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**Historic Environment Division**

# Applying the Conservation Principles

Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland

**January 2023**



This edition is published by DfC Historic Environment Division, January 2023  
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**Front Page Image:** Carrickfergus Castle – Drone view of new castle roof structure overlooking the historic settlement of Carrickfergus





Above: Interior view of the new Irish oak hipped roof structure over the Great Hall, Carrickfergus Castle, replacing an earlier 1930's flat roof. A dedicated team of heritage professionals and tradespeople with heritage skills, worked together to plan and construct the new roof, informed by extensive research and investigative works.

## Historic Environment Division's aim

“Helping communities to enjoy and realise the value of our historic environment”

We do this by:

- Recording, protecting, conserving, advising, promoting and enhancing its value for current and future generations
- Utilising and growing our specialist knowledge and expertise in collaboration with a wide range of groups and individuals
- Providing people with ready access to the skills, evidence, knowledge and confidence needed to ensure that we all make the most of our historic environment and contribute to the objectives as laid out in the Programme for Government

- Influencing decision-making so that it fully weights the importance of the historic environment

Our historic environment provides authentic and attractive places which increase our pride, character and identity, lead to improved wellbeing and community engagement, and to prosperity through tourism, investment, skills, regeneration and creativity. It is a precious and finite resource available to present generations, and with appropriate management, to future generations.

# Contents

Introduction	6
1. Applying the Conservation Principles	7
2. Statements of Significance	8
3. Managing Change	10
4. Types of Change	11
4.1 Archaeological Investigation	12
4.2 Maintenance	15
4.3 Repair	16
4.4 Periodic fabric renewal	18
4.5 Restoration	20
4.6 New work and alteration	24
5. Guiding criteria for the implementing of conservation works to heritage assets:	27
6. Integrating Conservation with other Considerations	28
Definitions	29
Appendix A	30
Appendix B	33



## Introduction

This document is the second part of a two part publication on the Department for Communities (DfC) **Conservation Principles** for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment.

Part 1, The **‘Conservation Principles’** Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland’ (referred hereafter as the **‘Conservation Principles’**) provides a best practice conservation led framework to inform all aspects of decision making which affect our historic environment. It sets out the six key guiding conservation principles and also explains how significance is central to conservation, how to assess it, and use it as a tool to manage change.

This document, Part 2, ‘Applying the **Conservation Principles**’ sets out the different types of changes impacting a heritage asset. It explains how the conservation principles can guide decision making for each change, in order to achieve best conservation outcomes.

The **‘Conservation Principles’** and **‘Applying the Conservation Principles’** guidance will together inform how HED will approach its work and also guide anyone making decisions that affect heritage assets, whether it be offering advice, managing or implementing change.

The guidance set out within this document is aligned with the approach by sister organisations in other jurisdictions, tailored to the process through which the historic environment is managed in Northern Ireland.



Above: Bishops Court Airfield. A recent survey programme of Northern Ireland’s Defence Heritage sites has enhanced understanding of their heritage value.

# 1. Applying the Conservation Principles

1.1 The six key conservation principles as outlined in Part 1 are:

- Principle 1 - The historic environment is of value to us all
- Principle 2 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
- Principle 3 - Understanding the significance of heritage assets is vital
- Principle 4 - Heritage assets shall be managed to sustain their significance
- Principle 5 - Decisions about change shall be reasonable, transparent and consistent
- Principle 6 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

1.2 The key objective of the '**Conservation Principles**' is to provide a framework for managing change impacting a heritage asset, based on an understanding of its significance. This will enable a balance

between a sound conservation led approach and legitimate public policies or private interests to emerge.

1.3 The greater the range and strength of interests contributing to the significance of a heritage asset, the less opportunity there may be for change. However, few heritage assets are so sensitive that they, or their settings, present no opportunities for appropriate change. This may include changes to safeguard them.

1.4 Whether the change relates to routine maintenance schedules or to major development projects, the **Conservation Principles** can help to guide decision-making to avoid potential harm to the significance of an asset or, where it cannot be avoided, ensure it is managed appropriately.



Above: Excavation works, Tirnony Dolmen, Co Londonderry - Excavations at this site were undertaken to inform approaches for conservation works to the Dolmen.



## 2. Statements of Significance

2.1 The core ethos of the **Conservation Principles** is based around the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset to inform decision making. Applying this understanding can avoid harm to what is most important about a historic building, monument or place and realise opportunities to better reveal its significance; or, where harm cannot be avoiding, mitigate against it.

Chapter 7 of the **Conservation Principles** outlines the framework of key interests which may contribute to the significance of a heritage asset. Chapter 8 gives guidance on the assessment of significance, including the form and structure of Statements of Significance.

### 2.2 What is a statement of significance?

A statement of significance is a succinct objective analysis of significance and the contribution of setting, and should describe what matters and why, in terms of heritage significance. It is not an advocacy document, seeking to justify a scheme or works which have already been designed or implemented, rather it should inform and influence the appropriate solution. The earlier the statement of significance process is engaged, the more considered and conservation-led the final scheme or works will be.

