



Department for

Communities

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An Roinn

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Deapartment fur

Commonities

Historic Environment Division

Conservation Principles

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

January 2023



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.



Donaghadee Harbour

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Introduction

Our historic environment is central to Northern Ireland's cultural heritage, providing us with a sense of place, identity and wellbeing. It is a resource to be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced for the benefit of present and future generations.

Northern Ireland has a rich tapestry of cultural heritage, including large numbers of monuments, buildings and archaeological sites which articulate some 10,000 years of human interaction with the landscape and the sea. This heritage is a valuable resource and woven into the everyday fabric and stories of the places where we live and work.

Our historic environment is constantly changing, but each part of it represents a finite resource. The process of managing change to a heritage asset and its setting must be carried out in ways that best sustain its significance and retain character, distinctiveness, local identity and quality of the places in which we live and work.

Purpose of the guidance

The document sets out a best practice conservation-led framework to inform all aspects of decision-making which affect our historic environment, and to reconcile its protection with the economic and social needs and aspirations of our communities.

It now also faces climate related challenges, and the importance of adaptation and mitigation against climate change is recognised.

Understanding significance is key to this activity. The significance of an asset is most simply defined as being its cumulative heritage interests. There may be a diverse range of

values or interests which are determined by input from a wide range of sources.

When significance is understood, we can determine if it is vulnerable in relation to any action or proposal for the asset. This enables the best decisions to be made to sustain significance and enhance it where possible. This may apply equally to the fabric and/or to other aspects of the site.

This document is the first part of a two part publication on Department for Communities (DfC) Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment. This document, Part 1, 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. Part 2 sets out how to apply these principles in order to achieve best conservation outcomes.

DfC strongly encourages these Conservation Principles to be referred to for guidance by the following when considering changes which impact on a designated or non-designated heritage asset:

- owners and people responsible for looking after heritage assets;
- developers and their consultant teams;
- policy makers and decision makers in central government and local authorities

The principles within this guidance will inform the exercise by Historic Environment Division (HED) of its following functions, namely:

- in our decision-making prior to undertaking work on sites in our ownership and care;

- in our decision-making and in our advice to others;
- to inform our consultation advice to local councils on planning applications;
- when providing advice with regard to the marine historic environment for development proposals either seaward, or exempt from, terrestrial planning;
- when contributing to Local Development Plans;

- in publishing guidance relating to the historic environment; and assessing applications where we provide financial support.

The principles are not predicated for use only on designated assets. The significance of heritage assets vary greatly. When they have been assessed as meeting the criteria threshold for designation¹ they become formally protected for the public interest; however, the principles apply to both designated and non-designated assets.



St John's Lighthouse Killough

¹ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-hed-scheduling-of-historic-buildings>.

Context with international treaties, legislation and guidance

The UK is a signatory to a number of international treaties relating to culture and heritage. This places an obligation on the government to implement the objectives of these conventions, where necessary by making laws or policies that bring them into practice. While conventions and treaties may not be directly relevant to planning decisions they can be relevant to the interpretation of legislation.

Note: The list below is not exhaustive

The Conservation Principles have been developed to be consistent with:

- **International Conventions:**

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

The Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention), 1985

The Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta Convention), 1992

The European Landscape Convention (Florence Convention), 2000

- **Legislative requirements:**

Protection of Wrecks Act 1973

Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

Planning Act (NI) 2011

Marine Act (NI) 2013

These acts and orders are primary legislation or statutory law in Northern Ireland.

Under the Planning Act (NI) 2011, each district council must also prepare its own Local Development Plan (LDP) which will include important considerations in dealing with planning applications and guiding decision making at local government level.

- **British Standards:**

The British Standard 7913:2013 Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings.

British Standards are recognised best practice standards, specification and guidance texts.

The six principles set out within this publication are consistent with the approach by Historic England, Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Ireland) to ensure a clear, shared approach across these islands. This publication is tailored to the process through which the historic environment is managed in Northern Ireland.

Context with strategic policy documents in Northern Ireland

The importance of our historic environment and its protection is recognised by the Northern Ireland Executive. The following are extracts from key strategic policy documents for Northern Ireland:

The **Regional Development Strategy 2035** includes the explicit objective to:

‘Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake’ [RDS aims, 2.10) and; ‘Conserve, protect, and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment’ [RG11] adding that, ‘The environment, both in terms of natural and built heritage, is one of Northern Ireland’s most important assets. Effective care of the environment provides very real benefits in terms of improving health and wellbeing, promoting economic development’

The **Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015** includes the following Regional Strategic Objectives for archaeology and the built heritage:

‘Secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage; Promote the sustainable development and environmental stewardship with regard to our built and archaeological heritage; and Deliver the economic and community benefit through conservation that facilitates productive use of our built heritage assets and opportunities for investment, whilst safeguarding their historic or architectural integrity’

The **Investment Strategy** for NI 2011-21 also addresses obligations to heritage:

‘We have a responsibility to present and future generations to protect and enhance our environment and to conserve the rich diversity that our natural and built heritage possesses.’



