

# CONSERVATION POLICIES

## For the sustainable management of our Historic Estate

### Introduction

The CWGC have adopted a conservation-based philosophy, based on our Heritage Strategy 2016 – 2021, which set out our vision and approach in maintaining our estate. We will seek to conserve, whilst remaining true to our principle of commemorating the names of the fallen.

The Heritage Strategy established the following principles:

1. Equality of treatment of the dead and missing is of paramount importance.
2. The sites must have a sense of dignity and inspiration.
3. Commemorations must be legible.
4. The heritage value of the Historic Estate must be preserved for future generations.
5. The Historic Estate will be sustainably managed.
6. The cemeteries and memorials must look cared for and well presented.

Our Conservation Policies reflect not only continuing best practice, but an understanding that change and decay are inevitable. "Preservation" is impossible – we therefore aim to manage change, whilst sustainably caring for our cemeteries and memorials.

### Aims

The CWGC will always take a holistic approach in the management of our historic estate; all buildings, features, horticulture and landscapes, are to be viewed as one. The cemeteries and memorials will be understood, based on their significance and their heritage values, with each maintenance decision ensuring that these are retained or enhanced.

Maintenance will be based on a complete understanding of condition. The aim is to manage the estate based on planned

(preventative) maintenance, reducing the need for full-scale repair and replacement. Our cemeteries and memorials will be maintained in their optimum condition, ensuring that they are peaceful, and safe, places of remembrance that welcome visitors.

These Conservation Policies apply to all our cemeteries and memorials, regardless of whether they meet the thresholds for formal international, national or local designation (i.e. a protected or Listed Building, UNESCO designation, etc.).

# Conservation Policies

## 1. Assessing the Condition

**1.1.** The condition of our cemeteries and memorials will be regularly assessed via:

- Structural Condition Surveys, fully detailed and costed, on a 5-year rolling programme.
- Performance Quality & Maintenance Standards (PQMS), for the inspection of horticultural standards, to be done once per year (as a minimum).

**Rationale:** The condition of our historic estate is dynamic. Preventative maintenance depends on a proper understanding of our cemeteries and memorials before any work is done.

**1.2.** Our historic estate must remain safe for staff and visitors; we will assess this via:

- Risk Assessments – carried out by fully trained staff.
- Tree Inspections – carried out by an appropriately trained person (e.g. LANTRA Training, or the approved equivalent), following our CWGC Tree Risk Procedure.

**Rationale:** Adequate and well considered risk assessments for our sites, and the tasks that we carry out, are a vital part of ensuring safety. They must be carried out thoroughly, with any recommendations being acted upon in a timely manner. Action taken to minimise risk must be proportionate to the severity, and the likelihood, of the consequences.

## 2. Standards of Care

The conservation philosophy of the CWGC is an international proposition; we aim to provide the same level of care to all our cemeteries and memorials throughout the world, irrespective of their individual situations: political, social and environmental.

**2.1** Our cemeteries and memorials will be maintained in a good and safe condition following a conservation-based approach, providing a site with dignity and respect.

**Rationale:** Our historic estate must look cared for, with all inscriptions being legible / identifiable. Horticulture is dynamic; we aim to maintain a level of quality, through the use of PQMS.

**2.2** We recognise the effects of time and weathering on our headstones and structures; we will not remove this patina of age. We will keep them to an appropriate level of cleanliness, however excessive and inappropriate cleaning will cause damage.

**Rationale:** We accept the inevitable effects of time – which can add to the significance. We will not try to make our sites 'as new'. Headstones and constructed features must never look neglected, but a patina of age is inevitable. Cleaning can remove the surface of the stone so it is therefore only to be undertaken when really necessary. All cleaning must follow our *Stone Cleaning Guidance*.



**2.3** Legibility of headstones and memorials is our priority.

**Rationale:** One of our founding principles is that “Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial”. We are responsible for their permanence – legibility and identifiability of inscriptions is therefore of paramount importance. Inspections must be in line with our Legibility Guidance.

**2.4** Our conservation-based approach is based on regular management and maintenance of our historic estate. We use the following conservation hierarchy:

1. Maintenance;
2. Repair;
3. Restoration;
4. Reconstruction (rebuilding structures, or their elements)

**Rationale:** Routine care and maintenance of our historic estate is the best way to ensure long-term conservation. Preventative maintenance will be carried out on the basis

of Condition Surveys and PQMS findings. A consistent, coordinated and planned approach will be applied to all interventions, including planting changes.

**2.5** Maintenance or alterations to our built structures, planting and landscapes, are to be executed to the highest standard. They should form part of a clear long-term management plan. A Conservation Statement must be produced before any interventions which affect significance; this is key to proper decision making and planning.

**Rationale:** The character and dignity of our cemeteries and memorials is a combination of the quality and craftsmanship of the materials, the landscape setting, including any significant trees or planting, and the inherent design layout. The sites as a whole – the graves, the built features, the landscape, and the wider setting – must be viewed as a single entity and a consistent, coordinated and planned approach will be applied to all interventions. In the long term this prevents expensive restoration / reconstruction.