### 2.3 When is a statement of significance required?

A statement of significance helps to inform any type of change to a heritage asset. It is not required by law to accompany consenting, licensing or planning applications, but is recommended as a best practice tool to guide decision making about the impact of a change on a heritage asset. A statement of significance for a heritage asset can be developed at any time and can often evolve and be updated as new information is revealed or perceptions about its heritage interest develop.

When considering minor changes to an asset, a short statement of significance may be appropriate, with the detail proportionate to the potential impact and scale of a change to a heritage asset. For archaeological investigations, major schemes of repair, restoration projects and new work or alterations, proposals should be informed by a more thorough and detailed statement of significance, to assist balanced decision making. Where a Design and Access Statement<sup>1</sup> is required as part of a planning application or listed building consent application, a statement of significance can be included as part of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 6 of The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, **The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015** ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)) and Regulation 4 of The Planning (Listed Buildings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/108/regulation/4/made>



Statements of significance are also an important tool to inform Conservation Management Plans, when developing the long-term conservation and management approach for a heritage asset.

#### 2.4 Who can write one?

Statements of significance will normally be developed by heritage experts with appropriate professional expertise

to ensure the consistency and validity of the assessment. This is particularly important for complex proposals with major potential impacts on a heritage asset and its setting. Asset owners and local communities can however contribute to the process by sharing their local knowledge, understanding and history of a place outlining why an asset is important to them.



Above: Devenish Monastic Site: Photographic recording of gravestones to inform conservation management of the site.

## 3. Managing Change

3.1 As set out in the **Conservation Principles**, changes to a heritage asset should be managed by applying a conservation led approach. This involves the management of change in ways that will best protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution its setting makes to its significance. Where there are competing priorities, this can also involve balancing the understanding of the significance of the asset with the requirements and aspirations of the current generation and its protection for future generations.

3.2 Changes affecting a heritage asset can be temporary or permanent. They can also vary in type, nature, scale and complexity. A proposal can also include a number of changes which involve different types of work. Accepting that all changes will be different, the process of decision making will however, generally be consistent and follow the four key stages as identified in Fig 1 below:

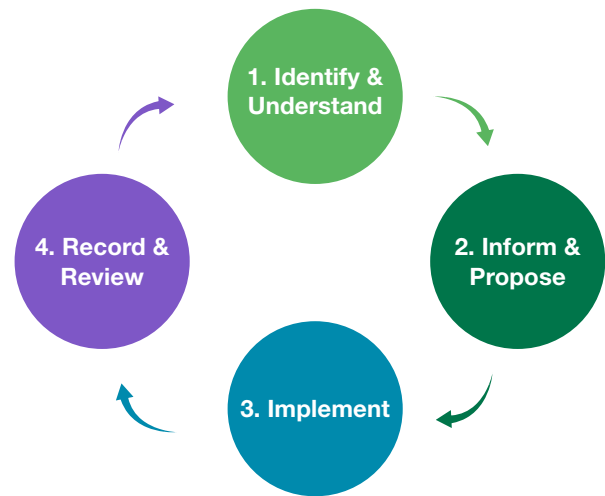


Figure 1: Diagram showing the four key stages during the process of managing change to a heritage asset, aligned with the **Conservation Principles**.

3.3 Applying a conservation led approach requires that the **Conservation Principles** are applied consistently at each stage of the process, when making decisions about programming for, implementing and recording change. A sample methodology for applying the **Conservation Principles** at each stage of the process is set out in Appendix A.



## 4. Types of Change

4.0.1 Changes affecting the historic environment can be as a result of either direct or indirect human-made interventions or environmental impacts, such as the effects of climate change. More than one type of change may be considered as part of a proposal, and often many changes will be required over the lifetime of a heritage asset which can include the following types of work:

- Archaeological investigation
- Maintenance
- Repair

- Periodic fabric renewal
- Restoration
- New work or alteration

4.0.2 While some changes have a close relationship to a particular principle, for example ‘New work and alteration’ to Principle 4, it is important that all of the above types of work apply the **Conservation Principles** holistically.



Above: Conservation work in progress at Church Island State Care site, November 2022.



## 4.1 Archaeological Investigation

4.1.1 The focus of archaeological investigation at a heritage asset should primarily be to increase knowledge of the past. The physical preservation in-situ of archaeological remains should always be considered the preferred option and specific legislation and policies are in place to provide for this. Archaeological excavation is inherently a destructive process and must be carefully considered and justified in each case. When an archaeological investigation involves the material loss of evidence, for example through archaeological excavation, it should normally only be acceptable if:

- a) preservation in situ is not reasonably practicable; or
- b) it is demonstrated that the potential increase in knowledge
  - cannot be achieved using non-destructive techniques; and
  - is unlikely to be achieved at another place whose destruction is inevitable; and
  - is predicted to decisively outweigh the loss of the primary resource; and
  - is supported by a clear set of research objectives and/or research framework.