Excavation project at Dunluce

Conservation Principles

Principle 1 - The historic environment is of value to us all

- 1.1 Our historic environment contains a unique and dynamic record of human activity. It has been shaped by successive generations responding to the surroundings they inherited. It embodies lives, aspirations, skills and endeavour.
- 1.2 People value this historic environment as part of their cultural heritage, reflecting the knowledge, beliefs and the traditions of diverse communities over time. It gives meaning, quality and context to the places in which we live and visit, providing a sense of continuity and a source of local identity and distinctiveness. The historic environment is a social, economic and environmental asset and a resource to be sustained for learning and enjoyment.
- 1.3 Each generation should shape and sustain the historic environment in ways that allow people to understand, use, enjoy and benefit from it, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same.
- 1.4 Heritage assets are of public interest, regardless of their ownership. The use of legislation, policy and investment is justified to sustain significance and protect public interests. Statutory procedures are in place to provide a framework for balancing private and public interests.
- 1.5 Custodians should recognise and understand the significance of heritage assets, and to seek advice from public sources to assist in their efforts to protect, conserve and where possible enhance them.

Principle 2 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment

- 2.1 Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute their knowledge of the significance of heritage assets and to participate in decisions about their future, including change. Engagement ensures that all viewpoints, as far as is practical, are given consideration in decisions in an open and transparent way.
- 2.2 Sharing knowledge is central to sustaining the historic environment because it raises awareness and understanding of heritage, and the different ways it can be perceived by diverse groups of people. Learning also encourages engagement which informs and promotes active participation in sustaining historic environments.
- 2.3 People who are proficient in heritage knowledge and skills shall encourage and enable others to learn about, value and care for the historic environment. They play a crucial role in discerning, communicating and sustaining the significance of heritage assets, and in helping people to refine and articulate the values they attach to them. Alternative perspectives from those who are familiar with a place may also form a valuable part of a cumulative account.
- 2.4 It is essential to develop, maintain and pass on the specialist knowledge and skills necessary to sustain the historic environment.
- 2.5 Work to a heritage asset should only be undertaken by people with the appropriate knowledge, qualifications and skills. The appropriate consents shall be obtained where required.



Stonemasons at work

Principle 3 - Understanding the significance of heritage assets is vital

3.1 The historic environment is made up of individual heritage assets: archaeological sites, monuments and buildings, historic wrecks, as well as the townscapes or landscape/seascape settings in which they are found. Any part of the historic environment which has a distinctive historic association or identity can be considered to be a heritage asset and therefore holds a significance.

3.2 The significance of a heritage asset embraces all the diverse cultural interests that people associate with it. These interests tend to grow in strength and complexity over time, as understanding deepens and perceptions of a heritage asset evolve.

3.3 Understanding and articulating what is significant about a heritage asset is critical to inform decisions about its future, ensuring decisions made are well-informed and based on sound evidence.

3.4 To identify the significance of a heritage asset, the value of the heritage interests shall be considered, including how and why they may have changed over time:

- Archaeological interest
- Architectural interest
- Historic interest

These are explained in more detail within the 'Understanding Significance' section later.



Excavation of part of the souterrain at Bushmills distillery (Clogher Anderson ANT 007-021)

Principle 4 - Heritage assets shall be managed to sustain their significance

- 4.1 Change in the historic environment is inevitable. This can be the result of decay by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, or the need to respond to social, economic, environmental and technological change. For example, the impact of climate change and improving the energy efficiency of heritage assets are particular challenges. Finding a sustainable new use for an asset also needs to be carefully considered so as not to negatively impact its significance.
- 4.2 Conservation is the process of managing change to a heritage asset and/or its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage interest, and protect, conserve and enhance its significance for present and future generations.
- 4.3 Conservation of a heritage asset, including its setting², is achieved by gaining and sharing an understanding of its significance, and using that understanding to develop and manage the conservation approach:
- Identify heritage interests which are vulnerable to change inclusive of any associated natural environment;
 - Define the constraints necessary to protect, conserve and enhance those interests;
 - Achieve a balanced view between the impact of different options on the interests and significance of the heritage asset;
 - Ensure consistency in decision-making which retains the significance of the heritage asset.
- 4.4 Not all heritage conservation action leads to interventions; at times the most appropriate approach may be to do nothing and monitor, for example when an ancient field monument remains stable and appreciated in a working agricultural landscape.
- 4.5 Where interventions are proposed, they are to be proportionate and justified by demonstrating that the benefits outweigh any resulting harm or loss to the heritage asset's fabric or setting. Interventions must not confuse our understanding of the past, but rather they should reveal or reinforce the significance of a heritage asset.
- 4.6 New work (interventions of any kind) shall respect the interest and setting of the heritage asset, and the quality of design, material and execution, should be such that it is valued both now and in the future. This neither implies nor precludes working in traditional or innovative ways.

