



Conservation plan guidance

September 2017



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1 Introduction

If you are applying under the Heritage Grants programme for a grant of £2million or more towards a project that involves capital works to a site, building, designed, semi-natural or natural landscape, or if your project is complex and involves conserving several different types of heritage that are important in their own right, we will ask you to prepare a **conservation plan** as part of your second round application.

Ideally, the preparation of a suitable conservation plan should be the first thing you do in your development phase as it will help you make important decisions about your project. You will need to send this to HLF at a point agreed with your case officer.

We do not require conservation plans for projects that focus on collections, archives, biological species, or intangible heritage (such as people's memories and experiences, cultural traditions) **where no building work is proposed**. For collections, archives and biological species projects, we will expect you to write a collections management plan, archives preservation plan, biodiversity action plan or similar.

This guidance note will help you to prepare a conservation plan or to commission an expert to help you. It tells you how they can help you manage your site and design your project.

Please note, as part of our standard terms of grant, we will ask you to maintain the benefits of your project in the future. That means we will expect you to make sure that the work we have funded is kept in good condition. Therefore, you will also need to prepare a separate **management and maintenance plan** in addition to a conservation plan.

2 About conservation planning

A conservation plan is simply a document that helps you to understand why your heritage is valued and by whom. It helps you take an overall view, and it sets out a framework of policies that will help you make decisions about how to look after your heritage whilst ensuring it continues to be used, enjoyed and made accessible. A conservation plan should cover the whole heritage site and not just the part affected by the HLF-funded project.

At its most basic, a conservation plan describes:

- your heritage;
- why it matters and to whom;
- what is happening to it; and
- what are the key issues you need to be aware of to look after it.

The information in a conservation plan should help you to:

- design new work;
- plan conservation and restoration works;
- improve public access; or
- plan activities to help people engage with heritage.

A conservation plan should include information about all of the different kinds of heritage on your site, and why they are important. Most historic places include more than one kind of

heritage – such as archaeology, landscape, structures or buildings. And each of these might be important in its own right – for example a scheduled ancient monument, a site of special scientific interest, a listed building or a locally valued place. Having one single integrated plan ensures the issues are considered collectively and can also help you to anticipate and avoid potential conflicts in looking after different kinds of heritage.

2.1 The information in a plan will help you to:

Identify project costs

It is not easy to anticipate heritage costs with any degree of certainty, but if you understand the heritage and its issues before your project begins, you have a better chance of predicting the financial need. The information in your conservation plan should help you to anticipate any heritage issues and allow for them in your timetable and costs.

Design your capital project

When you design your capital project you will need to think about the impact of your project on the heritage. Poor-quality work can damage the heritage, and can also lead to higher management and maintenance costs in the long term. The information in your conservation plan will help you design new work. Use it to draw up a brief for the architect who is designing your project. Make sure they have a copy of the plan and ensure that they are aware of the information in it.

Write your HLF activity plan

Understanding what is important and to whom will help you create your activity plan. It will help you identify what people value about your heritage and how they might want to engage with it, and this will help you create opportunities for a wider range of people to take an active part in your heritage. The information you gather in your plan will inform the stories you tell about your heritage in the interpretation of your site, and it is helpful in creating activities for people to learn about, enjoy or volunteer to manage your heritage. As you gather information you should share it with the people developing your activity plan and agree how it can be used.

Think about effects on the environment

Your conservation plan should help you to think about how you can improve energy efficiency without damaging what is important about the heritage. It may also help you to identify opportunities for environmental benefits, such as caring for the biodiversity on your site, reducing water consumption, or recycling materials.

Think about access

The process of preparing a conservation plan should help you to think about how you can improve access to the heritage as part of your project. Improving access involves removing both physical and sensory barriers that prevent people from gaining maximum benefit from your heritage project. Understanding the important areas of your heritage will help you to think about where it is most important for you to improve access to areas that may not be currently easily accessible. It can also help to inform alternative forms of access such as interpretation in various formats, creating digital copies or providing virtual access. You may

want to commission an Access Audit. This is a step-by-step assessment of the ease by which disabled people can get into and around your site, buildings and facilities. You should also consider establishing an Access Group to understand any barriers that may limit access.

Identify the need for specialist site surveys and investigation

You may need to commission specialist surveys to find out more about your heritage, such as a survey of a monument, species, habitat or designed landscape, or the dendrochronological analysis of roof timbers.