- c) it is required to evaluate the potential harm of a development proposal or to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal in line with planning policy<sup>2</sup>  
If it is acceptable, the intrusive archaeological investigation shall require:
- d) a skilled team, led by a licensed archaeologist<sup>3</sup> with the resources to implement a project design based on explicit investigation objectives;
- e) the production of an authoritative record of the investigation in line with best practice standards<sup>4</sup>, including publication of the results if necessary;
- f) funded arrangements for the subsequent conservation and preparation of the site archive to a standard for deposit into HERoNI within a reasonable timetable, and for appropriate analysis and dissemination of the results;
- g) a strategy to ensure that other elements of the heritage asset are not prejudiced by the work, whether at the time or subsequently, including for conservation of any elements left exposed following excavation.

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<sup>2</sup> The Strategic Planning Policy Statement NI 2015,(SPPS) and retained policy under transitional arrangements of the SPPS, Planning Policy Statement 6 Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage, which will cease to have effect in a district, when a council adopts its Local Development Plan, Plan Strategy.

<sup>3</sup> Licensed under Article 41 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995

<sup>4</sup> HED Technical Advice and Guidance is available on the DfC HED webpage [Historic Environment Toolkit | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

4.1.2 The historic environment provides a unique record of past human activity, but unlike written archives some parts of it can only be 'read' through the careful removal and recording of the primary evidence. This applies particularly to the excavation of buried archaeological deposits where less intrusive methods are not sufficient to meet requirements but can be relevant to the physical investigation of structures. It concerns a level of intervention that goes beyond the evaluation and targeted investigation that may be necessary to inform and justify conservation management decisions.



Above: Quoil Castle: Excavations at 1st floor to inform consolidation of cracked vault.

4.1.3 The continuing development of archaeological investigative techniques shows that, in future, it will be possible to extract more data from excavation and other interventions than is currently possible. This requires a cautious approach to the use of a finite resource, which shall avoid loss of integrity of the heritage asset. However, this cannot reasonably exclude all investigation where this will increase our knowledge of the significance of a heritage asset, or rescue that evidence in advance of its non-scientific destruction, and contribute to a better understanding of our history.



4.1.4 Archaeological intervention must be justified primarily by considering the potential social, economic and environmental benefits balanced against the impact on the archaeological resource, and specifically on the significance of the heritage asset or type of site in question.



Above: Lisburn Castle Gardens: Before & After: Excavation works informed conservation and presentation of castle gardens.



4.1.5 The physical investigation of a heritage asset should always be the minimum necessary to achieve the research objectives and make full use of non-destructive techniques; but should also

be extensive enough to ensure that the full research potential of what is necessarily destroyed in the process can be realised.



Above: Former Workhouse, Downpatrick : Excavation and recording of burial ground of former Workhouse, in advance of development.



## 4.2 Maintenance

4.2.1 The conservation of heritage assets is founded on appropriate monitoring, management and routine maintenance.

The range of interests of heritage assets will be quickly obscured or lost if management and maintenance regimes are discontinued. The lack of regular maintenance on our monuments, buildings or landscapes could significantly impact their historic character, their historic fabric, their ability to provide a sustainable function, and impact on traditional skills learning and materials.



Above: Two semi-detached early Victorian villas designed as a pair. Following a fire, the villa on the right has fallen into disrepair compromising the group value, architectural interest and significance.

4.2.2 Regular monitoring should inform continuous improvement of planned maintenance and identify the need for periodic repair or, where appropriate, renewal at an early stage. If a permanent solution to identified problems is not immediately possible, temporary works should be undertaken to prevent the problems from escalating. Temporary solutions should be effective, timely and reversible.



Above: Coaching House, Dunadry: Short Term Solution - Tarpaulin secured over thatch roof providing temporary protection before repair and renewal works.



Above: Carleton's Cottage, Springtown: Medium term solution - Temporary corrugated tin roof on metal frame structure to arrest deterioration to underlying thatch roof.

## 4.3 Repair

4.3.1 Repair differs from maintenance: it occurs on a longer cycle, is usually more invasive in nature and often has a greater impact.

4.3.2 Repair necessary to sustain the heritage interests of a heritage asset, is desirable if:

- a) there is sufficient information to comprehensively understand the impacts of the repair on the significance of the heritage asset; and
- b) the long term consequences of the repair can be demonstrated to be benign, or are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future; and
- c) it is designed to avoid or minimise harm, when actions necessary to sustain particular heritage interests are in conflict.

4.3.3 It is important to look beyond the immediate need for action, to understand the reasons for the need for repair and, where necessary, avoid repeated decay. Some material failures are the inevitable, if slowly developing, consequences of the original method of construction. For example, not all historic structure materials or techniques were durable – iron cramps in masonry are subject to corrosion. While sufficient work should be undertaken to achieve a lasting repair, the extent of the repair should normally be limited to what is reasonably necessary to make failing elements sound and capable of continuing to fulfil their intended functions.



Above: Timber splice window repair. This approach ensures the historic fabric, authenticity and the essential character and appearance of a historic building/asset is retained and conserved.

4.3.4 The use of materials or techniques with a lifespan that is predictable from past performance, for example like for like for those being repaired or replaced, is recommended, and tends to carry a low risk of future harm or premature failure. By contrast, if using materials or techniques which are innovative or relatively untested it is considered appropriate to monitor and record their impact to better our understanding.





