of Rural Life at the University of Reading and/or the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton, West Sussex. It should be funded by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund or DCMS. Sector Skills Councils and trade organisations and associations should be actively involved, as appropriate. The present representation of the traditional crafts in museums is patchy, with many local crafts still unrecorded.