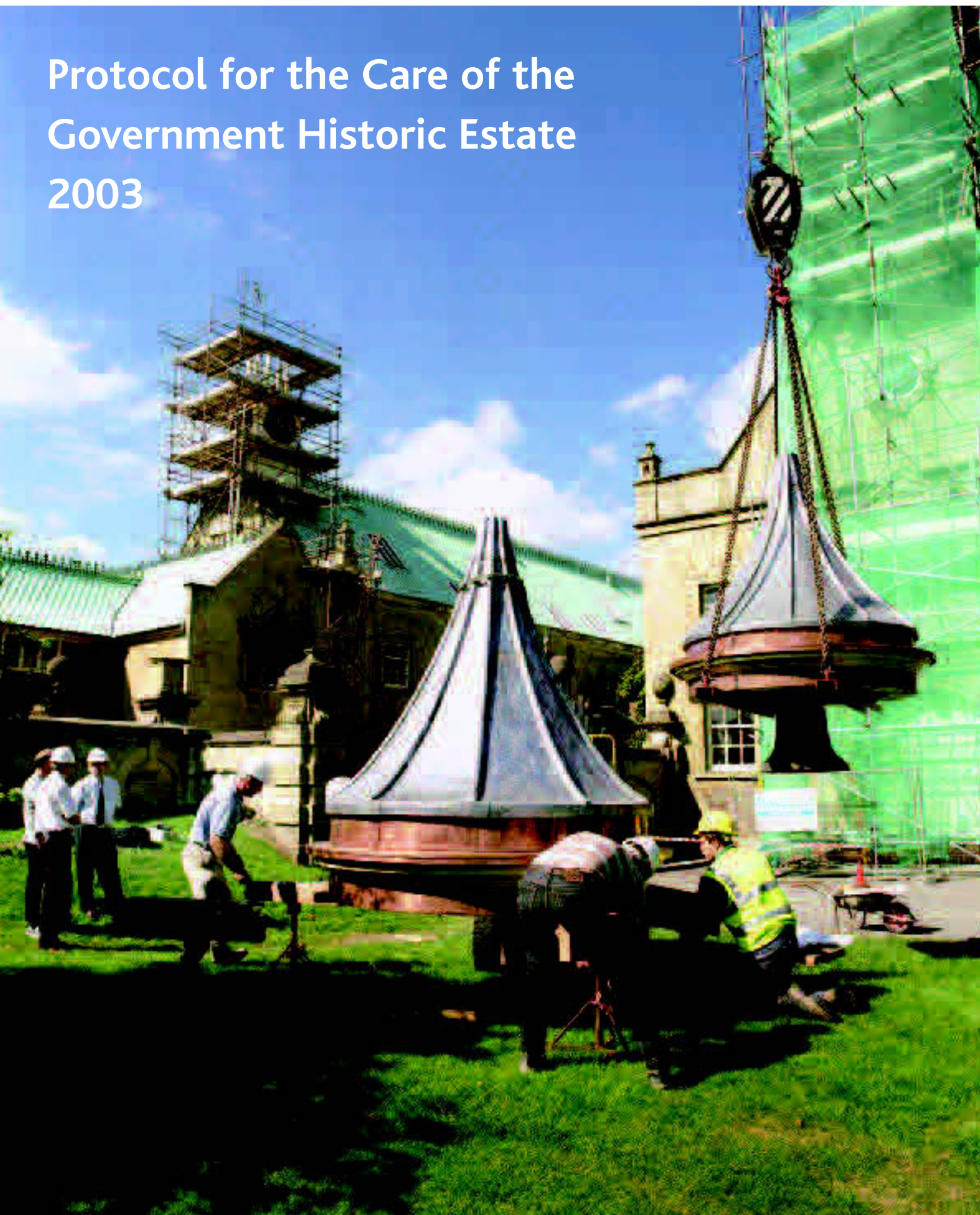


Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate 2003



Summary

The Government is committed to setting a good example in the care of its historic estate. Individual departments and agencies are enjoined to adopt and implement this Protocol which provides a framework for putting this commitment into practice.

The maintenance of historic buildings in active use and good repair is part of a sustainable approach to the environment. By adopting a strategic approach to the management of their historic property, departments will ensure that available funds are allocated wisely. This will help to achieve better value for money in the long term as well as safeguarding the special interest of the historic environment.