Above left: Inappropriate mortar repairs can exacerbate erosion of original stonework and compromise the essential character and appearance of historic buildings. Above Right: Removal of defective mortars and repairing with stonework and detailing to match the original, conserves the buildings architectural interest.



4.3.5 The use of original materials and techniques for repair can sometimes destroy more of the original fabric, and any decoration it carries, than the introduction of reinforcing or superficially protective modern materials. These may offer the optimum conservation solution if they allow more significant original fabric to be retained.

4.3.6 In historic landscapes, planting may need to utilise alternative species, to resist disease or the effects of climate change. Before making decisions, it is essential to understand all the heritage interests of the elements concerned, and to consider the longer term, as well as the immediate, conservation objectives.



Above: Lead flashing applied to cornice and parapet upstand to protect stonework from weathering and effects of water ingress.

4.3.7 Sometimes, the action necessary to sustain or reinforce one heritage interest can be incompatible with the actions necessary to sustain others. For example, below ground structural repairs may cause unacceptable damage to the underlying archaeology. Understanding the range, inter-relationships and relative importance of the heritage interests associated with an asset should establish priorities for balancing such tensions, with every reasonable effort made to avoid or minimise potential conflict.



Above: Templecorran Church, Ballycarry: Excavations to inform consolidation of a doorway.



## 4.4 Periodic fabric renewal

4.4.1 Periodic fabric renewal of elements of a heritage asset can be justified when not to do so would lead to greater harm or loss of historic fabric or significance in the heritage asset.

Periodic renewal differs from maintenance in that it occurs on a longer cycle, is usually more invasive in nature and often has a greater visual impact. It involves the temporary loss of certain heritage interests, such as the architectural interest of the patina of age on an old roof covering; but these interests are likely to return on completion of the works, provided the replacement is physically and visually compatible (normally 'like for like', to the extent that this is sustainable). By contrast, the consequence of not undertaking periodic renewal can create more extensive loss of the primary evidence fabric and its significance.

4.4.2 The justification for periodic renewal will normally be that the original historic fabric is incapable of fulfilling its intended function through more limited intervention, such as maintenance or repair. For example, in landscapes, where succession planting cannot achieve the objective in a less drastic way. Harm to interests that will normally be recovered on completion of the works can, in most cases, be discounted, but potential permanent harm cannot be ignored in making the decision.



Above: Thatched historic buildings can quickly fall into a rapid state of disrepair if the thatch covering is not periodically renewed. Timely intervention is vital to conserve the asset and the underlying roof structure, which is often a key part of the buildings significance.

4.4.3 A programme of archaeological or building recording may be required with periodic renewal. For example the replacement of a roof covering may reveal how it was originally constructed, or re-plastering/re-rendering of a wall may reveal significant evidence of earlier phases of the structure's historic interest.



Above: Killymoon Castle, Cookstown: Before, During & After. Replacement of a defective lead roof revealed the underlying timber roof structure around the central cupola, which informed the conservation repair approach to a key feature of special interest. A new replacement lead roof has safeguarded the ornate cupola and underlying building fabric.

4.4.4 The inherent sustainability of historic fabric (over new material) must be recognised. For example, the energy expended in producing a new building element may take many years to compensate for the loss of any historic fabric it replaced.

Likewise, the inherent sustainability of reuse of historic fabric is an important consideration when looking at potential conflict with other guidelines and legislation may need to be considered in a holistic manner.



## 4.5 Restoration

4.5.1 Restoration means returning a heritage asset to a known earlier state - involving the recreation of the lost parts, appearance or function based on the strongest available evidence for its construction and layout. Restoration can be justified only when it does not diminish the understanding of the surviving historic fabric and leads to the enhancement and sustainability of the asset.



Above: Hilltown Lodge, Hilltown: This large 18th Century country house, derelict and at risk for over 40 years, has now been sensitively restored, alongside some new development, securing the long term sustainable use of the building and enhancing the local village character.

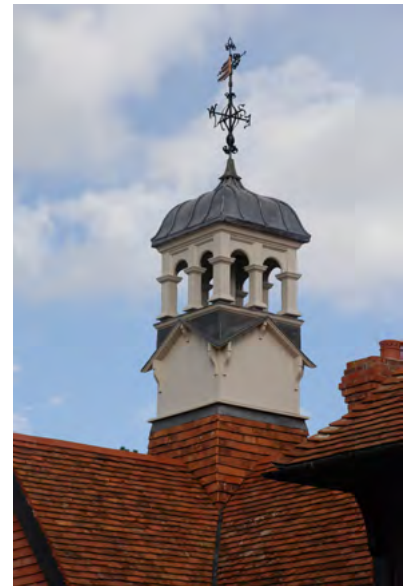
4.5.2 Restoration to a heritage asset will normally only be acceptable if:

- a) Heritage interests of the elements to be restored decisively outweigh the heritage interests that would be lost; and

- b) the work proposed is justified by compelling evidence of the evolution of the heritage asset, and is executed in accordance with that evidence; and
- c) the work proposed respects previous forms of the heritage asset and is designed not to prejudice alternate solutions in the future; and
- d) the current form of the heritage asset is not the result of a significant historical event, but rather due to natural progressive decay or alteration; and
- e) the maintenance implications of the proposed restoration are considered to be sustainable.