² <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/guidance-on-setting-and-the-historic-environment.pdf>

Principle 5 - Decisions about change shall be reasonable, transparent and consistent

- 5.1 Owners, managers and occupiers of heritage assets are encouraged to seek advice and examples of best practice in preparing their conservation proposals.
- 5.2 The level of assessment and public engagement shall be sufficient to inform and justify the decision to be made, but efficient and proportionate in the use of resources.
- 5.3 Decisions about change in the historic environment demand the application of expertise, experience and judgement in a consistent, transparent process led by established conservation doctrine, legislation and policy.
- 5.4 When assessing the impact of a proposed change, determining authorities shall give due regard to the significance and impact (present and proposed) of the heritage asset and its setting.
- 5.5 Potential conflict between sustaining the significance of a heritage asset and delivering other important public benefits is to be avoided or minimised by considering other ways of delivering those benefits.
- 5.6 If conflict cannot be avoided, the weight given to heritage interests when making the decision shall be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset, and the impact the proposed change will have on the significance of the heritage asset and its setting.



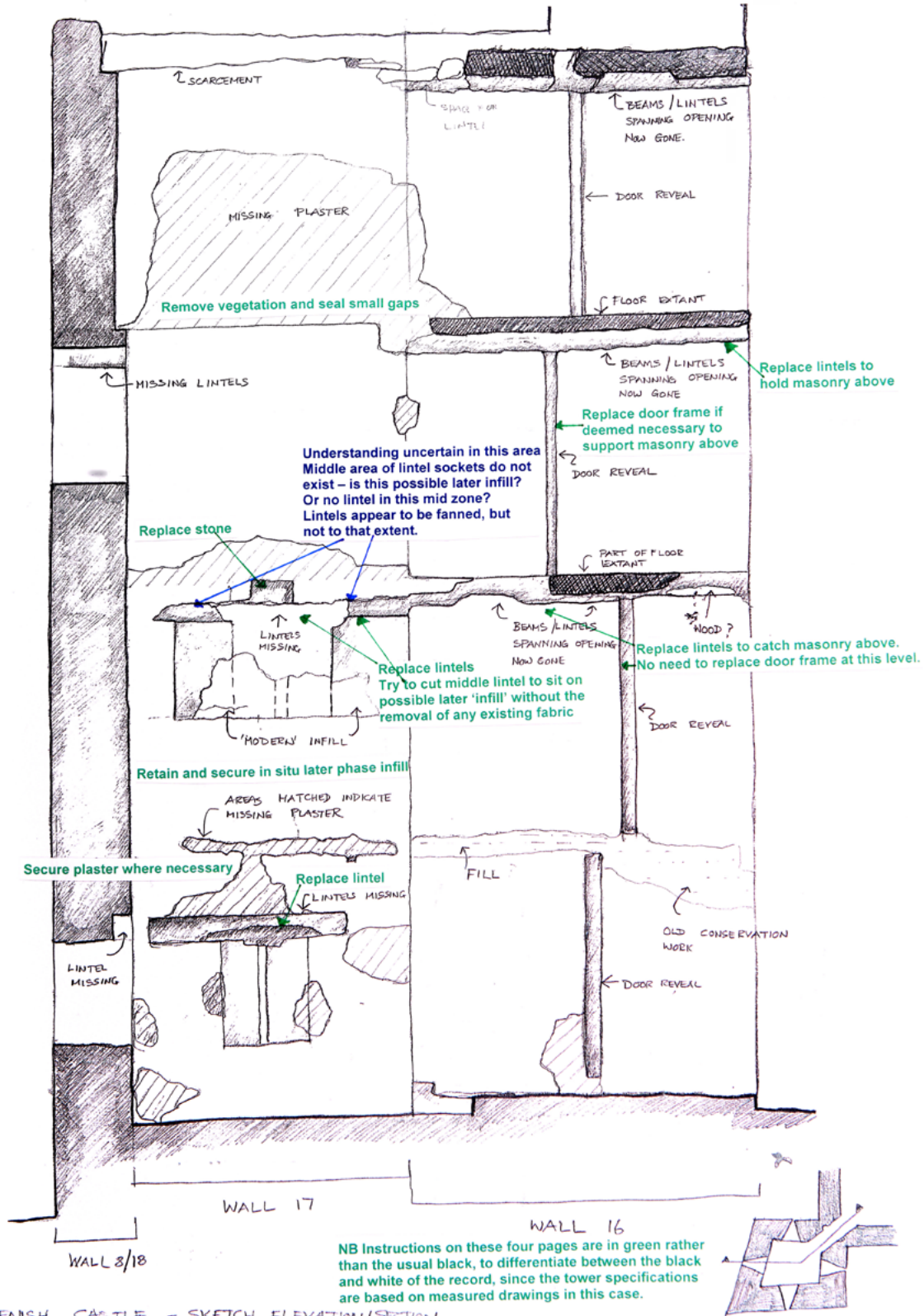
17th Century artillery fort, Hillsborough

