



When embarking on a war memorial conservation project, whether you are applying to War Memorials Trust for a grant or not, it is always advisable to plan the works in advance, based on its current condition and needs.

All grant applications to the Trust must be supported by a complete method statement - a document which must fully describe the condition of the war memorial and give details of how the work will be carried out. This document does not need to be long and its scope is not to address health and safety issues, but it must be comprehensive in detailing what works will be carried out to the memorial and how. This document will form a useful tool in obtaining quotes for the work and is vital in assessing your application for a grant.

This helpsheet details how you should be approaching a conservation and repair project and what areas of the memorial you should be looking at. As every war memorial differs from another in terms of design, construction materials, current condition and location its conservation needs will also vary. Therefore this document can only provide general guidelines. If you require any further advice please contact the Trust's Conservation Officer.

### **Aims of conservation**

Your proposed works should be in line with best conservation practice and should aim to employ the least interventionist procedure. The aim of any conservation project should be to arrest decay by addressing the causes of damage and preserving the memorial in good condition. Works should aim to conserve what is there and repair any damage. Replacement of original material should be kept to a minimum and should only be carried out when absolutely necessary.

The majority of war memorials in the UK were erected after World War I but even for ones that were erected subsequently it should not be forgotten that these are historic structures and therefore should be treated as such. This means that certain techniques and materials should not be applied to them. On the other hand war memorials need to fulfill their commemorative function and for this reason it is generally accepted that certain procedures that may, in the case of other historic structures be excluded, can be carried out on war memorials. Such procedures could include cleaning and the re-cutting of lettering to ensure that inscriptions remain legible.

Nevertheless materials and techniques that could potentially cause damage to the memorial should not be employed. These include abrading techniques, use of chemicals such as bleach and use of cement in pointing mortars. You should aim to use materials that are compatible with the memorial's components and any replacements should ideally be done on a like-for-like basis. Altering the appearance and design of the memorial should also be avoided. Covering up inscriptions with new plaques, removing inscriptions, redressing the surface should not be

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carried out.

Depending on the condition of the memorial and its design it may be worth considering commissioning a professional conservator to carry out a condition assessment of the memorial.

## Description

The first step in the process of deciding what works should be carried out is to identify the materials the memorial is composed of. Start by writing a brief description of your memorial - through this process you will be able to pick up several design and construction elements and identify the memorial's materials.

Below are a few questions to help you start thinking about what you should be looking at:

- Is it made of stone and if so, what type?
- Are there any metallic elements on the memorial such as decorative features or any plaques? What metal are they made of?
- Are there any other materials there? Bricks, wood, roof tiles, etc?
- Are there any inscriptions on the memorial? If so, are they incised/painted/raised lead/flush lead/gilded?

Look at the area around the memorial:

- Is it paved?
- Is there any vegetation?
- Are there any railings?
- If the war memorial is not freestanding are there any other areas that require attention (e.g. if the memorial is a plaque on a wall, what is the condition of that wall? Is there any damp that may be affecting the memorial?).

## Assess the condition and establish necessary works

Once you have established what materials the war memorial is made of you will need to look at its condition and establish what works need to be carried out. Below we list some technical issues that may be relevant to your project in order to help you prepare your method statement. Not all of the areas listed below will necessarily apply to your project but we have included details of the type of information the Trust would like to see included in a method statement submitted with a grant application.

- **Structural condition**

If there are any signs of structural movement, you should explain whether the movement is on-going, what has caused it and what remedial works you propose to carry out. Depending on the condition of the memorial it may be necessary to undertake investigative works or seek further specialist advice and/or commission a structural survey. Please note that such surveys maybe eligible for a grant.

- **Cleaning**

If the surface is soiled or covered by any deposits that are damaging to the war memorial's fabric then cleaning may be required. You should provide the reasons for cleaning and detail the type of soiling to be removed. It is very important to outline the proposed method of cleaning and list all materials that will be used. Any procedures or materials that maybe considered to be damaging to the memorial's fabric, either short or long term, will not be approved. Always consider even the 'simplest' of options; it is often surprising how much dirt and surface deposits can be removed with just low pressure water washing and soft bristle brushes.

In instances where you are uncertain of what the most appropriate cleaning method is, you may need to carry out on-site cleaning trials. In this case you should list all the materials and techniques you are proposing to test. The cost of these may be included in the overall project costs of your grant application.