If you already have a conservation management plan, integrated land management plan, green space management plan, or similar document, which tells us why your heritage is important and how you will look after it, then you may not need to prepare a new one. Ask your HLF development officer for advice before submitting your first-round application. If you do need to do more work on your plan you should identify this before you apply. You can ask for development funding to contribute to the cost if you need it.

3 Commissioning a conservation plan

If you are planning a heritage project, and running a heritage site, you may find it difficult to prepare a conservation plan at the same time. Most people find it useful to ask a consultant to prepare a plan, but it is vital that you are closely involved in the planning process. The plan should be of benefit to you in the long run, so you must make sure that you are happy with the document and that it meets your needs.

There is no one specialism best suited to writing a conservation plan – the important thing is that the person doing the work has a broad understanding of heritage management, is able to integrate different kinds of heritage and can present complicated information in a simple way. Whoever does the work is likely to need additional help to deal with heritage that they are not familiar with. If you do want to commission a specialist, don't forget to include the cost of that work in the project development section of your first-round application.

Ask the consultant to send you a method statement saying how they will go about the work, as well as a price. Also ask for examples of other plans they have written. You may want to interview potential consultants as it is important that you can work closely together.

As part of your project development, you may also want to commission specialist surveys to inform your conservation plan and to help you develop your project. You will often need to carry out more detailed research or investigation, especially if you are designing new capital works. That information might include the following research, surveys or investigations:

- a detailed condition survey of a building, landscape or monument;
- an assessment of the building's environmental performance;
- historical research;
- measured drawings of a landscape or building;
- archaeological analysis of a building or landscape;
- habitat or species survey;
- archaeological assessment;

- architectural paint research or tree-ring dating;
- geophysical investigation;
- site, building or species monitoring;
- scientific investigation;
- research or consultation with communities*; and
- collecting people's memories of the heritage*.

*This work should also be cross-referenced in your activity plan.

If further detailed survey, research or recording is essential for your project design or costs, you may include the work in your project development costs. If you do, tell us:

- what type of work is needed;
- why it is critical to your project;
- which type of professional skills you will need; and
- the estimated cost and programme of delivery.

4 Contents of a conservation plan

A conservation plan must address all the different kinds of heritage on a given site. Although every heritage site is different, and every plan is different, there is certain basic information that you will need in order to conserve and look after your site.

4.1 Executive summary

A very brief summary of the main points of the plan. Include a short statement on the overall significance of the site and the headline policies for its conservation.

4.2 Introduction

- Who wrote the plan?
- Who participated and who was consulted?
- Scope of the plan.
- Links to other planning work including your activity plan.
- Any gaps in the plan including any limitations.
- Any other documents that need to be read with the plan.

4.3 Section one – Understanding the heritage

The first section of the plan should tell you all about the heritage on your site. This develops in more detail the summary information we ask for in the second section of the application form. It should address the following:

- **Describe the heritage** - Describe each of the different kinds of heritage on your site including buildings, archaeology, landscapes and industrial heritage. If there is existing oral history material or other 'intangible' heritage you must also describe that.
- **History** - Tell us how your site, building or landscape has developed through time. Use historical sources and maps and also archaeological evidence to provide a set of drawings that illustrates the chronological development of your heritage. Make sure that you describe all of the history of the site from very earliest times to the present day.

- **Local context** - Explain where your heritage is and what is nearby. For example, if your heritage is a building, describe the surrounding environment. If it is a wildlife site, describe the surrounding area and landscape.
- **Put your heritage in a wider heritage context** - Describe the wider heritage context of the site. This means explaining how it relates to other sites of a similar type or date. For example, if it is a building, how does it compare to similar buildings or for a wildlife site, are there other comparable sites?
- **Describe how the heritage is looked after** - Explain how the site is managed today. Explain what policies you have in place for managing the heritage, what management standards you need to meet as a result of protection or designation, and whether there are tenants or other people involved in the site, who they are and what their role is.

Ideally, Section one of the plan should be succinct, containing no more than a synthesis of the background history of the site. It should be based on surveys and investigation, as well as historical sources, maps and plans, and can be illustrated with photographs and where possible copies of historical drawings, maps or plans. More detailed supporting information, such as a site gazetteer, survey of character areas, inventory or other survey or audit, should be contained in appendices.