4.5.3 Restoration can easily compromise the authenticity of a heritage asset. Even when restoring parts that have collapsed or been removed, what is produced will be new. When restoration becomes speculative or produces a generalised recreation, the proposals must be treated as new work and judged accordingly.

4.5.4 Restoration is an intervention made with the deliberate intention of revealing or recovering a known element of the heritage asset that has been eroded, obscured or previously removed. This approach may achieve conservation benefits, for example restoring a roof on a roofless building making it both physically and economically sustainable in the long term and may act to arrest the slow decay of historic fabric.



Above: Sion Mills Stable Block, Sion Mills: Detailed recording and analysis, together with comprehensive research informed the restoration of this former stable block by HEARTH, currently operating as a museum, classroom and café.

4.5.5 The concept of authenticity demands that proposals for restoration always require particularly careful justification. For example, reinstating damaged elements of work directly created by the hand of an artist normally runs counter to the idea of authenticity and integrity. However, the reinstatement of damaged architectural or landscape features in accordance with a historic design may be acceptable if the design itself was the artistic creation, intended to be constructed by others, and the necessary materials and skills are available.

4.5.6 In line with Principle 6 of the **Conservation Principles**, it is important to underpin restoration work by detailed recording. The results should be integrated with and used to update the initial analysis of the evidence to justify the restoration. When the work is completed, copies of the recording should be deposited in HERoNI and added to the asset owners record.



4.5.7 Restoration inevitably obscures part of the record of past change to a heritage asset, and so potentially affects its historic and architectural interest. Therefore, restoration must enhance other heritage interests, such as the integrity and quality of an earlier and more important phase

in the evolution of the heritage asset or its setting and highlighted in a Statement of Significance. Where the particular significance of a heritage asset is the result of centuries of change, restoration to some earlier stage in its evolution is unlikely to meet the **Conservation Principles**.



Above: Parkanaur Manor House, Dungannon. This Grade A listed building has evolved from a small two storey house built in the late 1700's, to the large Tudor Revival Style building present today. Each phase of development remains legible and is a key part of the building's significance.

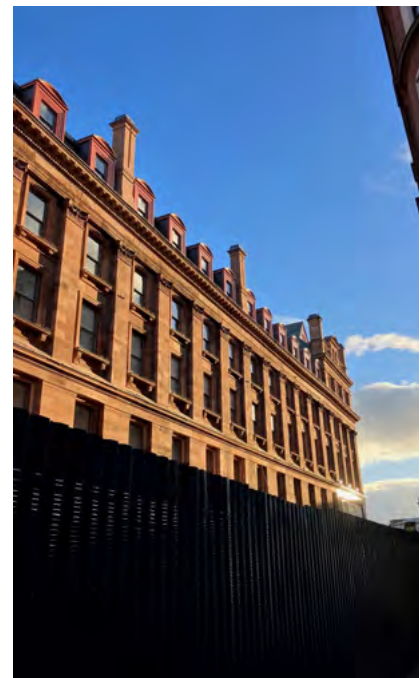
4.5.8 Evidence of the evolution of the heritage asset, and particularly of the phase to which restoration is proposed, should be drawn from all available sources – from study of the fabric of the asset itself (the primary record of its evolution), any documentation of the original design and construction process, and subsequent archival sources, including records of previous interventions. The results of this research and the reasoned conclusions drawn from it should be clearly set out in a Statement of Significance.

4.5.9 If a heritage asset was ruined or its character fundamentally changed as a consequence of an important historic event, its subsequent state may contribute to its significance. Attempts to restore heritage assets that have survived as ruins may conflict with their strong visual and emotional evidence of important historic events. Ruins – real or contrived – can also play a major role in designed landscapes, define the distinctive character and identity of a locality to national identity. Even so, their restoration or adaptive re-use may be justified if the alternative is loss.

4.5.10 By contrast, casual neglect and decay, abandonment<sup>5</sup>, crude adaptation for transient uses, accidental fires and similar circumstances are not normally considered historically significant events.

4.5.11 The public response to dramatic contemporary events which may ultimately

come to be seen as historically significant – to memorialise, rebuild or redevelop – tends to be driven by public debate linked to social and/or economic regeneration. Any decisions on the extent of restoration need to address the sustainability (social, economic and environmental needs) of the desired outcome.



Bank Buildings, Belfast City Centre : Image 1- August 2018, The Bank Buildings, a landmark building in Belfast City Centre, was subject to an extensive fire during refurbishment works. With public support, ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and commitment of the owner, the building has been now been sympathetically restored. Image 2 : Numbering and recording stonework to inform restoration proposals Jan 2019. Images: 3&4 Restoration nearing completion Sept 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Abandonment in certain cases, can be as a result of a historically significant event e.g. abandoned Clachans from the famine period.



