

# Guidelines for the Recording of Monuments, Groups of Buildings and Sites - draft

*Ever since the Venice Charter of 1964, ICOMOS has developed a series of documents setting out best practice in different aspects of consultation. Once adopted, they provide guidance in formulating projects and yardsticks against which proposals can be measured. The most recent example is the Training Guidelines which were adopted at the ICOMOS General Assembly in Colombo in 1993. Another important subject, that of recording, was taken up by the Research and Recording Committee of ICOMOS UK and led to the production of the ICOMOS Guide to Recording Historic Buildings (Butterworth Architecture 1990).*

*It was decided to follow this up by drafting Recording Guidelines which it is hoped may be endorsed at the next General Assembly in Sofia, in 1996. In much of the world where the importance of recording is not fully recognised, these guidelines, emphasising the need for recording and setting out the reasons, occasions, objectives, methods and content, will provide an important aid to better practice, while elsewhere they provide an occasion for reviewing policy and practice.*

As the cultural heritage<sup>1</sup> is a unique expression of human achievement; and

As the cultural heritage is under threat in many ways, and

As the responsibility for conserving and maintaining the cultural heritage belongs not only to the owners but also to the professions directly involved at all levels of government, and indeed all indeed all sectors of society, and

As Article 16 of the Charter of Venice states:

*In all works of preservation, restoration or excavation there should always be precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports, illustrated with drawings and photographs. Every stage of the work of cleaning, consolidation, rearrangement and integration, as well as technical and formal features identified during the course of the work, should be included. This record should be placed in the archives of a public institution and made accessible to research workers.*

These Guidelines set out the principal reasons, occasions, objectives, methods and content for the recording of monuments, buildings, groups of buildings and sites.

## **1.0 The Reasons for Recording**

1.1 Records of the cultural heritage are essential:

- a) to accumulate knowledge and to advance the understanding of cultural heritage and its evolution,
- b) to help in the maintenance and preservation of the heritage in a way that is sensitive to its physical form, its materials, construction, and its historical and cultural significance,
- c) to permit informed control of change or of works to the cultural heritage.

## **2.0 Occasions for Recording**

2.1 Records of the cultural heritage should be made :

- a) when compiling a national, regional, or local inventory of the cultural heritage,
- b) when academic research is being undertaken,
- c) when any works of repair, alteration or other intervention are contemplated and on completion of such work,
- d) when evidence of its history revealed during works,
- e) when accidental or unforeseen disturbance has damaged the cultural heritage,

- f) when natural or human activities threatens to damage the cultural heritage,
- g) when total or partial demolition, destruction or abandonment is contemplated.

### 3.0 Objectives of Recording

- 3.1 Records of the cultural heritage should, to an appropriate level of detail:
- a) identify the accurate location and extent of the monument, building, group of buildings or site,
  - b) establish the date, construction and original use and the subsequent history of its uses and structural alteration,
  - c) identify and describe the nature and quality of its components, and identify its cultural, artistic and scientific significance,
  - d) assist in identifying appropriate and sustainable use,
  - e) provide information upon which works, management, services and maintenance programmes may be planned,
  - f) provide sufficient information for administrators and planners at national or local government levels to make planning and development control policies and decisions,
  - g) provide information for the understanding, interpretation and presentation of the heritage,
  - h) provide a permanent record of all monuments of archaeological, architectural and historical importance that are to be destroyed or altered in any way.

### 4.0 The Content and Location of Records

- 4.1 (a) Before records are prepared, existing sources of information should be found and examined. Such information may be found in surveys, drawings, photographs, published and unpublished accounts and descriptions, and related documents pertaining to the origins and history of the monument or site. These records may be recent or historical.
- (b) Existing records may be found in national and local public archives, in professional, institutional or private archives and collections, in libraries or museums, and in the hands of individuals and bodies who have owned, occupied, recorded, constructed, conserved, or carried out research into the monument or site.
- (c) New records should note the sources of all information not obtained directly from the monument or site itself.

4.2 The methods of recording should be appropriate to the nature of the monument, the purposes of the record and the finance available. Current methods of recording include written descriptions, photographs (aerial or terrestrial), rectified photography, photogrammetry, geophysical survey, maps, measured plans drawings and sketches.

4.3 The location and extent of the monument, building, group of buildings or site must be given accurately. In rural areas a map reference or triangulation to known points may be the only methods available. In urban areas a street reference may be sufficient. In all cases an accurate location by description, maps, plans or aerial photos should be given.

4.4 Records may include the following information :-

- a) type, form and dimensions of the building, monument or site,
- b) evidence for dating the construction,
- c) the materials and construction,
- d) decoration, ornament or inscription,
- e) services, fittings and machinery,
- f) ancillary structures, the gardens, landscape and the cultural, topographical and natural features of the site,
- h) evidence for original use and evidence for subsequent changes in use and construction,
- i) the surrounding urban or rural environment, noting conflicts and threats from environmental pollution or adjacent land uses,
- j) the quality, historical, scientific and cultural significance of the buildings or sites.

In considering the different objectives of recording (see Section 3.0 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. Information in greater detail is required for the site or building owner's own purposes of conservation, maintenance and use.

4.5 A durable copy of the records should be preserved in a safe archive and the archive's environment must ensure permanence of the information and freedom from decay. All such records should be accessible for the purposes of research, development controls and other administrative and legal processes.

4.6 Records should be prepared according to international data standards wherever possible.

<sup>1</sup> In these guidelines, we employ the definition of "Cultural Heritage" embodied in Article 1 of "The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" adopted by UNESCO on 16 November 1972.