4.4 Section two – statement of significance

This is the most important part of your plan. It should tell us what is important about the heritage, why and to whom it is important. There are many different ways in which heritage is important to people. Your statement of significance should consider the following:

- Is the heritage of importance to science, for example for its wildlife, geology, biodiversity or ecology?
- Is it rare or endangered?
- Why is the heritage important to history? Is it associated with important people or events? How does it contribute to our understanding of the past?
- What are the artistic qualities of the buildings, spaces or designed landscapes?
- What is its contribution to the wider environment in which it sits?
- Is the heritage of archaeological significance? What can the buildings, landscape or buried remains tell us about past events? What do we know about the pattern of construction, use or alteration?
- Is the item of technical importance – does it tell us about innovation?
- How does the local community value the place?
- Is it a source of formal or informal learning? Is it used for recreation?
- Has the heritage been featured in films, paintings or in literature?
- Is it important for commemorative or spiritual reasons?
- Does its current use contribute to its significance?
- Has the value of the heritage changed through time? Was it important for different reasons in the past?
- Is the story of its preservation important?

If your heritage is registered, designated or protected in some way, this will be because it is of a particular value. Tell us whether it is protected, how it is protected and why.

Also explain who it is important to. Make sure you have spoken to:

- the community who live or work around the site.

- statutory conservation agencies (where relevant), amenity societies, local government conservation departments.
- any groups who take an interest in the heritage, such as Friends or local interest groups.
- people who use the heritage site now, such as for recreation or enjoyment.
- volunteers who help look after the site.

The statement of significance should cover the heritage as a whole but it is also useful to identify the significance of different parts in more detail, preferably in a gazetteer.

It can be useful to distinguish things that are crucial to its significance and cannot be lost or compromised, and those of lesser value. If there are things that have little value or detract from the significance of the heritage, explain why they are not valued – it is easy to dismiss as unimportant something that later proves to be worth keeping.

4.5 Section 3 – Risks and opportunities

This section should explain what is happening to the heritage, how it might be vulnerable and what the potential threats are to its long term survival. It is also important to identify the opportunities for improving the condition of the site and the benefits it provides for people and society.

Start by thinking about all of the things that you need to do to look after the heritage, and then think about how they could also put the site at risk. For example:

- construction or landscape works might put wildlife or archaeology at risk;
- enhanced security measures could make the heritage less accessible to the public;
- your monument might be vulnerable to erosion or vandalism as a result of increased access;
- action to reduce carbon emissions or energy use might put the fabric of a historic building at risk or have a negative impact on its character or appearance; or
- new buildings around the site could have a negative impact on its appearance

You should cover a wide range of things, from the condition of the heritage through to ownership, use, boundaries, resources, management problems, access, contents and public expectations. It should explore competing priorities such as conservation and commercial pressures. Try to use information that allows you to measure the scale or nature of the risks, such as how much has been lost over time. Some of the issues may relate to your own organisation – for example you may lack the skills needed to manage the heritage. Other issues may arise from external factors.

Section three should also include opportunities for preserving or improving the significance of the heritage, such as conserving a historic building or landscape, increasing access or providing better recreational facilities.

4.6 Section 4 – Policies

This section sets out the guiding principles for looking after the heritage, informed by the previous sections of the plan. There should be a clear link between significance, risks and opportunities, and your policies.

The policies should be written as a series of aims and objectives, and should be specific to the site. They will help reassure us and your partners that you are committed to caring for the heritage to the highest possible standards. The policies should cover:

- **Conservation** - How will you:
 - conserve or enhance each of the different types of heritage;
 - resolve any conflicts between different types of heritage; and
 - meet conservation standards for each kind of heritage.
- **New work** - How you will make sure that any new design or building work:
 - does not damage heritage unnecessarily;
 - anticipates impact on different kinds of heritage and includes action to reduce that impact (e.g. archaeological excavation);
 - is based on a proper understanding of what is important;
 - makes use of appropriate materials;
 - is located in an appropriate place;
 - uses an appropriate approach to restoration, reconstruction and the reinstatement of lost features; and
 - is of a suitable scale and does not impact on the setting of important heritage.
- **Access** - Your organisation should have an access policy. Refer to it in your conservation plan when you explain how you will improve access. For example, specify how you will:
 - improve access without damaging heritage, such as providing wheelchair access to all parts of a historic building;
 - design access improvements so that they are appropriate to the site, including choice of materials, scale and location;
 - provide alternative solutions, where physical access is not possible, such as by using digital technology to provide virtual access; or
 - provide access for people with sensory impairments, such as improving lighting or colour contrasts for people with reduced visual ability.
- **Climate change** - Identify your aims and objectives for dealing with the risks you identified above, including how you will deal with changing climatic conditions, such as increases in rainfall.
- **Effects on the environment** - Explain how you will reduce effects on the environment in the way you manage your heritage; for example how will you:
 - encourage visitors to use public transport;
 - conserve energy; and
 - minimise waste.
- **Managing information about your heritage**
 - How will you make sure that decisions are based on enough information about the heritage?
 - Who will provide that research or investigation, when and how?
 - How will you store heritage information, update it and make sure it is accessible in the future?
 - How will you ensure volunteers, staff and contractors have access to information about the heritage?
 - How will you inform the public about your heritage and how you are looking after it?

