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Cost budgeting in conservation management plans for heritage buildings

Cost budgeting

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Abstract

Purpose – The conservation management plan (CMP) for a heritage building establishes the nature of the work required to conserve, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage significance of the property. A missing element from many CMPs has been a realistic consideration of the cost of the work at this early stage. The paper aims to show how cost planning of works in a heritage building's conservation environment can be achieved.

Design/methodology/approach – A background to the structure and preparation of CMPs from the literature in Australia and the UK is presented. Experience gained from the costing and budgeting in the CMP for several heritage projects in Australia and the process, are both described, summarised and discussed.

Findings – The CMP provides a comprehensive working management guide for owners and other stakeholders to follow when carrying out works to the heritage property and includes components such as current condition, legal responsibilities and statutory obligations, sequencing and timing of proposed actions. The addition of significant financial information such as maintenance programmes, funding sources, long and short term costs, financial resources of owner, technical constraints, current owners needs and requirements and conflict resolution provides the possibility of making the CMP a more valuable document to the funding agencies and the building's users.

Practical implications – Heritage clients and users increasingly need to know their likely financial commitment before work commences. This early stage cost advice (indicative costs) integrated into CMPs can establish realistic budgets for decision making.

Originality/value – The addition of the cost of the works as proposed in a CMP can support client and community groups in making requests for funding from the various government and private agencies with an interest in, or responsibility for, the future care and use of these properties.

Keywords Heritage, Buildings, Building conservation, Budgetary control, Australia, United Kingdom

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Communities and governments place greater emphasis on the conservation of heritage places as a result of the expanding interest and appreciation in the events, achievements and traditions of the past. Governments have increasingly assumed the duty of ensuring the protection and preservation of our cultural heritage as a critical aspect of maintaining community identity. The conservation of heritage places goes beyond the passive definition of the significance of the place. It also embraces the active management of the heritage place so that it can not only be conserved, but also



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enjoyed by the community without further deterioration in its condition. Pearson and Sullivan (1995, p. 11) summarise the aims of conservation management as the elucidation of all the values of heritage places, the development of long-term preservation and the implementation of management practices that conserve the essence and physical form of the place. Cost planning can play a small but significant role in guiding conservation decisions that achieve the best value for the governing bodies and the community.

This paper presents the background to conservation management plans, mainly in Australia, but with reference to similar trends in the UK, and in a practice setting that identifies the form and content of these documents and shows how cost planning of works in a heritage building's conservation environment can be achieved.

Framework for conservation

In Australia, this duty of care for heritage places has manifested itself in the development of the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1999) to guide the experts (conservation practitioners) and the community in the development of an appropriate response to conserving a heritage place. The Burra Charter is a comprehensive document that has grown since its original publication in 1979, with revisions in 1981, 1988 to a latest revised version by Australia ICOMOS Incorporated in 1999 with the Australian Heritage Commission and Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage (2000) publishing a workbook for its interpretation and greater access and use by communities interested and involved in protecting heritage places.

The Burra Charter provides guidelines for understanding the five heritage values (aesthetic/architectural, historic, scientific, social and spiritual) and for the development of conservation policy and strategy for implementing policy. It also recommends a guideline for the contents and structure for a heritage report (Australia ICOMOS, 1999). A summary of the sequence of investigations, decisions and actions is summarised in Figure 1, taken from the Burra Charter.

Inspection of Figure 1 indicates three important stages:

- (1) understand and assess the significance of the place;
- (2) develop suitable policy through information gathering from stakeholders, and
- (3) manage the chosen conservation strategies with the implementation of policy.

A conservation plan is produced from the first two stages. Conservation plans are very useful as detailed guides to protect buildings, grounds, neighbourhoods and features of places with recognised heritage significance. They outline policy or objectives for a heritage place, resulting from a conservation analysis (stage 2). A useful guide for preparing plans is *The Conservation Plan* by Kerr Semple (1996).

