

National Trust : Conservation Principles Training Course

Quarry Bank Mill, Manchester : 9th Feb 2016

This was an internal training course designed for National Trust Managers but with a few spare places offered to IHBC members. This seemed an ideal opportunity to see how conservation is viewed by a private organisation whose funding is partly dependent on visitor numbers.

CONSERVATION IS THE CAREFUL MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

This first sentence caught me by surprise but seemed totally accepted by the main audience. I do think maybe this description would make Conservation more palatable to some of our politicians if we could accept it at the Forum.

The National Trust is Europe's biggest Conservation organisation.

We then followed William Morris, conservation versus restoration and undesirable change to ICMOS 1984 to the Burra Charter 2013. Stakeholder engagement/spiritual value
People centred approach to Conservation

National Trust Conservation:

National Trust conservation context - conservation directorate 2002

- **Minimum intervention** much as necessary, little as possible
- **Stability**
- **Compatibility**
- **Reversibility** retreat-ability
- **Honest repair**
- **Recoverability** reconcile use with wear
- **Historic integrity** management of patina

This is similar to Historic England who have their own incorporated in BS 7913

The day followed with speaker after speaker taking up the National Trust Principles

First Principle : Significance

This speaker had sought definitions and found the Planning Dept in Malta had the best!

- A. Historic Significance
- B. Aesthetic and Architectural Significance
- C. Social Significance
- D. Research Significance - potential for significance
- E. Rare Significance
- F. Contextual Significance - landscape
- G. Representational Significance - fine example of its type
- H. Authenticity

The National Trust then grades these

- A. Exceptional Significance
- B. Considerable Significance
- C. Moderate
- D. Neutral
- E. Intrusive or Negative

We were also introduced to SPIRIT OF PLACE which had its own slot later

Second Principle : Integration

Conservation is a creative process of integration to agree clear, shared goals and objectives that provide an imaginative solution.

Maximum significance is passed on to future generations

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Third principle : change

Can we anticipate change and manage it

Accumulative impact (sat.dish, parking, bins)

Impact of not allowing change

What may be the impact of not allowing change - redundancy

What change will make it more sustainable

The NT has a number of Building Design Guides available on line to illustrate these.

Fourth Principle : Access and Engagement

Everything Speaks:

Inviting people to become more involved

Wow, nature is awesome

Making sure we are relevant

Fifth Principle : Skills and Partnership

New book by NT Specification for Building Conservation

Building Design Guides

CIOB training courses

NT does ensure all their building projects involve training, six weeks with Flood Bros better than two years at college

Sixth Principle : Accountability

We will be transparent and accountable by recording our decisions and sharing our knowledge.

Our reputation and business efficiency are enhanced by rigorous management of our records

Conservation - understood by present and future generations

After lunch we were introduced to

Spirit of Place

This is clearly a new and exciting concept and one all the managers are encouraged to engage in for their sites

Niño Strachey was really the key note speaker.

What is unique (not as many sites as you would first think)

What is distinctive

What is cherished

Using Audience Insight to test and really *drill down into the facts*

It is fairly easy to step away from this one but I actually found it very interesting once it was explained how having a clear understanding of the Spirit of a Place then decisions can be made to reinforce or even exploit that.

The best example was Knowle House which whilst splendid did leave some visitors disappointed who found it depressing maybe dark. Working this through the description of the Spirit of Place the idea of - A Place of Beauty- a place of Melancholy - entered the general description leaving more visitors satisfied...

We closed with a presentation by James Innerdale of SPAB on their principles

1. Information - establishing significance, repair not restoration
2. Essential Work - maintenance and repair
3. Respect of Age - appreciation of time worn surfaces
4. Fitting new into old - embodying craftsmanship
5. Complement not parody - skilful contrast to continue story
6. Integrity - respect for setting and context
7. Workmanship - careful and considered - don't conceal age
8. Materials - don't reuse materials from taken from other sites
9. Responsible methods
10. Regular maintenance - National Gutter Day National Maintenance Week