Make sure that your policies are consistent with any local, regional, national or international policies, and any conservation standards that you need to meet.

As a result of the planning process and consultation, you may find your organisation needs to change, develop new expertise, manage the heritage differently or work more closely with others. Explain how you will do this.

4.7 Section 5 – Adoption and Review

Tell us when your organisation formally adopted the plan, and who will be responsible for making sure it is used and how that will happen. Also tell us who will monitor and review it. Explain who has copies of the plan, where it is published and where archival copies will be kept.

4.8 Bibliography

List any other plans that relate to this one, including your activity plan and any other documents. You should also include a list of your other organisational policies that relate to the management of your site, such as your access policy or disaster planning manual, if you have them.

Refer to all the other material you have consulted to write this plan and where it can be found. For example:

- wildlife or habitat surveys;
- condition surveys;
- any other site investigation such as archaeological work;
- any scientific studies or experimental data relating to conservation techniques or materials;
- any maps, plans or other drawings of the heritage; and
- any other historical research.

This means that people can follow up more detailed information if they want to, and you can keep the plan reasonably short.

4.9 Appendices

Include copies of information that is vital to the management of the site but that is too detailed to put in the main plan. For example, many sites find it necessary to prepare a Gazetteer. This is a detailed list of all of the heritage items on your site, with information about them and why they are important.

If you have done other work as part of the plan – such as prepare a condition survey or some further investigation of your site, collection or building – include that new information in the appendix.

5 Publishing your plan

We expect you to publish your plan. Make copies of the plan for all of the people involved in your project. Keep at least one paper copy in a secure place at your site, and ask to deposit a copy with the local Historic Environment Record, and in your local studies library or record office. You should also put your plan on your website. If paper copies are expensive make electronic copies. Keep an up-to-date master copy with any changes you have made.

6 Tips for successful planning

Do it for the right reasons

Use the process as a positive management tool. If you just produce the plan because you think we want you to, the process will be of limited benefit.

Work in partnership

Most large projects will involve different partners. You should involve your partners in drawing up the conservation plan and make sure that their views are taken into account in your plan. You could ask them to sign up to or endorse the plan.

Get specialist help

You and your team are responsible for looking after your heritage. But you may well need a specialist to help you prepare your plan and perhaps to make sure you and your team have the skills to implement it. The right advice can also save you time and money in the long term.

Involve people

Use the process to bring together the people who will be essential to the success of your project or management strategy. Make sure the document includes a wide range of views. Delays and extra costs can arise if the right people are not involved.

Manage it

Be prepared to take an active role in managing the planning process. Make sure that the plan you prepare or commission helps you care for the asset. Manage the process from the first discussion of the idea through to the commissioning process, to make sure that people use the plan in the long term.

Mediate

Use the plan to mediate between different ideas about heritage. For example, biodiversity specialists and buildings specialists might have different ideas about how to look after your site.

Reject poor drafts

The plan is there for you to read and use. It will be useless if it is poorly presented, difficult to read, badly organised or inaccurate.

Organise information

Use the plan to organise key information. A plan can easily be overwhelmed by the amount of information needed to care for a complicated heritage asset.

Work with your consultants

If you do ask consultants to prepare a plan, make sure you work closely with them. Make sure you are happy with their work, that they are making use of your knowledge and that of your staff or volunteers, and that they produce a document that helps you.

Adopt it and use it

There is no point in preparing a plan unless you are going to use it.

Appendix 1 Resources

Further HLF resources

Building environment and performance – good practice guidance

This guidance is intended to help you understand and control the risks that the physical changes brought about by your project might pose to the fabric of your building and its contents.

Management and maintenance plan guidance

HLF guidance on management and maintenance planning. The guidance includes more detailed advice on managing and maintaining:

- collections;
- biodiversity;
- landscapes;
- historic buildings; and
- industrial, maritime and transport heritage.

Reducing environmental impacts – good practice guidance

This guidance document deals with the main environmental impacts that arise on projects that are funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is of most relevance to applicants whose project involves building construction, but it is also relevant for projects involving no building construction at all – for example, landscape and parks projects, and transport impacts for any project that encourages more visitors to heritage sites.