Principle 6 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

- 6.1 The information gathered in the understanding and assessing of significance shall be retained by the owner or manager of a heritage asset, and where appropriate placed in a public archive. This will ensure future generations will benefit from the knowledge gained.
- 6.2 The information and documentation for the justification of conservation decisions and the actions that follow them are crucial to maintaining a cumulative account of what has happened to a heritage asset. This will ensure an understanding of how and why its significance may have been altered and inform future decisions.
- 6.3 Owners and managers of heritage assets, and responsible public bodies, should monitor and evaluate the effects of change resulting from decisions and policies, and use that information to inform future decisions and policies.
- 6.4 In the exceptional case where all or part of a heritage asset will be lost, whether as a result of inevitable natural process or a decision, the opportunity to extract and record that information about the past must be realised. This requires investigation and analysis, followed by archiving and accessibility of the results, all at a level that reflects its significance.
- 6.5 Where such loss is the direct result of human intervention, the costs of this work shall be borne by those who benefit from the change, or who initiate the change in the public interest.

SOUTH / SE ELEVATION INTERIOR (WALLS 17, 16)

Clear all vegetation from wall tops. Secure loose masonry. Take down and rebuild the minimum stonework necessary; secure in situ as far as possible.



CREVENISH CASTLE - SKETCH ELEVATION / SECTION

OCTOBER 2006 FEB 103:20

Understanding Significance

Preamble

7.1 We value the historic environment for many reasons, such as its distinctive archaeology, architecture or landscape, the stories it can tell us about our past, its physical connection with notable people or events and because we find it beautiful or inspiring. It may play a role as the focus for a community, and represent both tangible and intangible heritage. All of this we want to enjoy and sustain for the benefit of present and future generations.

7.2 The idea of ‘significance’ lies at the core of these principles. Understanding of a heritage asset’s significance, be it a building, an archaeological site or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape, is achieved by evaluating and assessing the heritage interests to enable and allow for the effects of proposed changes to be fully considered. This necessitates the application of a systematic and consistent process.

7.3 Tangible heritage – physical evidence produced by human activity and passed from one generation to the next, e.g. artistic creations such as monuments, structures and buildings.

7.4 Intangible heritage - traditions or living expressions inherited from one generation to the next, such as oral traditions, social practices, or knowledge and skills.

7.5 Significance – the collective term for the sum of all the heritage interests attached to a heritage asset, including its setting. The following provides a summary of the

core heritage interests, which apply to the significance of a heritage asset and may be expressed under one or more of these headings:

Archaeological interest

7.6 Archaeological interest of a heritage asset derives from the embodied evidence of past human activity. The evidence may sometimes be visible and relatively easy to access, but can also be less apparent (below ground remains and artefacts, palaeoenvironmental evidence, submerged marine heritage, or hidden beneath later built fabric) and therefore, obtained through careful investigation. The potential for evidence from occupied or vacant buildings must not be overlooked and is often an important driver for conservation decisions.

7.7 Physical remains of past human activity, including landform, are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of a place, and of the people and cultures that made them. Landform includes monumental landscapes, with its deliberate connections from one monument to another or a prominent point in the landscape. These remains provide the primary evidence for when and how a heritage asset was made or built, what it was used for and how it has changed over time. The unrecorded loss of historic fabric represents the destruction of finite primary evidence.

7.8 Heritage assets will vary in how much they can contribute to our understanding

of our history and are vulnerable to inappropriate methods of gaining this knowledge. The use of good practice and appropriate techniques will ensure that information can be gained without causing unnecessary damage to potentially vulnerable structures. Any activity which prejudices future archaeological investigation harms the heritage asset. This can mean that some heritage assets, or parts of them, are very sensitive to change. Therefore, the use of good practice and appropriate techniques will ensure, that when unavoidable, information can be gained without causing unnecessary damage to potentially vulnerable structures. Expert advice must be sought to identify those sensitivities, and through suitable assessment or evaluation, informed decisions can be made on how best to proceed. Non-intrusive investigation is preferable to intrusive work to obtain the evidence without physical harm to the archaeology.