The implementation of the conservation plan is the function of the management plan, which is a practical document dealing with the political, resource, economic and community issues surrounding the conservation of the heritage place. The Australian Heritage Commission and Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage (2000, p. 57) identifies the management plan as a crucial document that should include the following contents:

- (1) a description of the place and its setting;
- (2) an identification of the key people interested and the sources of information;

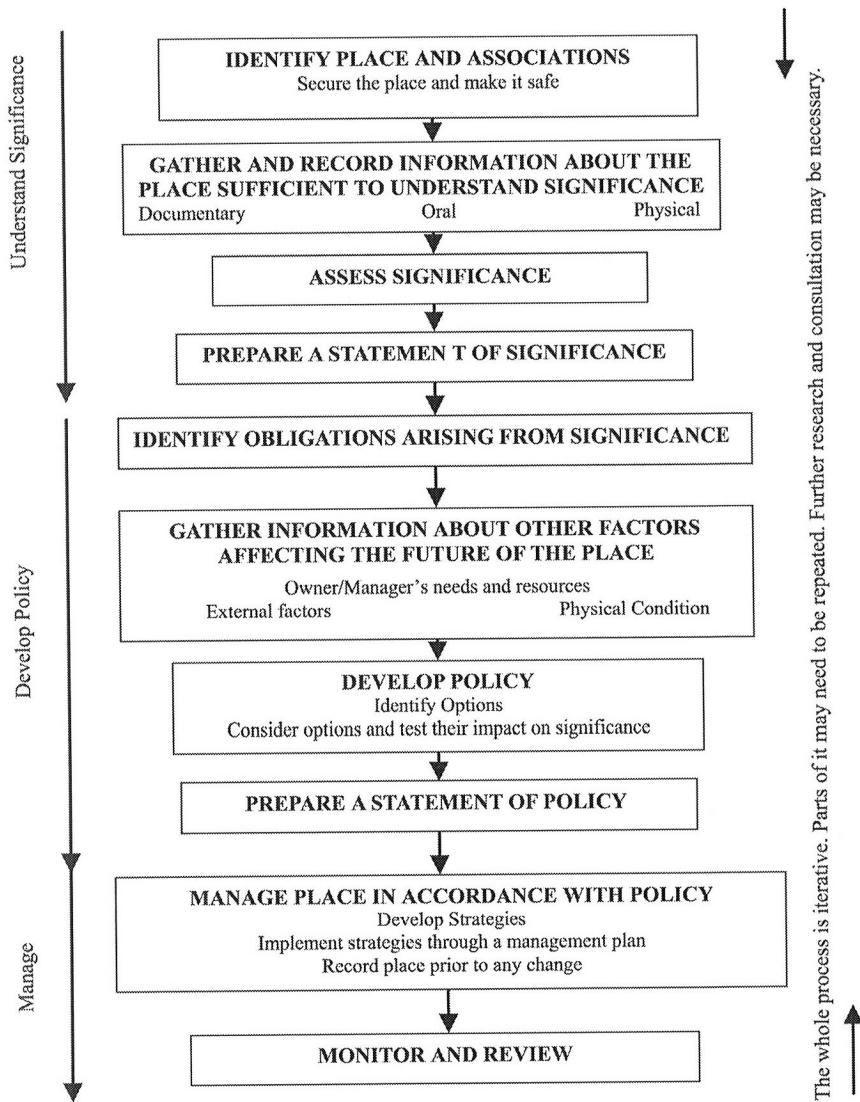


Figure 1.
The Burra Charter process

- (3) a statement of the significant heritage values of the place;
- (4) an identification of the key issues affecting the future of the place or places;
- (5) objectives;
- (6) guidance on what future actions will be done or are appropriate considering the significance of the place or places;
- (7) a list of people responsible for carrying out actions of the plan (who is responsible for what);

- (8) how the protection of the place itself will be monitored and reviewed; and
- (9) a process and timing for reviewing and updating the plan.

