

Report on	DfC, HED Written Response to MUDC Public Consultation on Conservation Principles Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland
Date of Meeting	7 th December 2021
Reporting Officer	Sarah McNamee, Conservation Planning Officer
Contact Officer	Dr. Chris Boomer, Service Director

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform Members of the Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division's written response to Mid Ulster District Council regarding the Council's submission to their ' <i>Public Consultation Conservation Principles Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland.</i> ' DfC, HED written response received via email on 18.11.2021, Annex A.
2.0	Background
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) submitted a written representation on 08.10.2021, to the Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division's in response to the public consultation specific to draft ' <i>Conservation Principles Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland.</i> '
3.0	Main Report
3.1	MUDC Planning Department welcomes DfC HED's formal written response dated 18.11.2021 and the information contained therein.
3.2	The Council is aware of the Department for Infrastructure's review of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 and await the outcome of said Call for Evidence. The Council note the Department for Communities intent to develop a Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Council welcomes the opportunity to partake in public debate and discussions relevant to the draft DfC Culture Arts and Heritage Strategy in 2022.
3.3	MUDC Planning Department thanks Mr Iain Greenway, Director of Historic Environment Division for his kind invitation to arrange an office meet with Dr. Chris Boomer, Service Director of Planning in the near future. However, given the need to comply with MUDC's governance procedures and to facilitate an open,

	transparent and forthright public discussion on the matters contained therein Dr. Chris Boomer, Service Director of Planning must decline the offer of a private discussion.
3.4	That said MUDC has welcomed the opportunity to attend the established Historic Environment Stakeholders Group and to take part in proactive and positive conversations regarding the future sustainable management, maintenance and monitoring of Northern Ireland's Historic Environment within the wider NGO and local heritage networks. Mr Tony McChance, Head of Culture and Arts has agreed to attend on the Council's behalf. However, the Stakeholders Group is an informal forum for discussion and sharing of ideas, it does not adhere to Civil Service and Local Government governance and accountability mechanisms.
3.5	The Council notes the suggestion that future discussions on the governance, accountability and organisational structures relevant to Northern Ireland's Historic Environment ' <i>might be better taken forward via the Planning Forum and the review of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 by DfI.</i> '
3.6	On this point, the Council respectfully requests that consideration is given to the establishment of a formal Inter-Government Historic Environment Forum consisting of all 11 Local District Councils, DfC, HED and DfI at an appropriate senior management level to enable direct transparent early engagement on the future sustainable management, maintenance and monitoring of Northern Ireland's Historic Environment.
3.7	The Council look forward to the publication of all submitted written representations received on the public consultation ' <i>Consultation Principles Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland.</i> '
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A

5.0	Recommendations
5.1	The Council notes the response and instructs the Service Director to write to Historic Buildings Division advising that the Council still wish its suggestion on reform of Historic Buildings Division to be published and considered as part of the consideration of the public consultation.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Annex A: DFC HED written response 18.11.2021 Conservation Principles Public Consultation.



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Department for
Commonities

Historic Environment Division
Ground Floor
NINE Lanyon Place
Townparks
Belfast
BT1 3LP

Email: iain.greenway@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: Conservation Principles Public
Consultation

Your Ref: DfC HED PC07/21

Date: 18 November 2021

Dr. Chris Boomer
Planning Manager
Mid Ulster District Council
Council Offices
50 Ballyronan Road
Magherafelt
BT45 6PN

By email: planning@midulstercouncil.org

Dear Chris,

CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Thank you for Mid Ulster District Council's detailed response to our Conservation Principles Public Consultation. You also provided comments in relation to other areas such as funding, communications and governance. The scope of the comments is broad, but I would like to take the opportunity to provide you with some background and information on the different areas.

NI Regulatory Framework Historic Environment

Our role, responsibilities and aims are similar to that of our sister organisations despite differences in legislation. Both Historic England and Historic Environment Scotland operate as arm's length public bodies, whereas Cadw is similar to Historic Environment Division in that it forms part of the civil service. Cadw's status was reviewed a few years ago, with the conclusion that it should retain its current status.

With regard to legislation concerning the historic environment, HED acknowledges the aspiration to have a specific Act for the historic environment in Northern Ireland. This would require significant changes to and consolidation of existing primary legislation. You will be aware of DfI's current review of the Planning Act 2011. This has provided an opportunity to put forward suggestions to DfI on areas where the legislation can be improved, including those provisions around the historic environment. HED staff are engaged with DfI in discussing relevant responses to the Call for Evidence.

Historic Environment NI strategy

You may be aware of the Communities Minister's intention to develop a Culture Arts and Heritage Strategy, which would draw out the longer term approach to ensure that these key elements can fully support the intentions of the Programme for Government and Community Plans. We expect work on the strategy to commence in 2022; its development will allow the debate and discussion of a wide range of strategic issues.