- 7.9 Additional evidence can be gained from documentary sources (historical records, contemporary written accounts, or reports from previous investigations), pictorial, maps or cartographic records, archaeological archives or museum collections. To assess the significance of this aspect of a heritage asset, all this evidence needs to be gathered in a systematic way and any gaps in the evidence identified.
- 7.10 Tangible and intangible evidence plays a vital role in helping us understand the past. The retention of as much of the primary evidence as possible, including local knowledge and tradition,

is critical in aiding our ability to properly understand its realities. The ultimate aim of archaeological investigation is to obtain the evidence to increase knowledge and our understanding without damage to the heritage asset. Where an impact on the historic fabric is unavoidable, this is kept to the absolute minimum necessary. This is not always possible, particularly when the requirement for investigative work arises as a final recourse to record archaeological remains in advance of destruction through development. However, identifying gaps in evidence through research and surveys can help inform small scale limited evaluation to answer specific conservation questions; these can be beneficial in informing objectives to conserve and protect the integrity of an asset, or ensure its preservation in situ.

Architectural interest

- 7.11 Architectural interest derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a heritage asset. It includes the style, character and ornamentation, the plan form and functionality of the physical structure, and how it is understood within its setting. It is an interest in the art or science, including the artistic endeavour of construction, craftsmanship, detailing and decoration of buildings or structures of all types. This can be through formal design or the seemingly incidental outcome, or both, of how the heritage asset has evolved over time.
- 7.12 Architectural interest of a building, structure or landscape as a whole embraces composition (proportions, form, massing, silhouette, views and vistas as

well as circulation through it) and includes materials or planting. Architectural interest also includes; setting, spatial organisation, technological innovation, interiors, alterations, group value and arrangement of spaces or landscape.

- 7.13 Formal design is the embodiment of an intentional design concept, be it architecture, structures, including industrial and defence structures, or landscape reinforced by human embellishment; design created through detailed instructions (such as by a known patron, architect, gardener or craftsman).
- 7.14 Incidental design can be categorised as vernacular, that is, the result of a succession of responses within a particular cultural identity. They include, the relationship of buildings and structures and their materials to their locality; a harmonious, expressive or dramatic quality in the juxtaposition of buildings and structures with their setting; or the seemingly organic form of an urban or rural landscape.
- 7.15 The physical structure and composition of a heritage asset may have changed over time. Earlier visual records and written descriptions may be more powerful in people's minds than what survives today. Important vistas may be lost or screened, or access to them altered or temporarily denied. Therefore, the compiling of evidence of the past and present form of the heritage asset will inform our understanding, enabling decisions on the protection and conservation of the heritage asset.

- 7.16 Aesthetic interest resulting from the action of nature and time on buildings or structures, may overlie and enhance the interest of a conscious design (man-made) and may influence how we respond to the heritage asset. While the passage of time may simply add to the range and depth of the significance of the whole, on occasion nature may be in conflict with the heritage asset, and have the potential to cause harm, for example, vegetation rooting in masonry joints.

Historic interest

- 7.17 Historic interest derives not only from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through the fabric of a heritage asset to the present, but to a heritage asset's age, rarity and authenticity. Historic interest tends to be illustrative or associative.
- 7.18 Illustrative – the physical story of past historical events, people or distinctive aspects of life. The illustrative value of heritage assets tends to be greater if the historic fabric incorporates the first, or only surviving, example of an innovation derived from consequence, whether related to design, technology or aspects of social or cultural organisation.
- 7.19 Associative – the association with a notable person, family, movement or event. The place where something momentous happened can increase and intensify understanding through clear linking of historical accounts of events with the fabric of the heritage asset where they happened – provided the heritage asset still retains some semblance of its appearance at the time.

7.20 When these stories, illustrative or associative, form part of the identity or collective memory of a place for a community it can hold a social interest. Such values tend to change over time, and sometimes may be important for remembering positive or uncomfortable events, attitudes or periods in our history.

7.21 The functions of a heritage asset are likely to have changed over time, but the historic interest can be easily diminished when its history is concealed or not acknowledged.

7.22 Original fabric is a primary evidence source, and where it is associated with a notable individual or event it can expand our understanding and ability to illustrate our past.

7.23 The change from one style or fashion to another that a heritage asset may exhibit, will provide historic interest. For example, how an individual built or designed a garden, or created a settlement, may provide insight into their personality, or demonstrate their political or cultural affiliations. It can suggest aspects of their character and motivation that extend, or even contradict, what they or others wrote, or are recorded as having said, at the time.

