

PRINCIPLES FOR THE RECORDING OF MONUMENTS, GROUPS OF BUILDINGS AND SITES (1996)

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As the cultural heritage is a unique expression of human achievement; and

As this cultural heritage is continuously at risk; and

As recording is one of the principal ways available to give meaning, understanding, definition and recognition of the values of the cultural heritage; and

As the responsibility for conserving and maintaining the cultural heritage rests not only with the owners but also with conservation specialists and the professionals, managers, politicians and administrators working at all levels of government, and with the public; and

As article 16 of the Charter of Venice requires, it is essential that responsible organisations and individuals record the nature of the cultural heritage.

The purpose of this document is therefore to set out the principal reasons, responsibilities, planning measures, contents, management and sharing considerations for the recording of the cultural heritage.

DEFINITIONS OF WORDS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

Cultural Heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites of heritage value, constituting the historic or built environment.

Recording is the capture of information which describes the physical configuration, condition and use of monuments, groups of buildings and sites, at points in time, and it is an essential part of the conservation process.

Records of monuments, groups of buildings and sites may include tangible as well as intangible evidence, and constitute a part of the documentation that can contribute to an understanding of the heritage and its related values.

THE REASONS FOR RECORDING

1. The recording of the cultural heritage is essential:

a) To acquire knowledge in order to advance the understanding of cultural heritage, its values and its evolution;

b) To promote the interest and involvement of the people in the preservation of the heritage through the dissemination of recorded information;

c) To permit informed management and control of construction works and of all change to the cultural heritage;

d) To ensure that the maintenance and conservation of the heritage is sensitive to its physical form, its materials, construction, and its historical and cultural significance.

2. Recording should be undertaken to an appropriate level of detail in order to:

a) Provide information for the process of identification, understanding, interpretation and presentation of the heritage, and to promote the involvement of the public;

b) Provide a permanent record of all monuments, groups of buildings and sites that are to be destroyed or altered in any way, or where at risk from natural events or human activities;

c) Provide information for administrators and planners at national, regional or local levels to make sensitive planning and development control policies and decisions;

d) Provide information upon which appropriate and sustainable use may be identified, and the effective research, management, maintenance programmes and construction works may be planned.

3. Recording of the cultural heritage should be seen as a priority, and should be undertaken especially:

a) When compiling a national, regional, or local inventory;

b) As a fully integrated part of research and conservation activity;

c) Before, during and after any works of repair, alteration, or other intervention, and when evidence of its history is revealed during such works;

d) When total or partial demolition, destruction, abandonment or relocation is contemplated, or where the heritage is at risk of damage from human or natural external forces;

e) During or following accidental or unforeseen disturbance which damages the cultural heritage;

f) When change of use or responsibility for management or control occurs.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECORDING

1. The commitment at the national level to conserve the heritage requires an equal commitment towards the recording process.

2. The complexity of the recording and interpretation processes requires the deployment of individuals with adequate skill, knowledge and awareness for the associated tasks. It may be necessary to initiate training programmes to achieve this.

3. Typically the recording process may involve skilled individuals working in collaboration, such as specialist heritage recorders, surveyors, conservators, architects, engineers, researchers, architectural historians, archaeologists above and below ground, and other specialist advisors.

4. All managers of cultural heritage are responsible for ensuring the adequate recording, quality and updating of the records.

PLANNING FOR RECORDING

1. Before new records are prepared, existing sources of information should be found and examined for their adequacy.

a) The type of records containing such information should be searched for in surveys, drawings, photographs, published and unpublished accounts and descriptions, and related documents pertaining to the origins and history of the building, group of buildings or site. It is important to search out recent as well as old records;

b) Existing records should be searched for in locations such as national and local public archives, in professional, institutional or private archives, inventories and collections, in libraries or museums;

c) Records should be searched for through consultation with individuals and organisations who have owned, occupied, recorded, constructed, conserved, or carried out research into or who have knowledge of the building, group of buildings or site.

2. Arising out of the analysis above, selection of the appropriate scope, level and methods of recording requires that:

a) The methods of recording and type of documentation produced should be appropriate to the nature of the heritage, the purposes of the record, the cultural context, and the funding or other resources available. Limitations of such resources may require a phased approach to recording. Such methods might include written descriptions and analyses, photographs (aerial or terrestrial), rectified photography, photogrammetry, geophysical survey, maps, measured plans, drawings and sketches, replicas or other traditional and modern technologies;

b) Recording methodologies should, wherever possible, use non-intrusive techniques, and should not cause damage to the object being recorded;

c) The rationale for the intended scope and the recording method should be clearly stated;

d) The materials used for compiling the finished record must be archivally stable.

CONTENT OF RECORDS

1. Any record should be identified by:

a) The name of the building, group of buildings or

b) A unique reference number;

c) The date of compilation of the record;

d) The name of the recording organisation;

e) Cross-references to related building records and reports, photographic, graphic, textual or bibliographic documentation, archaeological and environmental records.

2. The location and extent of the monument, group of buildings or site must be given accurately - this may be achieved by description, maps, plans or aerial photographs. In rural areas a map reference or triangulation to known points may be the only methods available. In urban areas an address or street reference may be sufficient.

3. New records should note the sources of all information not obtained directly from the monument, group of buildings or site itself.

4. Records should include some or all of the following information:

a) The type, form and dimensions of the building, monument or site;

b) The interior and exterior characteristics, as appropriate, of the monument, group of buildings or site;

c) The nature, quality, cultural, artistic and scientific significance of the heritage and its components and the cultural, artistic and scientific significance of:

- the materials, constituent parts and construction, decoration, ornament or inscriptions

- services, fittings and machinery,

- ancillary structures, the gardens, landscape and the cultural, topographical and natural features of the site;

d) The traditional and modern technology and skills used in construction and maintenance;

e) Evidence to establish the date of origin, authorship, ownership, the original design, extent, use and decoration;

f) Evidence to establish the subsequent history of its uses, associated events, structural or decorative alterations, and the impact of human or natural external forces;

g) The history of management, maintenance and repairs;

h) Representative elements or samples of construction or site materials;

i) An assessment of the current condition of the heritage;

j) An assessment of the visual and functional relationship between the heritage and its setting;

k) An assessment of the conflicts and risks from human or natural causes, and from environmental pollution or adjacent land uses.

5. In considering the different reasons for recording (see Section 1.2 above) different levels of detail will be required. All the above information, even if briefly stated, provides important data for local planning and building control and management. Information in greater detail is generally required for the site or building owner's, manager's or user's purposes for conservation, maintenance and use.

MANAGEMENT, DISSEMINATION AND SHARING OF RECORDS

1. The original records should be preserved in a safe archive, and the archive's environment must ensure permanence of the information and freedom from decay to recognised international standards.

2. A complete back-up copy of such records should be stored in a separate safe location.

3. Copies of such records should be accessible to the statutory authorities, to concerned professionals and to the public, where appropriate, for the purposes of research, development controls and other administrative and legal processes.

4. Up-dated records should be readily available, if possible on the site, for the purposes of research on the heritage, management, maintenance and disaster relief.

5. The format of the records should be standardised, and records should be indexed wherever possible to facilitate the exchange and retrieval of information at a local, national or international level.

6. The effective assembly, management and distribution of recorded information requires, wherever possible, the understanding and the appropriate use of up-to-date information technology.

7. The location of the records should be made public.

8. A report of the main results of any recording should be disseminated and published, when appropriate.