## 4.6 New work and alteration

4.6.1 New work or alteration<sup>6</sup> to a heritage asset should normally be acceptable if:

- a) the need for the work is fully justified; and
- b) there is sufficient information to comprehensively understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset and its setting; and
- c) the proposal would not materially harm the heritage interests of the heritage asset, which, where appropriate, would be protected, enhanced or further revealed; and
- d) good quality of design and execution are applied; and

- e) the long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

4.6.2 The requirement to protect and conserve the significance of a heritage asset does not run contrary to carrying out new works or alterations. Innovation, quality design and quality construction is important to sustaining heritage assets in the historic environment for present and future generations, but should not be achieved at the expense of their significance.



Above: Construction of a new Irish oak hipped roof structure over the Great Hall, Carrickfergus Castle, replacing an earlier 1930's flat roof. The roof design, informed by extensive research and onsite investigative works has sensitively conserved the asset and enhanced the quality of space within the Great Hall. Image 1: During Construction. Image 2: View of new exposed roof structure from inside the Great Hall.



<sup>5</sup> Where new work requires planning permission or listed building consent, decision making will be informed by the regional strategic policies as set out in the SPPS and either retained policy (PPS6) or the councils own LDP policies where adopted, including other relevant material considerations. See Paragraph 6.1.

4.6.3 The need for quality in new work applies at every level, from small interventions in an historic room, to major new structures or developments. Small changes need as much consideration as large ones, for cumulatively their effect can be comparable.

4.6.4 Successful new work has a clear and coherent understanding of the relationship between the historic structures, including the setting, into which the new work is proposed. This neither implies nor precludes working in traditional or new ways, but will normally involve respecting the heritage interests established through an assessment of its significance. This approach follows the established guiding

criteria of clarity of new work, so that it is distinguishable from the historic fabric. Applying low key demarcation techniques e.g using spaced stainless steel nails to outline new masonry in rubble built ruins, or adding coal dust in mortar to delineate an earlier opening, ensures that new work can be read, while using like for like materials and construction techniques.

4.6.5 Achieving quality, in terms of design, detailing, materials and execution depends on the skill of the designer, and the craftsmanship applied to complete the works, and is particularly crucial to both durability and to maintaining the essential character of heritage assets.



Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast. Historic records informed the sympathetic design and layout of the new replacement steps incorporating concealed lift access, in keeping with the architectural design and character of the building.



4.6.6 Quality is enduring, even though taste and fashion may change. The architectural qualities of a heritage asset, such as its scale, mass, composition, silhouette, and proportions, tell us whether the intervention fits comfortably in its context.

4.6.7 Proposals for new work may involve some impact to the existing historic fabric; therefore, there will be a 'presumption in favour of preservation' (doing no harm), in line with guiding principle 'maximum retention of historic fabric'. If new work is designed to be reversible it must not result in detrimental impact on or loss of historic fabric in its insertion or removal.

#### 4.6.8 Managing risks:

Changes proposed to lessen the risk or consequences of disaster require a balance to be struck between the possibility of major harm to the heritage asset without them, or the harm caused by the works themselves; for example, the need to improve fire prevention, fire escape or flood defences. These changes may cause some harm to the archaeological, architectural or historical interest, but may be significantly balanced by an increase in other interests deriving from the sustained use, for example social interest. All options should be evaluated, including improving maintenance management as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, lower levels of physical intervention.

As with repair, the use in new work or alterations of materials and techniques proven by experience to be compatible with existing fabric, tends to bring a low risk of failure. Work which touches existing fabric lightly, or stands apart from it, brings a greater opportunity for innovation and reversibility.



Kilbroney Medieval Church, Rostrevor: Cintec anchors installed to consolidate the leaning west wall of the medieval church ruins.



Templemore Baths, Belfast. Glass roof supported on glazed fins provides light touch intervention between historic building and new extension.

#### 4.6.9 Energy efficiency:

Energy efficiency (in production, in use and in disposal) of materials, and environmental sustainability should guide all new work, but not to the extent of causing harm to the significance of the heritage asset. In terms of historic buildings, this usually proposes the retrofitting of energy-efficient systems, e.g. insulation, glazing type, mechanical systems and so on. The guiding test is to ensure the significance of the heritage asset is maintained without causing long-term damage to the historic fabric.

#### 4.6.10 Maintaining new work:

New work should, where possible, avoid bringing new maintenance issues to an asset, but where proposed, due consideration should be taken in this regard.

## 5. Guiding criteria for the implementing of conservation works to heritage assets:

5.1 While the **Conservation Principles**, as set out in Part 1, apply a wider consideration of the heritage interests which contribute to an asset's significance, it is acknowledged that its significance will benefit and be better understood where historic fabric is retained.

5.2 The guiding criterion outlined below has formed the basis for conservation led decision making with regard to their impact on the physical materiality of the asset, supporting the conservation philosophy of international charters and treaties and regional conservation policies and standards<sup>7</sup>:

### a. Minimum Intervention

Every scheme should aim to conserve a maximum of the original fabric of the heritage asset, whether or not it will be seen. A certain amount of renewal is inevitable over time, but repair must always be weighed in the balance before any decision to replace is finally made.