7.24 The use of a heritage asset for its original purpose, for example as a place of recreation, defence, worship, or manufacture, illustrates the relationship between design and function, and so may make a major contribution to its historical interest. If so, cessation of that activity can potentially alter that interest. Conversely, abandoned historic

settlements for example, may illustrate important historic events.

7.25 While physical heritage assets offer clear and obvious insight to our past, the historical treatment and naming of the landscape, place names and townlands, also gives a sense of place and identity that is deeply embedded in our society, local culture and traditions. Intangible cultural heritage is an equally important part of the heritage interest and identity.

Further suggested heritage interests

7.26 In some cases it may be appropriate to consider other aspects of interest such as:

Authenticity interest – valued because it retains integral characteristics which truthfully reflect its heritage interest and which are to be safeguarded. Such safeguarding can impose a significant constraint on project decision making;

Communal interest - derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory;

Economic interest – providing a valuable source of income or employment, for example a historic landscape may be sought out for enjoyment for private reflection or social events which could generate economic income for the surrounding locality;

Scientific interest - may be important for its scientific content or as a source for scholarly study;

Social interest – may contribute towards social stability, social interaction and community cohesion, helping to identify the group values that make the community a desirable place to live and work;

Spiritual interest – emanating from religious beliefs, or reflecting present-day perceptions of the spirit of place;

Symbolic interest – may convey meaning and information that helps local communities to interpret identity and assert cultural personality.

The above headings are not exhaustive, and are provided as guidance in the assessment of ‘significance’. Many of the named heritage interests will apply to the assessment of the significance of statutorily protected heritage assets. Criteria for their designation is however derived from legislation.



Excavation at early Christian crannog, Drumclay

Assessment of Significance

- 8.1 Significance is evidence based, and new evidence can be uncovered at any time which modifies our understanding of a heritage asset. To identify significance, the heritage interests of an asset, its history, fabric and character, must be correctly understood. The different heritage interests of the asset should be researched, assessed and outlined in a Statement of Significance.
- 8.2 A Statement of Significance is a succinct assessment of the heritage asset. For example, it should cover the heritage interests in detail through consideration of:
- the heritage asset's origins;
 - contextual relationship with other heritage assets;
 - the surrounding natural and built environment;
 - how and why it has changed over time;
 - the form and condition of its constituent elements and materials;
 - the technology of its construction;
 - the function it provided or provides;
 - any habitats it provides; and
 - comparison with similar heritage assets in the locality, region or even nationally.
- 8.3 It is desirable to protect, conserve and enhance all the identified heritage interests of a heritage asset; but on occasion, what is necessary to sustain some interests will conflict with what is necessary to sustain others. Therefore, understanding significance is essential to objective decision-making.
- 8.4 An assessment of significance will need to identify how particular parts of a heritage asset and different periods in its evolution contribute to, or detract from, each identified heritage interest, producing a chronological sequence of its evolution.
- 8.5 Engaging with appropriate professional expertise to undertake this work is important to ensure the consistency and validity of this assessment.
- 8.6 Sources of information may include:
- Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI)
 - Documentation underpinning any existing statutory designations
 - Historical and archaeological archives (museum records)
 - Published research frameworks
 - Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)
 - Personal recollections / dialogue
 - Specific programmes of archaeological survey and investigation
- 8.7 Part of the assessment will normally be illustrated by maps, plans or photographic record showing the age and relative significance of the components or character areas of the heritage asset. When a scheme of work proposes potential change, it is important that the elements directly affected are addressed at an appropriate level of detail, but always in relation to the heritage asset as a whole.

8.8 Designation at an international, national or local level is an indicator of the importance of a particular heritage asset. However, non-designated heritage assets may represent monuments, buildings or landscapes which are locally important. Therefore, the absence of statutory designation does not necessarily imply lack of significance. Detailed research and analysis may reveal new evidence about any heritage asset and therefore, enable its review within current selection criteria for designation or the application of protective policies.

8.9 The fact that a heritage asset does not meet current criteria for formal designation does not negate the heritage interests it may have in creating a distinctive character or local identity for particular communities.³ Such interests will be taken into account in making decisions about their future through the local authority and marine planning systems.

8.10 It could be argued that no Statement of Significance can ever be complete or totally objective. However, it must try to express the heritage interests identified fairly and not be influenced by consideration of any changes being proposed. Different people and communities may attach different weight to the same heritage interests of a heritage asset at the same time. Judgements about heritage interests, especially those relating to the recent past, tend to be influenced by current perspectives, which will likely evolve over time. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that Statements of Significance can change with time as new evidence emerges, or perceptions of the historic context of the heritage asset change.