Introduction

The Government has an extensive historic estate encompassing buildings and landscapes, buried remains and historic areas. Some of these assets have statutory protection as listed buildings or scheduled monuments. Others are included in designated conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They all make an important contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. Public bodies need to have a consistent and co-ordinated approach to protecting these historic assets in the course of their estate management, disposal and procurement activities.

The following Protocol is therefore recommended for adoption by departments and agencies in the Government and the Devolved Administrations. Where responsibility for maintaining their estates is transferred to the private sector¹, the requirements of the Protocol may need to be incorporated in any contract specification. The Protocol is also commended to all publicly funded bodies as a model of good practice.

More detailed advice on the recommended procedures and on specific conservation-related matters is available from the Government Historic Estates Unit (GHEU)².

Background

This Protocol supersedes the 'Nine-point Plan of Action for the Care of Government Historic Buildings', originally issued by the former Department of the Environment in 1991 and revised by the former Department of National Heritage in 1996. The objective of the Plan of Action was to meet the commitment made by the Government in the 1990 White paper *This Common Inheritance*. This stated:

The Government constantly aims for the highest standards of conservation and will ensure that those responsible for its historic buildings are aware of the importance of the heritage they hold in trust. All departments holding historic buildings are committed by this policy, which extends to all protected sites and property of cultural value in the government estate.

This commitment was restated in *A Force for Our Future*, the Government's statement on the historic environment in England published in December 2001:

The Government will continue to set an example in the conservation of its own extensive historic estate, and is committed to the maintenance of the historic buildings that Government Departments use and occupy.

The Plan of Action was reviewed in consultation with departments in 2002, and published as a Protocol in 2003.

¹ Increasingly, accommodation for government departments and agencies is provided and managed by the private sector under the Private Finance Initiative, Public Private Partnerships, Prime Contracting and Facilities Management. Under these arrangements day-to-day responsibility for maintaining historic buildings usually passes to a private contractor.

² GHEU provides advice to Government departments and other Crown bodies on the management of their historic buildings and sites. It was formerly the Government Historic Buildings Advisory Unit (GHBAU). GHEU can be contacted at English Heritage, 23 Savile Row, London W1S 2ET Tel: 020-7973 3801.

The Protocol

Departments and agencies with historic estates will:

1 Nominate a conservation officer. This person will monitor all conservation activity within the department and liaise with the Government Historic Estates Unit. The conservation officer should maintain contact with individual property managers and ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities under the Protocol.

2 Use consultants and contractors with appropriate expertise. It is strongly recommended that specialist conservation consultants (SCCs) are used to prepare condition surveys and to advise on any works of alteration or repair. This also applies to works of research, evaluation and investigation. It is also important to engage consultants with appropriate architectural expertise to ensure that a high quality of design is achieved in any new work. It is desirable for the association of the specialist consultant with an historic building or site to be a long-term one³.

3 Commission regular condition surveys. A fundamental requirement of the Protocol is to maintain a system of quadrennial inspections (QIs), by which an inspection and report on the condition of each historic building is commissioned from specialist conservation consultants every four years. These reports should identify and prioritise necessary repair and major maintenance requirements, and provide an approximate cost for each item. They will enable work to be planned and executed in a cost-effective way. It is recommended that quadrennial inspection reports incorporate a statement of the building's significance based on available information.

4 Develop site-specific management guidance. In addition to regular condition reports, it is recommended that further site-specific guidance is prepared. Such guidance, which should be based upon a sound understanding of the significance of the site or building, will enable sound judgements to be made about repairs, alterations, management, reuse or disposal.

Any guidance will need to be based on accurate information about the building or site, including plans, reports, photographs and, where appropriate, an inventory of contents. Such information should be maintained in a secure yet accessible location.

In order to understand fully the building or site, it may be necessary to commission additional research, analysis, survey or investigation⁴. This may be necessary in advance of carrying out works, or in the course of preparing conservation management plans, management guidelines or conservation manuals⁵.

Management provisions should also include minimising the risk of disaster, particularly from fire, and an emergency plan to be implemented in case the worst happens.

