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Maintenance guidance and information sources

The establishment of a UK maintenance advisory unit to coordinate maintenance-related initiatives and to provide advice to owners is essential, covering issues such as management, insurance, access, procurement, suppliers, materials, maintenance products and health & safety. In particular the idea of a logbook for every listed building should be pursued and linked to the proposed Home Information Packs. Local maintenance co-operatives and access equipment pools should be encouraged.

Assessing costs and value of maintenance

Further work is required to demonstrate the costs and value of maintenance tasks.

Motivating owners to undertake maintenance

Different incentives need to be devised to appeal to individuals and organisations to maintain their properties.

Facilitating maintenance

The lead bodies need to publish guidance on prioritising maintenance and on the issues of insurance, health & safety and access to inform owners about possible solutions. The Government needs to support the appropriate skills, training and education bodies and professional and trade organisations to address the issues of skills needs.

New maintenance services and products

Government should help companies to set up general maintenance services with expertise in the maintenance of historic buildings. There should be a certification scheme for builders undertaking maintenance to show their competence and, where necessary, their awareness of conservation issues and techniques.

The feasibility of new products needs to be assessed, such as maintenance monitoring products and insurance-linked maintenance inspection contracts (along the lines of existing heating and plumbing schemes).

PUTTING IT OFF

How lack of maintenance fails our heritage

The full report is on:
www.maintainourheritage.co.uk

or copies can be obtained from:
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Note

The report is based on six research reports undertaken for Maintain our Heritage by Arup Research + Development, De Montfort Expertise and the University of the West of England, Bristol. The six reports are available in full on the MoH web site: www.maintainourheritage.co.uk

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The views in the report are those of Maintain our Heritage and not necessarily those of the funders and partners in the research programme.

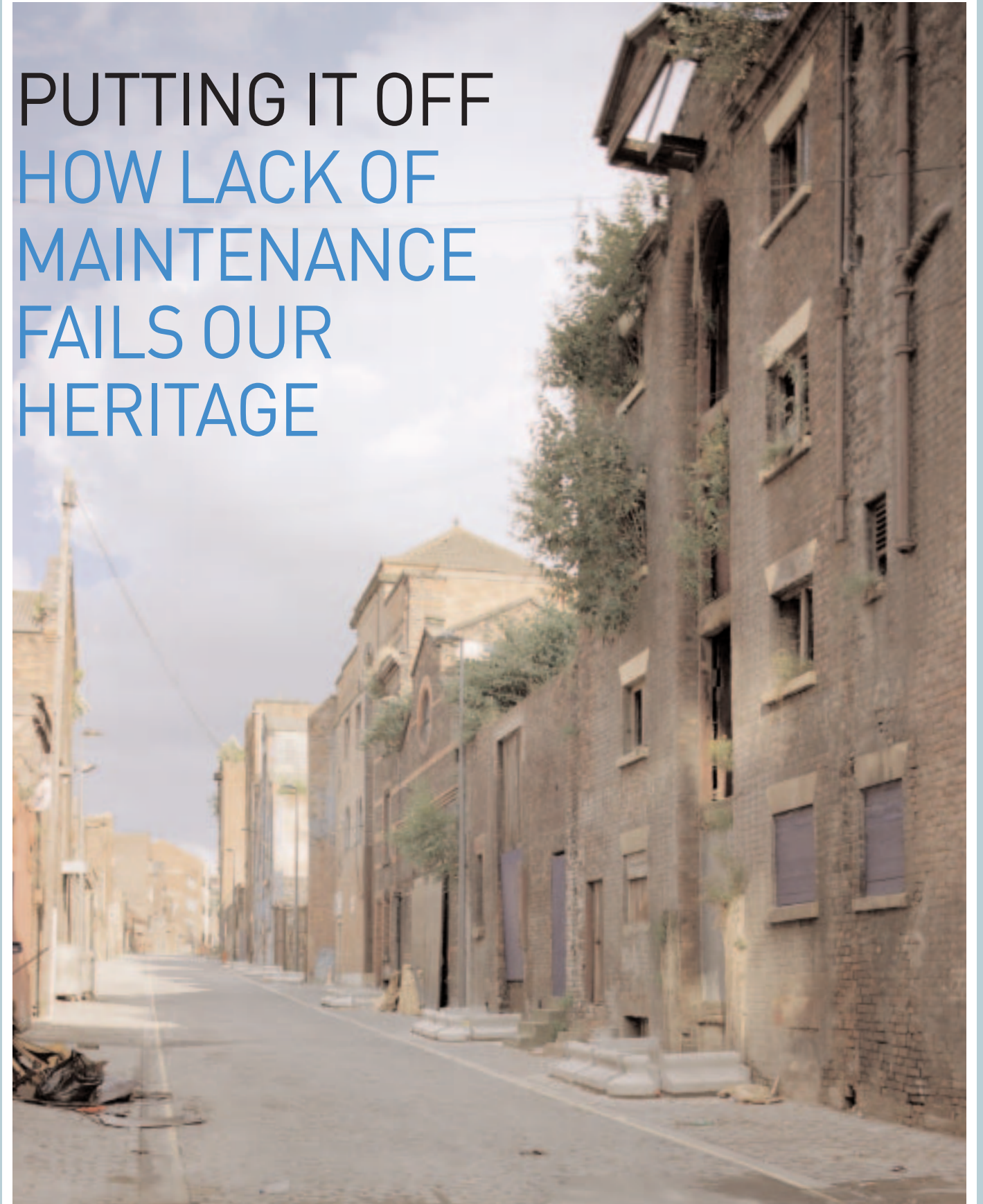
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Maintain
our Heritage