### b. Maximum Retention

We are only custodians of heritage assets for a relatively short time in the life of an asset. Any alterations we make to them should respect their

special character and seek to retain as much historic fabric as possible. An asset's significance will benefit and be better understood where the greatest proportion of historic fabric is retained.

### c. Clarity

The heritage asset in its original form should remain the dominant feature in relation to any changes proposed to it. New work should be of quality (design, materials and detailing) and distinguishable from, but never in competition, with the historic fabric.

### d. Reversibility

Reversibility means ensuring that any interventions to a heritage asset can be carried out without loss of historic fabric and removed in the future without loss of historic fabric.

### e. Sustainability

The principle is that any change proposed to a heritage asset supports a sustainable future for the structure, or at least does not preclude this; to ensure that current use of the heritage asset, which is desirable, does not destroy the chances of handing it down to future generations.

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B



## 6. Integrating Conservation with other Considerations

### 6.1 Planning:

Protection of our heritage assets requires a balance between economic, environmental, social and sustainability objectives at every level of planning, both strategically at a regional level and also locally. It is essential that those promoting the need for change consider and compare the impacts on the significance of a heritage asset over a range of potential options with varying degrees of impact. This should lead to the selection of an option that either eliminates, or (as far as is possible) mitigates harm. This will involve HED as a statutory consultee<sup>8</sup> and other heritage professionals, employing the skills necessary to critically appraise any proposal fully and robustly to ensure the protection and conservation of the heritage asset.

### 6.2 Heritage at Risk:

Deterioration through cumulative neglect should not, of itself, be grounds for agreeing a scheme that would otherwise be unacceptable. The impact of the proposal should be assessed by comparing the significance of the

heritage asset in its current condition to that after the completion of the works. Any changes that would cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset should be limited to what is necessary to sustain it in use or appropriately conserve the asset.

### 6.3 Regeneration:

Heritage-led regeneration through the reuse or development of heritage assets can bring multi-faceted benefit for local communities. The potential benefits of such regeneration proposals should be tested against the **Conservation Principles**.

When considering the severity of potential impacts on a heritage asset there should always be proportionality and reasonableness. As outlined in Principles 4 & 5 of the **Conservation Principles**, the balance lies between irreplaceable loss of something of significance and the predicted benefits of development. Adequate information, thorough assessment and a clear process, is crucial to reaching transparent, publicly-justifiable decisions.

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<sup>8</sup> HED is statutorily consulted on planning applications in accordance with Schedule 3, Part 1, The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and on all listed building consent applications under Regulation 6, The Planning (Listed Buildings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

## Definitions

Includes words used in a specific or technical sense within this document.

(Also see the **Conservation Principles** Part 1 for a full list of Definitions)

### **Conservation Management Plan** –

A strategic document that defines what is significant about an individual heritage asset or historic place, establishes management principles and informs the approach to future work.

**Design & Access Statement** - A Design and Access Statement [D&AS] is a single document that explains the design thinking behind a planning application. It provides a framework for applicants to explain and to justify how a proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting.

**Statement of Significance** - A Statement of Significance is a succinct objective analysis of significance and the contribution of setting, and should describe what matters and why, in terms of heritage significance.



# Appendix A

## Sample Methodology for applying the Conservation Principles

The following is a list of key questions which can inform decision making at each stage of the process. (Note: These are not exhaustive, but are framed as an aid for those undertaking change impacting a heritage asset)

### 1. Identify & Understand

The **Conservation Principles** para 8.2 outlines 'To identify significance, the heritage interests of an asset, its history, fabric and character, must be correctly understood.' Identifying who values the place and why they do so and how those values then link to fabric, associated assets, setting, and context; and then comparing the place with others sharing similar values is key in the assessment of significance. When considering a change to an asset, some key questions to consider include:

#### i) What do we have?

- Identify heritage assets directly and indirectly affected
- Research information on the asset/s including any similar assets
- Consider past changes and learning they provide

- Assess how sensitive the asset is to change
- Identify needs for further research / consultation

#### ii) Why is it important?

- Is the asset designated or undesignated, or does it potentially merit designation?
- To whom is it important, and why
- Identify the tangible and intangible heritage interests and assess their contribution to the significance of the asset
- What other interests does asset have

#### iii) What is the need for change?

- What benefits can it bring
- Will the change enhance or harm significance
- Can it be avoided or monitored
- Is the change temporary or permanent

Further information on the 'Assessment of Significance' is provided in Section 8 of the **Conservation Principles**.

