

HISTORIC BUILDINGS COUNCIL

ROLE OF THE COUNCIL AND JOB DESCRIPTION

1. Constitution of the Historic Buildings Council

The Historic Buildings Council (the Council) was established in 1973 under the provisions of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. Its current authority is derived from the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Appointments to the Council, which consists currently of a Chairman and 15 Members, are subject to the approval of the Minister of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The term of appointment is for a period of three years but Members may be eligible for reappointment for a second term, subject to satisfactory service. Should the Council be abolished, amalgamated or have its functions transferred during the appointment period, then the appointments would, of course, also cease with effect from the date of that abolition, amalgamation or transfer.

The Council currently operates from 5-33 Hill Street, Belfast, BT1 2LA and is serviced by a Secretariat.

2. Role of the Historic Buildings Council

The role of the Council is to advise the Department of the Environment on matters relating to the preservation of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

Specifically, it advises on:

- the listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest
- the designating of Conservation Areas
- the general state of preservation of listed buildings
- such other matters relating to the preservation of buildings of special architectural or historic interest as may be referred to it
- such other functions as may be conferred on it by any statutory provision
- applications for exemption of listed buildings from Capital Transfer Tax
- the issue of certificates that buildings are not intended to be listed

3. Structure of the Council

Membership of the Council is sought by means of public advertisement. However, in the interests of continuity, the Department considers the re-appointment of some existing Members, subject to the general principle that Members should not normally serve more than 2 terms in line with the Code of Practice established by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland. The Department will seek to maintain a balance between a wide geographical knowledge of historic buildings and an appropriate spread of experience and skills within the Council. The Department will seek to

ensure, on merit, an overall representation, which reflects the composition of the population of Northern Ireland in terms of community background, gender and ethnic origin. In order to facilitate the Council's consideration of cross-border heritage issues, one post on the Council is taken up by an appointee from the Republic of Ireland.

4. Required competencies and experience

Chairman

No specific professional qualifications are required however it is essential that candidates are able to demonstrate that they meet all the following criteria:

Leadership qualities including experience in chairing discussions and representational skills

Proven management ability

Knowledge of environmental issues particularly those concerned with the protection and conservation of the built environment (this includes knowledge of current legislation and awareness of policy and case law) and of how these issues relate to the Northern Ireland society.

Members

No specific professional qualifications are required for the majority of the places on the Council however the effective operation of the Council necessitates the inclusion of a small group of professionally qualified architects and a professionally qualified, suitably experienced, structural engineer. Applicants for these places must be in a position to provide evidence of their qualifications and experience. However, it is essential that all applicants are able to demonstrate competency, professional training and/or experience in **at least three of the following areas:** architecture, vernacular architecture, architectural conservation, local history, industrial heritage, education, legislation, town and country planning, quantity surveying, structural engineering, the media and marketing.

It is also desirable that all applicants are able to demonstrate an active interest in historic buildings and a commitment to the promotion of their conservation.

5. Duties

Chairman

The Chairman's duties will include chairing ten Council meetings a year, each meeting usually lasting a whole day (approximately 7 hours). Meetings may be held throughout Northern Ireland but are normally held in Hillsborough or the Greater Belfast area. The Chairman will also chair occasional special

meetings and may attend sub-committees, such as the Joint Committee on Industrial Heritage (which meets three or four times a year).

In addition to chairing Council meetings, the Chairman would be expected to attend pre-meeting briefings with Department officials, to handle correspondence and responses to consultations, to represent the Council at occasional functions and events, to represent the Council to the media, and to prepare the Council's end-of-term report to the Department.

Members

Members are asked to attend and contribute to some ten Council meetings a year, each meeting usually lasting a whole day (approximately 7 hours). Meetings may be held throughout Northern Ireland but are normally held in Hillsborough or the Greater Belfast area. There may be occasional special meetings or visits to buildings or proposed Conservation Areas. Members with special interests may be invited to serve on a sub-committee, such as the Joint Committee on Industrial Heritage (which meets three or four times a year). Members will be asked to contribute to the Council's Report, published every three years at the conclusion of the term of office of the Council.

6. Terms and Conditions of Appointment

The appointments will be for three years, effective from 1 March 2007, with the possibility of an extension for a second three-year term, subject to satisfactory service. Should the Council be abolished, amalgamated or have its functions transferred during the appointment period, then the appointments would, of course, also cease with effect from the date of that abolition, amalgamation or transfer.

Members will be expected to attend meetings and may also be asked to serve on ad-hoc sub-committees. Neither Chairmanship or Membership attracts a salary, but an allowance for travelling and subsistence expenses, in line with standard Civil Service rates, is payable, together with payment of incidental expenses, if any. Expenses incurred in relation to the care of dependants will also be reimbursed where appropriate.

If, after appointment, a person finds that he/she is unable to make a satisfactory contribution to the work of the Council, he/she may be invited to withdraw from the Council.

7. Code of Practice

In exercising their duties the Chairman and Members of the Council must demonstrate impartiality, integrity and objectivity.

Communication between the Council and the Department will normally take place through the Chairman. The Chairman and Members must at

all times operate within the limits of the Council's statutory authority.

Individuals should be aware of their wider responsibilities as Members of the Council. Like others who serve the public, they must follow the basic principles of public life as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee). Council Members must

- undertake on appointment to comply at all times with the code of practice that is adopted by the Council and with the rules relating to the use of public funds;
- act in good faith and in the best interests of the Council;
- not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purposes, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations; and
- ensure that they comply with the Council's rules on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.

8. Handling of Conflicts of Interest

The Chairman and Members should declare from the outset any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities as Council Members, commencing with completion of the relevant section of the application form.

A register of these interests will be kept. It will list direct or indirect pecuniary interests which members of the public might reasonably think could influence judgement. The register of interest will also include non-pecuniary interests of Members which relate closely to the body's activities or interests of close family members and persons living in the same household as the Council Member. If changes occur, Council Members should ensure that the register is updated. The contents of the register will be open to the public for inspection.

9. Appointment Process

All application forms must be submitted to the Department by 5pm on 31 August **2006**. CVs should not be submitted. Each form will be acknowledged.

Applicants will be short listed for interview on the basis of the criteria outlined in the application form. It is therefore essential that applicants indicate on their application form how and to what extent they meet the criteria. Applicants who are not short listed will be notified in writing as soon as possible.

Interviews will be held week commencing **2 October 2006**.

The Department will publicly announce the appointment of the new Council by means of a press notice.