HED reports annually on its activities across the historic environment for the NI Environmental Statistics Report. This is a compendium which reports on a range of environmental indicators, including heritage, and provides links to government strategies. HED also provides input to the 5 year strategy for the Department 2020-25 [DfC Five Year Strategy 2020-2025](#)

Historic Environment NI Grants and Loans

We note your comments on levels of funding. You will be aware of the processes for determining priorities across Departments and business areas during the annual budgeting process. Funding through the Historic Environment Fund (HEF) sits alongside a wide range of other funding from various sources, including through loans and social funding routes as well as grants. We have recently completed a review of the HEF and will shortly be engaging with stakeholders on this.

We are also working to connect more closely to other sources of funding, for instance through the Village Catalyst scheme which is operated by HED and DAERA with support from the Architectural Heritage Fund. Stronger connections between funding streams, and a wider range of funding streams beyond traditional grants, are essential if we are to deliver to best effect for the historic environment in a constrained funding climate.

The Department maintains a funding webpage which provides information on support sources which we are aware of, that is available to owners and groups to maintain repair and reuse historic buildings. You can access this at the following address: [Historic Environment Funding & Grants | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://communities-ni.gov.uk/historic-environment/funding-grants)

Historic Environment Communications strategy

HED has comprehensive guidance and information on our webpage. We use social media platforms on a daily basis to publicise and inform on our work and the historic environment in general. District Councils are able to disseminate this further through their own channels. We are very happy to consider areas which you feel are under-developed in this regard.

I would stress however that the historic environment sector and community is far larger than HED. We convene an Historic Environment Stakeholder Group which is very widely drawn and meets regularly. The group has published Heritage Delivers as a statement of the benefits and value that the historic environment can deliver, and Heritage Statistics ([NI Heritage Statistics \(niheritagedelivers.org\)](https://niheritagedelivers.org)) to provide evidence of that. The group recently provided a sectoral response to the PfG consultation, and is currently involved in discussions on how it can evolve further. MUDC has recently joined the Group, and will be able to be involved in these discussions.

Historic Environment NI Education and Training Strategy

HED is committed to increasing sectoral skills. We support the achievement of accreditation by our professional staff, and require appropriate accreditation for works that we grant-fund. We have recently convened a group including SPAB Ireland, IHBC, RTPI, ClfA, IAI, BCNI and RSUA to develop a series of joint CPD, Conservation in Common, and have disseminated this information. This programme is designed to enhance the CPD available to local professionals, and to increase the opportunities for them to engage with each other across professions.

We are also partners with the Prince's Foundation in schemes to increase the availability of craft skills, something which is vital if we are to see historic assets appropriately maintained. And we would be very happy to contribute to your Elected Members training and development programme, having done so for other Councils.

Heritage and the Climate Crisis

HED is part of the DfC Climate Change Working Group; the Department has recently published its 2021-2022 Action Plan [DfC Climate Change Action Plan 2021 - 22 | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#) We note your comment in connection with heritage and embodied carbon for consideration specific to the principles draft document, and agree that climate change considerations will have to be at the heart of everything we do.

Planning Policy Statement 23: Enabling Development for the Conservation of Significant Places (withdrawal)

This is within the remit of DfI. I would note however that to withdraw this may not benefit some assets. It is a thorough policy in that it requires much work to prove, and therefore is not often used. There are also other mechanisms in place that can be employed by councils to ensure that development is not to the detriment of an asset eg. Agreements through Section 76 of the Planning Act.

Historic Environment NI Public Archive

HERoNI (Historic Environment Record of NI) holds significant collections and information relating to all aspects of our historic environment. It is open to the public, currently via appointment [Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland \(HERoNI\) | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

The Department is currently progressing work to consider the future conservation and management of the State Care Monuments, and to determine the best route to completing the Second Survey of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

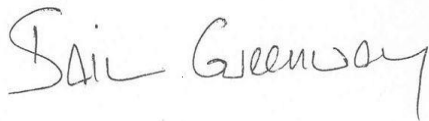
Heritage staff

In this section of your letter, you raise some suggestions which could fundamentally change the settlement that was reached via the Review of Public Administration. Discussions on these might be better taken forward via the Planning Forum rather than bilateral engagement with a single statutory consultee. The review of the Planning Act by DfI would be another potential avenue for these points.

DfC recently funded a pilot scheme for a Heritage Development Officer to a District Council for 3 years. [Derry City & Strabane - Heritage Development Officer \(derrystrabane.com\)](http://derrystrabane.com) Reporting on the initiative is expected in due course for evaluation. A number of councils have appointed heritage officers (including Ards & North Down Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) and would I am sure be willing to share the insights that they have gained through doing so.

Once again, I appreciate the range of comments that you have provided. Given the breadth of the comments, it might be helpful to get together to discuss them further, now that face to face engagement is becoming more possible. It is a number of years since we worked together in DOE. If you could be content with that approach, I would be happy to arrange to come to your offices to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Iain Greenway". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "Iain" is written with a capital 'I' and a lowercase 'a', and the surname "Greenway" is written with a capital 'G' and lowercase letters. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

IAIN GREENWAY

Director, Historic Environment Division