

# Listed Buildings: Common Myths and Queries

Historic  
Environment  
Division



Department for

**Communities**

An Roinn

**Pobal**

Männystríe o

**Communities**

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

**FRONT COVER IMAGE: Doorcase, Dungannon**

# “Helping communities to enjoy and realise the value of the historic environment.”<sup>1</sup>

Whatever your interest in listed buildings may be, you’ve probably heard at least one of the myths included here. This guide is intended to address these myths. In it, we explain some of the common queries around listing and what it means.

**The Department for Communities (DfC)** is the Government Department with responsibility for the historic environment in Northern Ireland. **Historic Environment Division (HED)** sits within DfC. This is the division you should contact if you have any queries about listed buildings. **Contact** details for HED can be found at the end of this guide.

Though the Department for Communities are the lead government organisation for listed buildings and monuments, local councils also provide advice on planning matters relating to listed and heritage buildings, conservation areas, and community or local development plans involving heritage buildings and sites.

In Northern Ireland there are a number of organisations who can offer further advice, guidance, and support for the historic environment.

ULSTER ARCHITECTURAL  
HERITAGE

**Ulster Architectural Heritage (UAH)** is an independent, charitable organisation, made up of staff and volunteers, that works to promote the historic environment, across Northern Ireland. The Department and UAH share common interests in the historic environment - its protection and conservation as well as heritage-led regeneration for people and communities.

Through conversations with listed building owners, potential buyers and members of the public, both organisations have encountered commonly held myths relating to listed buildings.

For this reason, the Department and UAH have collaborated to create this short guide which should:

- Address common misinformation about listed buildings,
- Answer some of the everyday questions asked about their protection and,
- Contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of our built heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Divisional aim of Historic Environment Division

# 1

## What is a listed building?

**Listed Buildings** are the man-made objects and structures selected by the Department, via the listing process which meet the ‘criteria for listing’; listed buildings have ‘special architectural or historic interest’ and have been afforded legal protection. More information on the listing process itself can be found on the DfC website.

**FACT:** The government is required to list buildings under legislation – specifically **Section 80 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011**. This responsibility lies with the Department for Communities, who have a statutory duty to compile ‘The List’.

Telephone kiosks, pumps, bridges and railway signals are just some of the variety of man-made structures defined as ‘buildings’ on ‘The List’. The List is a specific record held by the Department for Communities, within the **Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI)**. Any structure on the list meets the criteria for listing and is referred to as a ‘listed building’.

**FACT:** A Glossary which defines some of the common listed building terms can be found on the DfC Historic Environment Division website in the **Historic Environment Toolkit**.



Listed Telephone Box Ballylesson Road.

**FACT:** You can use the Historic Environment Map Viewer to search for listed buildings. The listed building ‘dots’ on the map link to the Northern Ireland Buildings database, where information on each listed building can be found.

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/historic-environment-map-viewer>

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/buildings-database>

## What is so 'Special' about listed buildings?

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### **The criteria for listing buildings -**

which are published on the DfC website - includes both architectural and historical criteria; the criteria sum up all of the potential evidence which might prove that a building has 'special interest', and therefore might make the case for its legal protection. The range of possibilities is huge - listed buildings might be very rare survivors or be designed by a well-known architect, for example, but equally they may have no known architect and be of a common type, but be entirely intact as originally built.



Listed buildings are of special architectural and historic interest - like this listed building in Glenarm. (photo credit UAH David Bunting).

Whilst the criteria for listing try to encapsulate the physical and documented aspects of listed buildings, many listed building owners and enthusiasts talk about why they love listed buildings. Common words used to describe listed buildings are:

- Unique
- Crafted
- Cherished

Listed buildings have qualities which are highly sought after and contribute to their value:

- Are made with high quality, often irreplaceable materials,
- Are finished with highly crafted materials and details such as joinery, tiling, lighting, glazing techniques and plasterwork,
- Have high quality interior daylight and are well ventilated,
- Have generosity of space,
- Are full of character,
- Are a reminder of the past – outbuildings and associated structures giving clues as to how people once lived,
- Are generally practical buildings, adaptable for re-use,
- Contribute to a sense of place and community.