Vernacular grouping, Thomas Mellon Homestead, Omagh

³ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/hed-historic-buildings-of-local-importance-designation-guidance.pdf>

Managing change to a heritage asset and its setting

- 9.1 Conservation 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 on that significance.
- 9.2 Factors to consider in assessing the impact of change include:
- the relative contribution to significance of the elements affected (where appropriate, by reference to criteria for national or local designation), including the contribution of its setting;
 - how the proposed change would affect these elements;
 - the extent of any uncertainty about its heritage interests (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements); and
 - any tensions between potentially conflicting interests.
- 9.3 Change to heritage assets is inevitable. The passage of time, natural forces and regular use will lead to erosion of historic fabric impacting the archaeological or architectural interest. Ensuring the long term future of our heritage assets often requires adaptation and change, which may be acceptable provided such interventions respect the recognised heritage interest and significance of the heritage asset. Owners and managers of heritage assets should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential interest and value, provided that the existing recognised significance is not eroded or compromised in the process. It is acknowledged that work of successive generations often contributes to significance.
- 9.4 Retaining the economic viability or the social functions of heritage assets will sustain their survival and encourage their regular maintenance. For example, many archaeological sites can be maintained under sympathetic farming or forestry regimes, or as with historic parks, gardens or demesnes which form part of dynamic systems, they can benefit from continuous management practices. Lapses in management and maintenance regimes may lead to accelerated deterioration of heritage assets.
- 9.5 Decisions about change to heritage assets will involve balancing the significance of the heritage asset against the anticipated positives and negatives of the proposed intervention.
- 9.6 Managing appropriate change of a heritage asset balances a sound understanding of the significance of the asset with the requirements and aspirations of the current generation and a long term view for its protection for future generations. Only through this process, will we create a sustainable management of the historic environment.

Definitions

Includes words used in a specific or technical sense.

Alteration	Work intended to change the function or appearance of a heritage asset or part thereof
Authenticity	Those characteristics that most truthfully reflect and embody the cultural heritage interests of a heritage asset
Built Heritage	A collective term for heritage assets of local, regional or international significance because of their heritage value(s)
Conservation	The process of managing change to a heritage asset in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations
Conservation area	An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, designated under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
Cultural heritage	Inherited assets which people identify and value as a reflection and expression of their evolving knowledge, beliefs and traditions, and of their understanding of the beliefs and traditions of others
Context	Any relationship between a heritage asset and its setting, including other places and its past, relevant to the values of that heritage asset
Designation	The recognition of particular heritage interest(s) of a heritage asset by giving it formal status under legislation or policy intended to sustain its significance
Designated Heritage Asset	A World Heritage Site, State Care Monument, Scheduled Monument, Area of Significant Archaeological Interest, Listed Building, Conservation Area, Area of Townscape/Village Character, Local Landscape Policy Area or Protected Wreck Site.
Fabric	The material substance of which places are formed, including geology, archaeological deposits, structures and buildings, construction materials, decorative details and finishes and planted or managed flora

Harm	Change for the worse, here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage interest of a heritage asset
Heritage	All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having cultural significance
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora
HERoNI	The Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI), holds information on all elements of Northern Ireland's historic environment and heritage assets in the form of databases, written records, maps, photographic, drawn and digital material
Integrity	A measure of the wholeness and intactness of a heritage asset and the survival and condition of those elements that contribute to its significance
Intervention	Any action which has a physical effect on the fabric or appreciation of a place
Maintenance	Routine work necessary to keep the fabric of a place, including its setting, in good order
Preserve	To keep safe from harm
Proportionality	The quality of being appropriately related to something else in size, degree, or other measurable characteristics
Public	Of or concerning the people as a whole
Renewal	Comprehensive dismantling and replacement of an element of a place, in the case of structures normally reincorporating sound elements

Repair	Work beyond the scope of maintenance, to remedy defects caused by decay, damage or use, including minor adaptation to achieve a sustainable outcome, but not involving restoration or alteration
Restoration	To return a heritage asset to a known earlier state, on the basis of compelling evidence, without conjecture
Reversible	Capable of being removed so that the previous state is restored without loss of historic fabric. Here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage interest of a heritage asset
Setting	The immediate and extended environment that is part of – and contributes to – the significance and distinctive character of a heritage asset, and through which a heritage asset is understood, seen, experienced and enjoyed
Significance	The value of a heritage asset to past, present and future generations because of the sum of its embodied heritage interests. Those interests may be archaeological, architectural, historic or others. Significance also derives from its setting
Sustain	Maintain, treasure and affirm significance
Sustainable	Capable of meeting present needs without compromising ability to meet future needs
Transparent	Open to public scrutiny
Value-based judgement	An assessment that reflects the values of the person or group making the assessment

Appendix A

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 treated 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.

