

Historic Post Boxes in Jersey

Background

During 2013-2014, Jersey Heritage worked with Jersey Post and the Environment Department to identify post boxes that merit some form of protection – some to be Listed and retained within their street setting, and others as ‘historical artefacts’ - thereby preserving a physical record of the rich diversity of post boxes that has been installed by Jersey Post, and previously the Post Office (the Channel Islands forming part of the British Post Office administration until 1969). The review was undertaken with Orbasli Associates and in consultation with Julian Stray of the British Postal Museum and Archive.

History

The postal service has a long history in Jersey. The first post office was established here in February 1794. The introduction of uniform Penny Postage in 1840 provided the impetus for an explosion in the use of the postal service by the general public, and on 23rd November 1852 the first pillar boxes ever put into use in the British Isles were on Jersey. Anthony Trollope, the novelist, in his role as Surveyors Clerk was sent to the Channel Islands to make recommendations on improving postal services and in order to resolve some of the issues being faced, he recommended a new idea - the use of post boxes or 'Post Office Receivers'. The first four boxes were located at Bath Street, New Street, Elizabeth Place and St Clement's Road - unfortunately none of these have survived. The *Jersey Times* of that year records that these first boxes were painted red. Later years saw a number of different liveries and variety of colours being utilised. In 1859 a standard colour for all boxes was authorised, this was green. This remained the official colour until red (with black base) was stipulated in 1874. Wall boxes were introduced in 1857, providing a cheaper facility where the greater cost of a pillar box could not be justified. In 1890 there were 26 receiving offices, pillar and wall boxes in St. Helier; additionally there were 12 sub-offices and 20 letter boxes 'in the country'. In 1896 a smaller type of post box was first introduced in the form of a lamp box - originally attached to lamp posts, now usually built into walls or stone/brick pillars. Pillar boxes were reintroduced in the reign of Elizabeth II. The use of the Royal cipher is one of the most noticeable aspects of a post box, and boxes bearing the ciphers of five monarchs are to be found in Jersey. On 1st December 1952, one of the first boxes to bear the EiiR cipher was unveiled in St Helier, on the site of one of the first pillar boxes.

Recommendations

The recommendations for protection are based on the significance of the post boxes - determined by weighing the various values associated with each box such as age and rarity of type, and contribution to townscape or rural character. The list is purposely wide ranging across all reigns (Victoria, Edward VII, George V, George VI, and Elizabeth II) and including examples of pillar, wall and lamp boxes.

40 boxes are formally designated as a Listed building under the auspices of the planning law, and protected in-situ like any listed roadside feature (see table A).

Historic Post Boxes in Jersey

A further 19 boxes are identified as of historical significance, but in a location which is not of interest, and consequently only the post box itself is recommended for protection like other historical 'artefacts' (see table B).

The attached joint policy statement between Jersey Post and Jersey Heritage, sets out how both organisations will safeguard historic post boxes as part of the Island's heritage and its urban and rural character.

R Hills – Head of Historic Buildings 30 July 2014

Joint policy statement by Jersey Post and Jersey Heritage, July 2014

The agreed joint intention between Jersey Post and Jersey Heritage is to safeguard historic post boxes as part of the Island's heritage and its urban and rural character.

1. Jersey Post will continue to maintain and decorate all historic post boxes on a regular basis.
2. Where part of a historic post box needs to be replaced, priority should be given to the use of salvaged parts from broken or redundant boxes held in store.
3. Statutory consent should be sought for alterations to, or removal of, post boxes that are listed (see attached table A).
4. If a listed / protected box is badly damaged with no repair possible, then discussion as to whether the box still merits protection should take place with Jersey Heritage.
5. Decommissioned, but listed, boxes should be maintained in-situ.
6. Jersey Post will continue to use the current paint colour (Col Ref: 538 BS381C), for as long as it is available, on all operational & non-operational boxes. The addition of gold highlights for operational boxes, and plain red for decommissioned boxes is appropriate as a way of identifying between the two types. This allows for a local variation on the 'Royal Mail' colour scheme, whilst ensuring non-operational boxes maintain an appropriate historic colour.
7. Jersey Post will offer unwanted, decommissioned non-listed boxes, which have been identified as historically significant (see attached table B) to a museum collection through Jersey Heritage.
8. Such boxes should be removed with care and under the supervision of Jersey Heritage.
9. Jersey Heritage will assist Jersey Post in helping to maintain the island's postal heritage by providing a properly accredited museum location for unwanted post boxes of heritage value.

.....
On behalf of Jersey Post

.....
On behalf of Jersey Heritage