All of the above mean that listed buildings and their settings also contribute to our well-being, and that includes both the inhabitants and those who live and work amongst listed buildings, such as in historic settlements, towns and cities.



House at Scroggy Road brought back from vacancy using traditional building skills.



Plaster detail, Assembly Rooms, Belfast (Photo credit UAH David Bunting).



The remains of a horse walk mechanism in a barn.



Titanic Drawing offices, Belfast. Historically, natural daylight was the primary source of illumination, and so to maximise light penetration, high windows, high ceilings and a shallow plan depth were designed in to most buildings – both domestic and commercial.



The Triumphal Arch Gate Lodge (Colebrooke, Brookeborough, County Fermanagh) interior is warm and inviting – in historic buildings, every surface was considered, designed and crafted. – (Photo credit - UAH David Bunting).



Ballycopeland Windmill has a unique design, but the simpler outbuildings also tell us about how the grain was processed and stored, and how the miller and his family lived.



Shopfronts in Portrush dating from the early part of the 20th C contribute to the unique character of the town, enhancing its sense of place. Locals are proud of this unique townscape which attracts holidaymakers, contributing to the local economy.

## 2

# Common myths about listed buildings

## Myth: “Only the exterior of the building is Listed”

This is probably the most common myth. Statutory listing of buildings in Northern Ireland began in 1974. This was called the 'First Survey' and took over 20 years to complete; often buildings were recorded externally, with no internal inspection. Therefore, the description only referred to the exterior. The majority of Northern Ireland's listed buildings have had a second, more comprehensive survey (known as the **Second Survey**) which includes the interior and a description of the extents of the listing.

**FACT:** Regardless of what the description may or may not say, the whole building inside and out is covered by the legislation. It also includes structures within the grounds, or fixtures and fittings attached to the building or within what is commonly called the 'curtilage' of the building.

**FACT:** The curtilage of a building can include outbuildings, walls, gates, railings etc, which have been part of the land since before 1 October 1973 (when listing legislation describing curtilage was first applied to Northern Ireland).



Unique stained glass – part of a listed 20th Century Church interior.



Gates are examples of curtilage structures which are part of the character of buildings.





## Myth: “Only old buildings are Listed”

The older a building is, and the fewer surviving examples there are of its kind, the more likely it is to have historic importance. In general, buildings dating from before the early 19th century which survive in anything like their original form will qualify for listing. Age is an important consideration but by no means the only consideration. There will be other factors, for example in certain instances the building might be a good example of a certain style or noted architect, or a particular construction technique.



The Ashby building, built in the 20th C is listed at grade B+. It is one of the best examples of a large scale Modernist in-situ concrete buildings in Northern Ireland, and a landmark building in South Belfast.

**FACT:** There may be reasons for a building to have been listed other than age. This can include association with events or people. The full list of criteria on which decisions to add to the list are based can be found in the document: ‘**Criteria for the Scheduling of Historic Monuments and the Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest**, with associated procedures’, which can be downloaded from the DfC website.



## Myth: “Once it’s listed, a building can never be demolished or de-listed, unless I leave it to decay”

Before any building is de-listed, checks are made, to see whether inappropriate works were carried out to the building, in which case the local council planning enforcement team will be notified.

In the case of a building being left to deteriorate, the same checks are made and the council also has powers to require that urgent works are carried out to save the listed building from further decay.

**FACT:** It is possible to apply for listed building consent to demolish a listed building. This includes curtilage buildings (often outbuildings) within the ownership of the listed building.

**FACT:** Although it may prove very difficult, it is possible to get a building de-listed. De-listing will only happen, however, if it can be clearly proven that the building no longer meets the criteria for listing.

(Above image) Thatched buildings are considered for listing because they are of national importance. (Photo credit - UAH David Bunting).



Tale of two halves – the difference in how two owners have maintained their own adjacent listed buildings shows how maintenance can prevent decay and retain the value of a property.

The local council - who take the lead on enforcement and urgent works - and the Department will always work with a building owner to reverse any inappropriate works, and find the best solution for the building. The legislation says that failure to obtain listed building consent is a criminal offence. The urgent works required as a result of a 'Building Notice' can also be carried out by the council, who can then seek compensation from the owner.