Conventions can be accessed **here**

Charters

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

The Preservation of Historic Gardens (Florence Charter), 1981

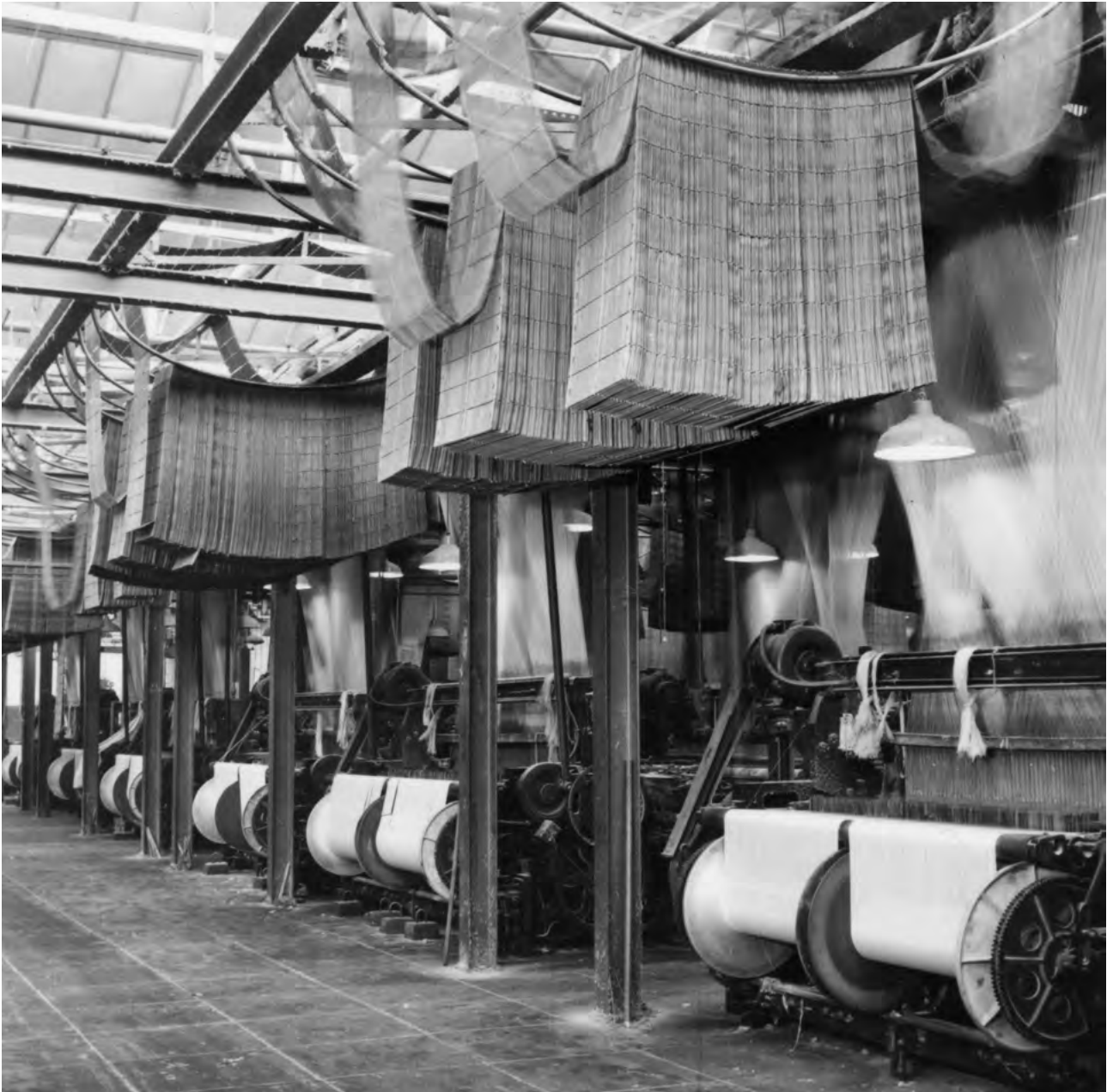
The Charter on the Protection and Management of Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICOMOS), 1996

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.

Charters can be accessed **here**



Ballygrooby Cotton Manufactory, Old Bleach Linen Co. Ltd.
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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)

The above lists are not exhaustive



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This document is Part 1 of two publications on Conservation Principles; Part 2 is 'Applying the Conservation Principles'.

This edition is published by DfC Historic Environment Division, January 2023.

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Front Cover Image:

Dundrum Castle Co. Down