



Conservation principles for the properties in the care of Scottish Ministers.

Purpose and Scope

Recognised principles of conservation are enshrined in the numerous international charters that have developed over many years and reflect an evolving approach. Our principles are informed and in some instances aligned with these charters but they also recognise our specific circumstances and particularly how our approach can realise other benefits without compromising our conservation objectives.

Historic Environment Scotland, cares for the properties in care of Scottish Ministers and their associated collections on behalf of the people of Scotland. These monuments, artefacts and places of cultural heritage represent a tangible and irreplaceable link with our past. Scotland has a conservation tradition that can be dated back to the work of Robert Reid on cathedrals and abbeys in the mid-18th century. More recently, the Scottish Government's policy aspirations for the historic environment were set out in the 2011 Scottish Historic Environment Policy and subsequently expanded in 2014 by 'Our Place in Time', a strategy to ensure that Scotland's heritage makes a strong contribution to the wellbeing of the nation.

These principles sit within a wider societal context that brings benefits beyond those set down in the charters and policies. We see no conflict here: rather, such an approach underpins the purpose, importance and broader benefits of conservation generally.

These principles should be clearly regarded as a standard for the work that Historic Environment Scotland carries out at its own hand rather than conservation principles for the wider historic environment.

1. *The purpose of conservation is to perpetuate cultural significance.*

The underlying intention of conservation operations is to sustain the tangible and intangible cultural significance for as long as possible in order to pass that body of evidence on to our successors. Decay is a natural process which ultimately cannot be resisted. Interventions should be driven by risks defined in a formal assessment of conservation need and a conservation strategy for the asset. This should focus on the minimum work necessary to counter deterioration, stabilise elements for the foreseeable future and have minimal impact on evidence.



Conservation work at Knock Castle

2. *The cultural significance and the history of the monument's evolution will be understood before interventions are considered.*



Glasgow Cathedral

Understanding the tangible and intangible significance of a place is key for informing decisions on management and interventions. Our understanding of significance changes over time and we should therefore ensure that our decisions are made on the best available evidence. Those involved with conservation will share an understanding of this significance which, in turn, should help to:

- understand the development of a place and the context to that development;
- identify the drivers of decay and the risk associated with these to historic fabric;
- illustrate how this will impact on significance, integrity and authenticity;
- guide the actions and constraints required to sustain that significance;
- inform decisions

3. *Our approach to dealing with climate change will be pragmatic and informed.*

The impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent and should be central to our thinking. In some cases this will require our approach to be more flexible in reducing risks to the assets. Understanding these risks and their impacts is a key priority for us. We will assess the vulnerability of our assets in relation to these risks and consider climate change as one of the criteria in our resource management plans. Regular routine conservation and maintenance will continue to be the first line of defence. In some cases it will be necessary to have a more flexible approach to build resilience and future-proof the assets.



Broch at Dun Carloway, Lewis

4. *We will respect context and authenticity and avoid dislocation of historic fabric from its setting.*

Every monument or object derives significance from its context. While it may be technically possible to move structures and objects from their original site, significance and context will be diminished. We will generally not remove structures, objects or fabric components from site to extend their lifespan. We shall ensure that such elements are well documented for future study. If we chose to replace a feature, this will be done only using traditional materials and skills in order that the intangible value in skills and materials will be nurtured, and we will be honest in presentation in this scenario. Where necessary items may be taken off - site for conservation work but only when there is an agreed plan for re-instatement.

5. ***Conservation takes precedence***

Managing cultural significance means making decisions about tangible places and objects of cultural significance that cannot be replaced, and about intangible traditions, skills and practices associated with that place. Since these resources are finite and irreplaceable, conservation of the asset is our priority and will take precedence over other demands made of a site. Intervention shall seek to protect and perpetuate the intangible cultural heritage also



Stirling Castle

6. ***We will ensure the availability of the appropriate knowledge, skills and materials to fulfil our conservation purpose.***



The level of specialist knowledge and expertise required to deliver conservation activity is significant and diverse. Whilst we have a great deal of this expertise, we do not have all the answers. We will approach our work with humility and recognise that we are part of broader conservation community and be open to the views and expertise of others.

The availability of traditional skills and materials is core to our work on the estate and we also recognise our leadership role in the broader sector in this respect. We shall demonstrate leadership in accredited training and education provision for our own staff. We will maximise opportunities to perpetuate and re-introduce sources of traditional materials in procurement of external contractors and in new build works on the estate. We are cognisant of the broader emerging opportunities around sustainability and the circular low carbon economy and this will figure strongly in our thinking.

7. *Our approach will be respectful of those who have gone before and retain that authenticity.*

Interventions should be faithful to the original design intent, details, materials and construction and should be self documenting. We will chose honest interventions using traditional materials over the introduction of modern techniques and materials. Authenticity of historic fabric and presentation are of key importance to us



8. *Conservation interventions will be recorded and archived to help those who come after us, and we will share our experiences.*

Our decision making process should be evidence based and transparent. We will be exemplary in our production of a formal record of change, its retention and accessibility. We will maximise the learning and engagement opportunities arising from our conservation activity, and share our experiences with others



Perpetuating intangible traditions - burning shell using peat on the Isle of Barra

For further information please contact ;

Historic Environment Scotland
Longmore House
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH

Historic Environment Scotland is a registered Scottish Charity. Scottish Charity No. SC045925