Other resources

Historic environment

[Association of Local Government Archaeology Officers \(ALGAO\)](#)

The best starting point for identifying any archaeological sites or features is to speak to your local Historic Environment Record or Sites and Monuments Record. The ALGAO website includes a list of contacts for local authority services throughout the UK.

[Cadw](#)

The best starting point for identifying any archaeological sites or features is to speak to your local Historic Environment Record or Sites and Monuments Record. The ALGAO website includes a list of contacts for local authority services throughout the UK.

[ChurchCare](#)

ChurchCare is the Church of England's national resource, containing extensive information on how to look after churches, including guidance on conservation plans for cathedrals and conservation management plans for major churches.

[Design Council Cabe](#)

Design Council Cabe provides advice and guidance to improve the design quality of the built environment and open spaces.

[Historic Environment Scotland](#)

Historic Environment Scotland is an executive non-departmental public body with responsibility for the historic environment. It provides an extensive resource of technical advice notes and policy guidance, including the writing of conservation plans (Conservation Plans – A guide to the preparation of conservation plans, 2000).

[Historic England](#)

Historic England is a public body responsible for protecting England's historical environment. Their website includes guidance on a wide range of historic environment issues.

[Northern Ireland Environment Agency \(NIEA\)](#)

NIEA is an Executive Agency for the natural and historic environment in Northern Ireland. It provides an extensive range of advice and guidance on the conservation and promotion of the environment.

Parks, gardens and landscapes

[The Association of Gardens Trusts](#)

This website provides links to local gardens trusts and useful information on historic parks and gardens.

[Conservation Management System \(CMSi\)](#)

CMS is a website and software system for producing management plans. Primarily aimed at natural sites, it also includes archaeology and cultural heritage. The website includes a useful management planning guide.

[Natural Resources Wales](#)

Natural Resources Wales is a Welsh Government sponsored body responsible for sustaining Wales' natural environment. They provide practical advice on how best to sustain the natural environment of Wales, both on land and sea.

[National Biodiversity Network](#)

The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) manages the largest biological information database for any country in the world – the NBN Atlas. The Network's priority is to grow the national commitment to openly sharing biological data and information.

[National Federation for Biological Recording \(NFBR\)](#)

If you want to find out about important biodiversity on your site, you can start by contacting your local record centre. The website for the National Federation of Biological Recording includes a database of local record centres throughout the UK.

[Natural England](#)

Natural England is the Government's adviser on the natural environment. They provide practical advice on how best to safeguard England's natural heritage including its wildlife, habitats, geodiversity and landscapes.

[Parks & Gardens UK](#)

Parks & Gardens UK is an on-going project to develop a dedicated web-based resource, freely available to individuals, for information relating to historic parks, gardens and other green open spaces throughout the UK.

[Scottish Natural Heritage](#)

Scottish Natural Heritage is the Scottish Government body responsible for Scotland's wildlife, habitats, landscapes, geodiversity and natural beauty. Their website includes policy, advice and guidance on promoting and improving natural heritage.

[The Wildlife Trusts](#)

There are 47 Wildlife Trusts around the UK who are working locally for an environment rich in wildlife. Local Trusts are able to provide local expertise and advice.

Industrial, Maritime and Transport

[The Transport Trust](#)

The Transport Trust is a national charity established to promote and encourage the preservation and restoration of Britain's unique transport heritage. The website includes links to many other transport sites and museums.

[British Aviation Preservation Council \(BAPC\)](#)

BAPC has held a series of seminars on historic aircraft. The conference papers are free to members and available from the secretary for a modest price. They cover issues such as maintaining aircraft outdoors, finding equipment for environmental monitoring and aviation materials.

[Heritage Railways Association \(HRA\)](#)

HRA represents the majority of heritage and tourist railways and railway preservation groups in the UK and Ireland and provides technical advice for members on its website.

[Inland Waterways Association \(IWA\)](#)

IWA campaigns for the use, maintenance and restoration of Britain's inland waterways. The website includes policy and guidance including the environment, trees and the management of waterways, as well as standards for construction and health and safety. For members there is also a practical restoration handbook.

[National Association of Road Transport Museums \(NARTM\)](#)

NARTM is an informal organisation of over 60 road transport museums. The website includes guidance on restoration and other practical matters for members.

[National Historic Ships UK](#)

National Historic Ships UK is a government funded independent body that gives advice on all matters relating to historic vessels in the UK. It has published valuable guidance on understanding and conserving historic vessels.