### 3. Structural Repairs



Our conservation-based approach is to conserve fabric where possible. If repairs are needed, the new work should be sympathetic to the structure as a whole, as uniformity is key to our cemeteries and memorials.

**3.1** Any structural repairs will be properly considered; based on an understanding of the cause of the defect and the impact the work will have. Repairs will be;

- Undertaken to a high standard. This relies on a proper explanation and specification of the task, along with sufficient planning and oversight (proportionate to the task);
- Undertaken following CWGC guidance and Specification Data Sheets wherever possible;
- Like-for-like (the same material as the original, used in the same way) if possible. If this is not possible (eg. stone not available), the properties of the new material must be technically and aesthetically compatible with the original to avoid a very patchy appearance.



**Rationale:** Investigation is needed to understand the reason for the defect to avoid repeating it, or causing further deterioration. Successful repair depends on addressing the underlying problem. Repairs must match the original structure, where possible, respecting the integrity of the historic fabric. A series of small unsympathetic repairs will have a detrimental impact on a site's significance.



**3.2** Any repairs should cause the least intervention and remove as little of the historic material as is practically possible. We will only replace, or completely renew, fabric when;

- There is ongoing deterioration being caused and repairing will only perpetuate it;
- The extent of repair required is so great that it does not give sensible value for money;
- Repairs will give an unsightly appearance, marked different weathering or early failure;
- For replacement headstones – our Legibility Guidance has been followed and we will match the original, or predominant, headstone type in the cemetery.

**Rationale:** Our conservative approach is to retain as much historic fabric as possible, keeping change to a minimum. We are not trying to recreate 'as new'; for example, small chips are generally acceptable in a

sound stone and piecing-in indents are encouraged as an alternative to complete stone replacement when practical and cost effective. We may sometimes carry out a repair that is a more costly approach than reconstruction in order to preserve the authenticity of the structure, however this must be a very carefully judged decision. All works undertaken must achieve a sustainable, lasting and value for money repair.

**3.3** We will correct poor quality past repairs where practical, but generally only when;

- Past repairs are causing ongoing damage or are exceptionally aesthetically poor;
- The old repair can be removed without causing greater damage to the surrounding fabric, and it is cost-effective to act now;
- There is certainty that there is no heritage value to the old repair;
- There is certainty the new repair will look and perform better than what it is replacing.

**Rationale:** For example, a hard cement mortar causing ongoing damage to soft bricks should be replaced with lime mortar where possible. A hard cement mortar which is not causing ongoing problems, or might cause more damage by its removal, should usually be left in place.



## 4. Changes to Planting, Landscape or Layout

**4.1** Any proposed changes to the landscape and mature trees will only be justified if:

- They are based on the original landscape and planting plan for the cemetery or memorial – or rationale is given if this is to be deviated from. Archive research is needed, usually in the form of a Conservation Statement, along with an appreciation of an individual architect's style, etc.;
- The uniformity and intended coherence between built features and the planted elements (the 'soft' landscape') is understood and will be maintained, or enhanced;
- The Horticulture Manual has been followed (or rationale is given as to why this will be deviated from);
- Our Conservation Committee (Form B) process has been followed.

**Rationale:** Our sites were planned as a single entity, comprising both structural and horticultural elements. It is therefore key to understand the original intentions for the planting (including tree species), landscape and layout. Removing established planting or mature trees will affect the overall design, uniformity and consequentially the site's significance.



**4.2** The default position is that healthy trees should not be removed and dead or failing trees are to be replaced with the same species. Where trees are not replaced like-for-like, and there is a deviation from the existing layout, the following needs to be considered:

- The original landscape and planting plan will always be the reference point for new planting, but not necessarily rigidly adhered to. The aim is to restore the original planting intent, rather than necessarily always planting the same tree in its original location. Understanding the design intention of the architect is key to this.
- The shape of the plantation (pruning shape) will take precedence over the variety itself.
- The spatial context of the site – its views, vistas and axes – are to be preserved as much as possible, and where appropriate, screening planting is to be used.
- The Horticulture Manual should be followed, adapted to local conditions and the selection of plants and trees should take account of the nature of the climate, the suitability in terms of pest and disease resistance as well as the success or failure of previous planting schemes.
- The Conservation Committee (Form B) process has been followed.

**Rationale:** Planting is not only an integral part of the overall design, but it often establishes a link with the wider environment and landscape setting. Trees and shrubs are used to create vistas and screens, and to lead the eye to significant views of the built structures, as well as creating enclosure and a different sense of space. Any change to planting therefore needs a good understanding of the impact upon the cemetery layout as well as the landscape beyond.



## 5. Alterations to Structures & Built Features

We may consider alterations to a cemetery or memorial when there are benefits to be gained, or when the planned works will enhance its significance. Such alterations will only be acceptable if there is a thorough understanding of the site, its history and the impact any changes may have.