A sound management plan can be used with, and by authorities and stakeholders to convince any interested party that the heritage place can and should be protected and most importantly, the management plan is a key means for supporting fundraising within the community and to external bodies. A more recent development in conservation practice is the blending of the conservation plan with the management plan to create a sound analysis of the heritage place with a management plan that takes a practical and realistic view of the implementation of the conservation policy. This document is known as the conservation management plan (CMP). The Australian Heritage Commission and Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage (2000, p. 58) considers that the CMP is a conservation plan with some consideration of management issues.

This paper focuses on the third stage of the process, the implementation of the conservation plan through appropriate management of conservation strategies using a CMP. Pearson and Sullivan (1995, p. 188) pinpoint the form of management required in this type of (conservation) environment as:

- (1) identifying the range of options available for each heritage place in accordance with its assessed significance;
- (2) balancing these options with other considerations, such as the availability of funding and human resources and the potential conflict with other management aims for the same or adjacent land; and
- (3) choosing the most appropriate option and pursuing it as a management policy.

The Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1999, p. 17) is specific in terms of the management policy prepared with the client, or client groups, and should include the following flexible strategies to deal with:

- the financial resources to be used;
- the technical and other staff to be used;
- the sequence of events;
- the timing of events; and
- the management structure.

Whilst the management aspects of resources, timing and organisational structure are emphasised in the Burra Charter, financial resources are also given prominence and cannot be ignored.

Pearson and Sullivan (1995, p. 198) also identify the major elements that should be included in a management plan for a cultural place. The sequence and content they present differs from that of the Burra Charter. They consider that the management plan should:

...reflect the reality of the management situation in which most heritage place managers find themselves: the management process is based first and foremost on statutory obligation, which may encourage or discourage conservation action. Often the manager's primary task is to find a way to interpret the legislative constraints to allow conservation to occur.

The main headings of Pearson and Sullivan's (1995, pp. 198-211) management plan can be summarised under their six key headings:

- (1) Statement of legal responsibility, philosophy and general policy forming the base for the plan.
- (2) Description of the heritage place, its assessment and a statement of significance.
- (3) Statement of other values in the management area, and of how the heritage value ranks with them.
- (4) Identification of other requirements, opportunities and constraints placed upon the management of heritage places.
- (5) Formulation of a conservation or management policy.
- (6) Management strategy or implementation plan.

The Australian sources of managing conservation of heritage buildings, which include Pearson and Sullivan (1995), Kerr Semple (1996) and the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1999) provide a solid framework for managing the conservation of heritage places. It is interesting to note developments in the use of conservation plans in another country such as the UK. Developments in a country such as the UK may provide insight and a useful comparison for conservation approaches in Australia.

Conservation plans in the UK

Whilst conservation and heritage has a long history in the UK, the establishment of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) gave a great impetus to using this body as a source of funding for communities to conserve their heritage places. The HLF web site (www.hlf.org.uk/) confirms the same principles of approach where primacy is given to the creation of a conservation plan as an important process in understanding and managing the heritage significance of a site by:

- (1) focusing on the significance of the heritage asset;
- (2) identifying the policies needed to be in place to retain the significance; and
- (3) demonstrating that the proposals are based on a clear understanding of the importance of all aspects of the asset.

In fact, the HLF prescribe the structure of a typical CMP. The HLF obviously have an aim to regulate requests for funding by having a policy that encourages a standard approach to assist communities and consultants preparing a CMP that enables comparison between projects and assists in the evaluation of submissions.

The structure of a typical HLF conservation management plan is given in Table I.

Worthing and Gwilliams (2002) have summarised the development of conservation plans, noting that the use of conservation plans is a recent occurrence and has been significantly boosted by the HLF, which requires such plans to support funding bids to the organization.