5 Implement a planned programme of repairs and maintenance. Planned maintenance registers and forward repair plans are recommended as a means of converting the information provided by the quadrennial inspections and conservation manual into prioritised and costed forward programmes of work.

Future repairs identified in the QI, with their estimated costs, and day-to-day maintenance requirements identified in the conservation manual should be included on the register, so that targets can be set for each historic building over the years.

It is also recommended that any works undertaken should be fully recorded in a logbook kept by the building manager or managing agent as appropriate.

³ GHEU can advise departments on the selection of SCCs, whether on a term commission basis or for individual projects. A framework agreement for architectural services for historic buildings was set up by OGCBuying.solutions in 2002.

⁴ See *Informed Conservation*, Kate Clark, English Heritage 2001.

⁵ The use of conservation manuals is advocated in BS 7913 *Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings*. Their format is set out in Appendix Two of *The Care of Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments: Guidelines for Government Departments and Agencies*, 1998. Other types of management guidance include conservation management plans and listed building management guidelines – see *Informed Conservation*, Kate Clark, English Heritage 2001.

6 Protect buildings at risk⁶. GHEU maintains records of any historic building known to be vacant or at risk of damage or neglect. Departments are urged to work with the statutory authorities and GHEU, as appropriate, to agree a strategy for resolving each case, whether by repair, reuse or disposal.

7 Safeguard historic buildings that are in course of disposal. Departments and agencies should observe the guidance on the disposal of historic buildings issued by DCMS⁷. This guidance states that maximisation of receipts should not be the overriding aim in cases involving the disposal of historic buildings.

8 Comply with the non-statutory notification procedures for Crown bodies⁸. These are laid down in Circular 18/84 *Crown Land and Crown Development*. Departments and agencies are advised to consult with the relevant statutory authorities⁹ at an early stage in relation to proposals that affect the historic environment. They should respond promptly to legitimate concerns from local authorities and others in relation to their development proposals.

9 Ensure that the design quality of any new work enhances the historic environment. New work, including alterations and extensions to historic buildings as well as new buildings in historic areas, should enhance its surroundings¹⁰.

10 Prepare biennial conservation reports. It is recommended that each Green Minister¹¹ should require their department, through its conservation officer, to prepare a biennial report. This should provide information relating to each historic building including details of current occupation, condition and any statutory protection. The report will summarise the work and issues arising in the past two years and progress achieved. Guidance on the format and content of these reports is available from GHEU.

A copy of each department's biennial report should be sent to GHEU to enable the Unit to monitor progress centrally and to draw up and publish biennial overview reports on the condition of the government's historic estate.

Departments reporting to the Scottish Parliament or the devolved assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales should send copies of their reports to the relevant Ministers in each country¹². The statutory heritage bodies in these countries will be responsible for collating these reports and forwarding them to DCMS and GHEU.

⁶ In England a national 'Buildings at Risk' (BAR) strategy was adopted by English Heritage in 1998, principally for grade I and II* buildings. GHEU maintains a record of all government historic buildings at risk – of all grades – throughout the UK.

⁷ *The Disposal of Historic Buildings: Guidance note for government departments and non-departmental public bodies*, Department for Culture Media and Sport, The Stationery Office 1999.

⁸ A government review of Crown exemption from planning controls is currently (2003) in progress.

⁹ Guidance on the procedures for consultation is contained in *The Care of Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments: Guidelines for Government Departments and Agencies*, 1998.

¹⁰ *Better Public Buildings* (DCMS, 2000) recommended that departments and other public bodies appoint a high-level 'design champion'. In some departments this role is combined with that of the Green Minister.

¹¹ Each department has a Green Minister to champion sustainable development and environmental matters in their own department. *A Force for Our Future* confirmed that the historic environment will become part of the remit of Green Ministers and that the role of Ministerial Design Champions will be extended to include the care of any historic estate for which the Government department concerned is directly responsible.

¹² GHEU monitors progress in implementing the Protocol in all parts of the United Kingdom on behalf of DCMS. However, the Unit does not provide site-specific advice to departments and agencies outside of England.

Front cover: Welbeck College – repair and reinstatement of the clock towers. Photo courtesy of Mowlem Aquamen Defence Services.



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