- **Masonry repairs**

If you propose to repair the war memorial's masonry, you should identify the type(s) of stonework or brickwork, describe its general condition and explain what types of repair you want to carry out (e.g. mortar repair, stone indent, stone replacement, etc). You should also identify the replacement materials which should ideally match the existing.

You should examine the condition of the joints and if they need re-pointing, you should describe what the existing mortar is made from and state the proportions and constituents of the proposed new mortars. As a general principle any type of cement should not be used and it is preferable to use lime-based mortar mixes

- **Lettering**

If the lettering is no longer readable, you may consider carrying out works to make it legible. You will need to describe the nature of the existing lettering (e.g. incised, filled, painted, gilded, etc) and explain how any enhancement or re-cutting work will be carried out.

Re-cutting should be done with hand (not power-assisted) tools. The use of electric tools or machine cutting will not be approved.

Re-facing of the stonework in order to obtain a new 'smooth' surface on which to re-engage the inscription anew is not advisable as it will only lead to unnecessary loss of original material and long term damage to the stonework. Likewise the alteration of the type of inscription present on the war memorial (e.g. to remove lead raised inscriptions and replace with incised painted ones) is not acceptable as it will lead to loss of original material and alter the memorial's design and appearance.

If you have reason to believe that the lettering was different at the time of erection to the existing one and propose to re-instate the original (i.e. re-painting letters) you will need to support this claim with historic evidence.

If you are proposing to add a new inscription or names (although this may not be eligible under some of the Trust's grant schemes) this should be done in a manner that replicates the existing in terms of layout, design, font and size. Further advice can be obtained from the Trust's Conservation Officer.

- **Decorative stone elements and sculpture**

If stone sculpture or other stone decoration has any fractures or missing elements, you should describe the damage and give details of any repairs, surface consolidation or protection which you propose to carry out. If you want to replace any missing features, you will also need to identify the materials that you propose to use. These should match the original in terms of material and design wherever possible.

- **Metal sculpture and plaques**

If you propose to carry out any work to metal sculpture or plaques, you should identify the type of metal, describe the condition of their surface and fixings and explain what type of work you propose to carry out (e.g. cleaning, removal of coatings, re-patinaion, repair of small defects and re-waxing).

Please note that metal conservation is a specialist field and a specialist conservator ought to

be employed to carry out this work. Please see War Memorials Trust's 'Conservation contacts' helpsheet for further information.

- **Metal fixings**

If there are any signs of problems caused by the presence of ferrous fixings, such as iron staining or cracking, you should describe the damage and give details of the treatment or replacement which you propose. Replacement materials should be non-ferrous (such as stainless steel).

- **Timber**

If timber and joints have decayed so that they no longer have the required structural strength, you should describe their condition and explain what remedial works you propose to carry out. If timber is used in a decorative manner and has weathered you should describe the conservation process you are proposing including details of any materials to be used. Any replacement should be kept to a minimum and rotted areas of wood can be removed and new wood spliced in, as opposed to replacing entire elements.

- **Landscaping**

You should describe any works that you propose to carry out to existing 'hard' landscaping that forms part of the war memorial's design and the reasons for carrying out the work.

- **Maintenance**

You should encourage your contractor to make recommendations regarding future maintenance needs for the memorial outlining what works will be required and how frequently. Please see War Memorials Trust's 'Advice on maintenance of war memorials' guidance notes for further information. The cost of drawing up this maintenance plan can be included in the overall cost of the project depending on the grant scheme you are applying for.

- **Relocation**

The Trust does not encourage the relocation of war memorials and will only support such projects when the memorial is at risk or no longer accessible for commemoration purposes. If your project includes moving the memorial, you are advised to discuss this with the Trust's Conservation Officer first.

Lastly please note that when applying for a grant from War Memorials Trust, if your project combines types of work eligible for funding with types of work that are ineligible, you are required to inform us of all works that you are intending to carry out (whether eligible or not).

## **Further information**

The local Conservation Officer (usually in the conservation or planning departments of your local authority) should be able to provide you with further technical advice. You should contact your local Conservation Officer to confirm if the war memorial is listed in order to determine whether listed building consent is required for the proposed works.

For information about qualified professional conservators and restorers, please see War Memorials Trust's 'Conservation contractors and professional advisors' helpsheet.

If you require further information on the above advice or would like further guidance on what works should be carried out to the war memorial, please contact the Trust's Conservation Officer on 020 7233 7356/ 0300 123 0764 or at [conservation@warmemorials.org](mailto:conservation@warmemorials.org).