It appears from reviewing the UK developments with the HLF that they may have been guided, or at least influenced by the more well-established approaches noted here

Major headings	Sub-headings
<i>Part One: Conservation Analysis</i>	
1.0 Introduction	
2.0 Historical overview	
3.0 Site investigations	
4.0 Comparative analysis	
5.0 Statement of cultural significance	
<i>Part Two: The Management Plan</i>	
6.0 Constraints	
7.0 Conservation policy	7.1 Exterior
	7.2 Interior
	7.3 Access ways
	7.4 Utilisation
	7.5 Statutory protection
	7.6 Control of physical intervention
	7.7 Funding opportunities
8.0 Recommendations and scope of works	8.1 Conservation recommendations: general principles
	8.2 Recommendations and scope of works: short term
	8.2.1 <i>Essential works</i>
	8.2.2 <i>Desirable</i>
	8.3 Recommendations and scope of works: long term
	8.3.1 <i>Essential works</i>
	8.3.2 <i>Desirable</i>

Table I.
HLF CMP structure

for Australian practice. Similarly, recent practice in Victoria also seems to have been influenced by the HLF in the UK. Practice in Victoria is now described and discussed.

CMP

The approach to the development of a CMP must take into account the specific client needs and any particular requirements of the heritage place under study. It is also the practice of the author's collaborator in CMPs (Dr David Rowe: see acknowledgments) to broadly implement the Conservation Plan Standard Brief (August 2001) of Heritage Victoria, the Victorian Government's heritage authority. Heritage Victoria's requirement of a CMP is that it should provide clear and justifiable direction for owners and permit issuing authorities in the management of the particular place for which it has been prepared. Clear and justifiable policies and actions also need to be negotiated during the process of preparing the report (Heritage Victoria, 2001, p. 1).

In the author's work with Rowe he has followed the Burra Charter approach to a CMP with the report divided into two parts. This structure is similar to that as noted by the HLF in Table I. A typical CMP structure used by the author and Rowe is given in Table II. As previously outlined, this also broadly follows the format stipulated by Heritage Victoria.

Pressure of space prevents the author presenting full details of a conservation management plan as shown in Table II. Rather the focus is on the Recommendations, works and maintenance (section 6.0) and specifically on the cost plan arising as a result of the work built up in the previous sections of the report. That is, the cost plan does

Major headings	Sub-headings
Executive Summary	
<i>Part One: The Conservation Analysis</i>	
1.0 Introduction	1.1 Introduction 1.2 Acknowledgments 1.3 Heritage listings 1.4 Statutory obligations 1.5 Definition of property
2.0 Historical evidence	2.1 Early development 2.2 Social development 2.3 Building development
3.0 Physical evidence	3.1 The site and setting 3.2 Built fabric 3.3 Conclusions
4.0 Cultural significance	4.1 Introduction 4.2 Assessment of significance 4.3 Statement of cultural significance 4.4 Significance of components
<i>Part Two: The Management Plan</i>	
5.0 Conservation policy	5.1 Introduction 5.2 General policy 5.3 Exterior fabric 5.4 Interior fabric 5.5 Setting 5.6 Heritage obligations 5.7 Future development and control of physical intervention 5.8 Use 5.9 Statutory constraints 5.10 Interpretation 5.11 Management 5.12 Funding opportunities 5.13 Lodgement of the CMP
6.0 Recommendations, works and maintenance	6.1 Introduction 6.2 The setting 6.3 Exterior 6.4 Interior (general) 6.5 Moderate-high integrity rooms 6.6 Moderate integrity rooms 6.7 Low-moderate integrity rooms 6.8 Low integrity rooms 6.9 Cost plan
7.0 Bibliography	
8.0 Appendices	

Table II.
Rowe's CMP structure

not stand alone, but is an integral part of the total report and for its accuracy relies on the information and analysis contained in the whole report.

Costing/budgeting for the CMP

A site visit is essential for understanding the place and the object of the work being recommended. Rowe and the author rely on a detailed photographic record of the place

to guide the detail required in the CMP. When the scope of works schedule is drawn up, reference to the photograph(s) representing the works is included to integrate the conservation analysis, the management plan and, in particular, the detailed costings for the specific item noted.