**5.1** Any changes, new interventions or improvements, will only be acceptable if;

- They are based on adequate research and investigation to fully understand the site, the setting and use of materials – usually via a Conservation Statement.
- The proposed changes will preserve or enhance the original design intention of the cemetery or memorial, especially the uniformity.
- Any resulting harm is clearly outweighed by the benefits (for example, there are access or safety improvements).
- There will be a high enough quality of design, workmanship and materials in the new work.
- Temporary structures, items added such as bins, lighting, benches, etc and signs, must be installed in a sympathetic location and be fully removable (reversible) – without damage.
- The Conservation Committee (Form B) process has been followed together with any local listing or protection requirements.

**Rationale:** Change, or intervention, might be justified where there are benefits to be gained, eg. improving accessibility, but there must be a proper assessment of the cemetery or memorial's significance first. A Conservation Statement will provide an understanding of the fabric and the evolution of the site and its setting, along with its heritage values.

New work must aspire to a high quality of design, execution and planning. Our cemeteries and memorials were constructed using a variety of materials and techniques. Ill-considered alteration, additions, or a series of seemingly small changes, can compromise the site.

**5.2** It may be acceptable to restore a lost structural feature, such as paving, when:

- There is certainty about its appearance, location, the materials used, etc., which is only understood through research – usually a Conservation Statement.
- The cause for the loss of the feature is understood, along with the long-term maintenance implications and sustainability of its restoration.
- There has been consideration of the horticulture of the site, especially if only part of a feature is to be recreated, eg. replacing paving around a pergola without planting changes.
- The work will be completed to a high-standard – including the level of design, workmanship and materials.
- The Conservation Committee (Form B) process has been followed.



**Rationale:** The concept of authenticity requires careful justification. If we are to restore a lost feature, through reconstruction, we will be guided by a complete understanding of the original feature via a Conservation Statement. Reinstating features such as statues, metalwork, artwork – known as a Vulnerable Feature – may be considered on the basis of enhancing the heritage value and significance of the site. It is essential to consider the long term maintenance implications before any works are carried out; why was it removed / lost / etc., in the first place?

**5.3** When an existing constructed feature is in a poor condition, due to poor workmanship, material failure or bad past repairs, it may be acceptable to dismantle and rebuild. This will only be considered when:

- The condition is so poor and it is no longer possible to 'make good' with repairs, that the only viable option is to reconstruct. The design of the site is such that its significance will be adversely affected by the complete loss of the feature, or compromised by a rebuild to a different design.
- Priority has been given to the recovery and use of the original materials and techniques.
- Our Conservation Committee (Form B) process has been followed.

**Rationale:** Normally the feature will need to be in a condition which is so poor that repair is not practically possible and so there is no other sensible choice. The underlying cause of the deterioration should be understood before an intervention is planned.

**5.4** Removal of a non-original feature, such as a tool shed, is usually acceptable when:

- There is certainty that the feature was a later addition and that it does not contribute to the significance of the cemetery or memorial as a whole (or where it is detrimental to the significance).
- It is no longer functional and there is as much certainty as possible that it never will be.
- Our Conservation Committee (Form B) process has been followed.

**Rationale:** Sometimes more modern additions to a site can contribute to its significance. Proposals to remove a feature must be guided by research evidencing when it was added.



## 6. Accessibility

Our cemeteries and memorials should be available for everyone. Good quality access will enhance our ability to commemorate the war dead, increase understanding of the historic environment and ensure its sustainability. We recognise that people's expectations – and the technical opportunities to meet them – are constantly evolving.

**6.1** We will inspect our historic estate for the purpose of assessing accessibility. Key findings will be made available to

visitors online. We will consider physical adjustments on a planned and prioritised basis where adjustments can be achieved without significant harm to the site and its significance and are in accordance with the other Conservation Policies in this document.

**Rationale:** We will continue providing good quality accessibility information and attempting to improve access to our historic estate, in ways that are befitting to these significant sites and that will cause the least damage to the historic fabric.



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## 7. Sustainability

We recognise that over time climate change, and extreme weather events, will have an impact on our historic estate and how we manage our cemeteries and memorials in a sustainable way.

**7.1** We aim to understand the impact of climate change through regular assessment of our cemeteries and memorials. We will consider any necessary changes to adapt / alter our sites on a planned basis where adjustments are proportionate, can be achieved without significant harm and are in accordance with the other Conservation Policies in this document.

**Rationale:** It is important for us to be dynamic in our management approach due to the changing climate. We will collect evidence of extreme weather events to better understand the frequency and



change in weather patterns, especially where they cause damage or affect access to our sites. We will then be able to make an informed decision on the best way to sustainably manage our historic estate.

The main consideration is water. In areas of prolonged drought, with a limited water supply, we may choose to dry-site a cemetery. By using appropriate plants, shrubs and trees, we can optimise the site so that it adapts to the local environmental and climatic conditions. In cases of extreme rainfall we will look at ways to capture and store water, allowing us to minimise use of local water supplies. We will also consider ways to safely divert flood water from overwhelming our sites, perhaps through the use of attenuation or creating flood channels.



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## 8. Recording

**8.1** We will keep accurate records of all works – horticultural and structural. These records should be made available to others.

**Rationale:** It is essential to good management that accurate records of our historic estate are kept. These will record the evolution of our sites and how they have changed – and provide justification for these alterations.