**SUMMARY OF A REPORT ON THE
RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON
THE MAINTENANCE OF HISTORIC
BUILDINGS LED BY MAINTAIN
OUR HERITAGE**

PUTTING IT OFF HOW LACK OF MAINTENANCE FAILS OUR HERITAGE



Maintenance is recognised as the best way to look after historic buildings. Yet in practice little maintenance is done. Many owners wait for things to go wrong before acting. The value of systematic and preventative maintenance is not widely appreciated. This report calls for a change in approach from passive endorsement to pro-active encouragement of maintenance.



MAINTENANCE – WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO IT?

Maintenance is defined here as any activity such as cleaning, painting and minor repair carried out systematically, on a planned cycle and based on regular inspection. Maintenance of historic buildings is most beneficial in conservation terms when it is preventative, that is, intended to reduce or remove the need for repairs.

Maintenance:

- keeps up a building's appearance, extends its life, and safeguards its investment value;
- reduces or eliminates the cost and disruption to occupants that flow from failures and occasional large-scale restoration;
- is sustainable, using fewer new materials and involving less extraction, processing and transport, waste and energy use, while reducing pressure for greenfield development;
- retains historic fabric because less material is lost in regular, minimal and small-scale work than in disruptive and extensive restoration; and
- provides a business activity that is steady and counter-cyclical, bringing jobs all year round in all parts of the country.

CURRENT MAINTENANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE

The research produced the following findings:

Government policy is at odds with conservation principles

Current legislation and policies do not adequately encourage maintenance – even in the historic building sector where the philosophy of maintenance as the best means of conservation is widely accepted.

For most listed buildings in the UK there is no duty of care. Listing imposes on an owner a responsibility to obtain listed building consent for works that would affect the building's character but there is no obligation on the owner to keep the building in repair.

Best practice elsewhere is not taken up in the conservation sector

The conservation sector has not drawn upon the examples of good maintenance practice adopted by some non-heritage organisations, such as businesses, hospitals and housing associations.

Lack of support for owners

Owners are not encouraged or helped to maintain historic buildings. VAT is imposed on maintenance and repair but not on alterations and new build. The necessary information and advice is not available from a single source.

Public benefits not evaluated

The long term value to the public of maintaining historic buildings is never evaluated because, currently, it is not quantifiable.

Convenience not conservation

Owners are not driven by conservation principles. They maintain their buildings primarily to avoid the inconvenience of disrepair which would adversely affect their use and enjoyment of the properties.

Reactive not systematic

Owners tend to take a short term view and do not see the benefit of maintenance that would prevent major faults appearing later.

Low priority of maintenance

Building owners tend not to prioritise maintenance because they:

- do not have the skills required to undertake or manage maintenance works; and
- see maintenance as a low priority activity.

Practicalities

Owners need help in making maintenance simpler to manage, particularly in respect of:

- insurance;
- health & safety;
- access; and
- sourcing suitably skilled builders.

Supply of maintenance services limited by apparent lack of demand

Suppliers have not developed preventative maintenance services for historic buildings largely due to an apparent lack of demand, low revenue and the administratively intensive nature of regular maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY OPTIONS

This report has major policy implications. It discusses proposals that will lead to the development of an informed and targeted strategy for maintenance. The main recommendations are as follows:

A UK strategy for maintenance

Government should promote a UK-wide debate on integrating maintenance into conservation policy and practice, leading to a UK strategy for maintenance.

Statutory duty of care balanced by financial, advisory and technical support

Government should legislate to introduce a statutory duty of care or to enable local authorities to introduce a minimum maintenance code to require owners to maintain listed buildings. To balance this responsibility, owners should be entitled to financial incentives and advisory and technical support.

Review of current enforcement powers

Current historic building enforcement powers and procedures require urgent review to encourage local authorities to be more proactive in halting deterioration before buildings fall into disrepair.

Best practice: heritage organisations and local authorities to lead by example

Cadw, English Heritage, the Northern Ireland Environment & Heritage Service and Historic Scotland ('the lead bodies'), in conjunction with the local authorities, need to develop best practice processes and procedures in conservation maintenance management to pass on the experience of good practice to owners. Heritage organisations and local authorities should lead by example.

Maintenance-focused grants and fiscal incentives

Maintenance should be central to the policy making of the relevant grant-giving bodies including the local authorities. They should consider a change of emphasis to encourage owners to maintain buildings, not just restore poorly maintained buildings. VAT anomalies must be removed.

Develop Buildings at Risk register as information source and advisory tool

The lead bodies and local authorities should develop more fully the Buildings at Risk register as a management tool to provide interactive information on listed building condition. This register should cover all listed buildings and be used to monitor and encourage maintenance.