Basis of the costings

Preparing estimates for this type of work is complex and difficult. The type of work priced in these types of project in the inception stage, are preliminary estimates that contain a great deal of work in and around the existing significant heritage buildings. The nature of such work is difficult to predict in terms of final content, extent and specification. Whilst the author makes every attempt to foresee any potential problems and construction difficulties, pricing this work at this stage may be subject to substantial variation by the time that the work is actually carried out. By its nature predicting the cost and extent of such alterations, renovations and repairs to existing buildings is risky and the client is made aware of these factors when reviewing the cost plan and CMP.

When preparing their CMP and cost plan it is essential to gain advice from a structural engineer where the nature of the work involves any issues of structural integrity of any part of the heritage place. Where these specialised services are not available at the time of the preparation of the CMP the cost plan assumes that no major works are required to maintain or rectify the existing structural capacity of the building in its present or proposed uses. Any major structural work arising as a result of the work involved in repairs, demolition, opening up and removal of items as identified in the CMP is identified as *not* being included.

Another important point at this early stage of planning is the need to meet all the statutory obligations of any authorities. This is clearly outlined in the Conservation Plan Brief by Heritage Victoria. The client should be made aware that the place must comply with all statutory obligations and regulations imposed by the various authorities (heritage places of state significance are included on the Victorian Heritage Register and heritage permits are administered by Heritage Victoria).

The client may need to investigate these requirements and take them into account when considering any future uses, design standards and cost them accordingly. Such items can include the provision of disabled access to the existing or any proposed buildings and the provision of additional public toilets (including disabled facilities) to satisfy the requirements of any local and other authorities. These requirements can be expensive and require some sensitive design and planning to incorporate them into the conserved place without disturbing its cultural significance.

Pricing the work in a CMP has to make certain assumptions about how the work will be procured. It is recognised that much of the work is likely to be carried out in stages representing the priority indicated in the CMP. The priorities used by the author are the same as those recommended in the HLF in Table II:

- Short term – essential works, desirable.
- Long term – essential works, desirable.

So, in practice the proposed works may be carried out in at least the four stages as noted, but it has to be recognised that many clients struggling with the realities of budgeting and possibly fund raising, may sub-divide this work further and possibly

into the individual items noted in the CMP scope of works schedule. The author expects that the costing of work in the CMP for individual related items (in type or location) will be aggregated to form a suitable work/tendering package to match the type of work normally carried out by contractors, sub-contractors or tradesmen in this area. However, in practice this may not be the case because of the exigencies of the finances of the client body.

The work contained in the CMP is normally not extensive in nature and is often better suited to smaller firms; registered builders, sub-contractors and licensed tradesmen. The author always recommends that these firms should have a good reputation for the quality and craftsmanship required for a significant heritage building.

Conclusions

The need to prepare a CMP on a heritage building provides the opportunity to begin the process of budgeting and cost planning on such buildings and provides the cost planner with a rich source of information to assist the stakeholders and funding agencies make decisions about funding.

The work needed in heritage buildings is often defined in a CMP that guides the work thereafter on the building. The CMP is produced at a relatively early stage to identify the opportunities and decisions regarding the work required. Therefore, the CMP provides a good, but not a complete basis for cost planning. However, this early stage CMP cost plan is an important document to support funding applications. In addition, it can guide the custodians of the building in caring for the building and for them to plan their own financial commitment, and where necessary, gain supplementary support from outside bodies and groups. In costing work to a heritage building the cost planner must be attentive to the context and environment that the work is carried out in and the contents of the CMP provides a comprehensive basis for appreciating the required standard and conditions the work will be completed in.

A range of specific building and environmental factors combine to make this work unpredictable and demanding. However, the close and often individual contact the cost planner has with the individual and interesting items makes work on these types of buildings more personal and the fact that involvement in such projects is saving and preserving the heritage of a community, makes it worthwhile and satisfying.

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