## 2. Inform & Propose

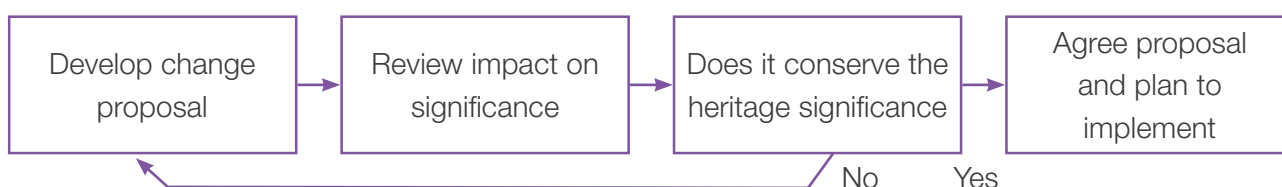
Understanding the significance of an asset, and why and to whom it is important, is the basis for informing appropriate and sensitive changes. For small changes, such as reviewing maintenance schedules or undertaking minor works of repair, conservation led decision making can be relatively straightforward, for example, repairing historic fabric applying the same materials, detailing and traditional techniques. For large scale development projects however, there are often many conflicting requirements between the need for change and its potential effect on the significance of heritage assets.

When considering a major change, the challenge for owners, local authorities, and heritage professionals is to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of an asset whilst allowing places and buildings to adapt where appropriate or necessary, so that they remain viable, fit for purpose, accommodating

society's changing needs and demands. Achieving that balance often requires that a series of alternative options are considered, to arrive at the optimal solution which conserves the significance of the asset.

### i) Does the proposal conserve and enhance the significance of an asset?

- Does the change conserve what is most significant
- What are the impacts of the change on the significance
- Are the changes high quality and sympathetic to the historic fabric, appearance and character of a place
- Are there opportunities to enhance the significance, or reveal more information about the asset and have they been included in proposals
- Have alternative options /approaches been reviewed and assessed
- Is there a more sympathetic way to achieve the change



### ii) Has the proposal been subject to consultation?

- Is there a statutory requirement for public consultation
- Does the change require consent/licensing/ planning permission
- Has the advice of statutory bodies been taken into account
- Have previous owners, adjoining landowners, interest groups/ organisations been consulted

### iii) Has the decision making process been documented?

- Has the decision making process been recorded and justification outlined e.g for larger proposals through a Heritage Impact Assessment or Design & Access Statement. For smaller repairs, recorded in a buildings maintenance schedule.



### 3. Implement

The **Conservation Principles** outline that for some changes, the conservation led decision will be to record and monitor the asset, while for other changes, the implementation of a change will be very complex, involving many consultants, contractors and stakeholders. Examples of some of the key questions include:

#### i) Are works being carried out with the appropriate skills?

Do consultants have appropriate heritage expertise relative to the nature and scale of work

Does the contractor/ tradesperson have appropriate conservation skills, experience and training

#### ii) How is the work being implemented?

Is the contract (where applicable) appropriate to the nature of the work

Is the time of year appropriate for the nature of the work

#### iii) How is the project being monitored or recorded?

How will the work be monitored and recorded throughout the process

Is the level of expertise and experience appropriate to the nature and complexity of the work

Is there an opportunity to engage/ share information with the public/ stakeholders

Does the work present an opportunity for training/ learning

### 4. Record & Review

Principle 6 of the **Conservation Principles** outlines that documenting and learning from decisions is essential. Information gathered in the understanding and assessing of significance should be retained by the owner or manager of a heritage asset, and may also be appropriately placed within a public archive, such as the **Historic Environment Record of NI (HERoNI)**. This will ensure future generations will benefit from the knowledge gained. Documenting and recording proposal options, implementation of the works and any new information revealed will also be equally important, adding to the record of the asset to inform future decisions.

#### i) Has new information been revealed about an asset?

How has the information been recorded

Where will the information be held and is it accessible

#### ii) What were the lessons learnt?

What have the works revealed new information about an asset

How should this new information influence future work

What could or should be done differently

## Appendix B

### Guidance in International Charters and Conventions

The importance of conserving and protecting heritage assets is recognised in a number of international conventions and charters. Conventions are normally international treaties. Once the United Kingdom has ratified a convention it has obligations to implement its requirements. Charters are statements of internationally recognised best practice that shall be taken as guidance.

#### Conventions

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (**UNCLOS**) 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (**Granada Convention**), 1985.

European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (**Valletta Convention**), 1992.

European Landscape Convention (**Florence Convention**), 2000.

#### Charters

The International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (**Venice Charter**), 1964.

The Preservation of Historic Gardens (**Florence Charter**), 1981.

The Charter on the Protection and Management of Underwater Cultural Heritage (**ICOMOS**) 1996

ICOMOS Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas. (**Xi'an Declaration**), 2005.

New Zealand ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value. 2010.

The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (**Burra Charter**), 2013.

#### Other guidance

**Conservation Principles**, Policies and Guidance, for the sustainable management of the historic environment (Historic England, 2008)

**Conservation Principles** for the sustainable management of the historic environment Wales (Cadw, 2011)

Architectural Heritage Protection, guideline for planning authorities (Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2011)

Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (Historic Environment Scotland, 2019)

British Standard Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings BS 7913:2013 (British Standard Institution, 2013)

Conservation Professional Practice Principles (Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation, 2017)

HED Technical Advice and Guidance - DfC HED webpage Historic Environment Toolkit | Department for Communities <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/historic-environment-toolkit#toc-17>





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