Both of these preventative measures recognise that listed buildings are a precious, finite resource, which once lost, cannot be replaced. Demolition and de-listing rarely take place because of the heritage value of listed buildings.

Top right: The Stable Block at Sion Mills was brought back to life following urgent works.

Top left: The semi-detached building above demonstrated the huge difference which maintenance can make to a building.



## Myth: “The Building is only grade B2”

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The legislation which protects listed buildings (the Planning Act (NI) 2011), does not refer to grades at all. The legislation refers to any listed building and applies to all listed buildings regardless of grade.

All listed buildings are important, which is why they are protected by legislation. Some are considered of greater significance than others, hence the grading. Whilst being of a certain grade might affect the nature or scale of works that are acceptable to a building, the key consideration is not the grade, but the 'alteration to character'.

A relatively small Grade B2 building can be drastically altered by the erection of a fairly modest extension. On the other hand, a large Grade 'A' building might be minimally affected by an extension.

The grade is irrelevant when considering if a listed building consent application is required. How the proposed works might be viewed is when the grading might have some influence.

**FACT:** The word 'significance' refers to a detailed description of the development of a building and its life. It is factual, making an objective and informed assessment of the relative merits or 'significance' of aspects, history or features of a building or group of buildings.

**FACT:** Each region in the UK has its own grading system. For Example, in England there are three grades, Grade II, Grade II\*' and Grade I, **whilst in Northern Ireland, buildings are graded into four bands as B2, B1, B+ and the highest grade A.**



All listed buildings have the same protection, regardless of grade. Examples include shopfronts, simple urban buildings or this boat shed at Ballintoy, all of which are listed at Grade B2. These buildings meet a smaller number of listing criteria, but are worthy of the same protection as a building listed at a higher grade.

# 3

## Making changes to listed buildings

Myth: Listing is a ‘Draconian’ burden - I will never be allowed to change anything in my listed building ’

Often building owners feel that they are already looking after their building and don’t need to be ‘burdened by listing’. Historic Building owners are often more appropriately called ‘custodians’. Listing safeguards the building for future generations. Once lost, listed buildings, or their elements cannot be replaced. Protecting them is important now, but is even more important for the future.

**FACT:** It’s true that the legislation requires that any work (which may be internal or external) considered to be an alteration which may affect the building’s special interest will need listed building consent (through the planning process). What constitutes an ‘alteration to special interest’ is often at the root of this myth.

How do listed buildings compare with other buildings?

**How are listed buildings the same as other buildings?**

Just the same as any other building, listed buildings need to be used, occupied, maintained and enjoyed to survive. Changes are entirely expected and possible as a building’s use evolves.

Though they enjoy protected status, listed buildings are included in the same ‘statutory regime’ as any other building:

- Planning permission is required for extensions or changes which need consideration because they might impact on neighbouring properties, or roads access for example,
- Building Control approval is required for changes which may affect a building’s structure or energy efficiency.

**FACT:** The Department has ‘rights of entry’ which apply to both listed and unlisted buildings. Legislation allows the Department the right to survey any building in connection with a proposal to include a building in, or exclude it from, The List.

### How are listed buildings different from other buildings?

- Unlike other buildings, the term ‘protected’ means that listed buildings have further checks required by the local planning authority for changes or alterations such as extensions because they may also affect the building’s special interest. These checks are carried out through the **Listed Building Consent (LBC)** process.
- Unlike other buildings, consent is required for all alterations to listed buildings which may affect their architectural and/or historic character – on any scale. This might include for example:
  - Extensions,
  - Large-scale stone repair,
  - Changes to materials,
  - Technical changes in building techniques,
  - Changes to the interior,
  - Changes to fixtures/fittings of the building, or
  - Changes to curtilage structures.



The approach to the Triumphal Gate Lodge (Colebrooke, Brookeborough, County Fermanagh) is part of its setting, and is protected under the Planning Act (NI) 2011. Curtilage structures like this gate screen are also protected.



The approach to the Triumphal Arch Gate Lodge (Photo credit - UAH David Bunting).

**FACT:** It’s true that the normal Permitted Development rights do not apply to listed buildings. For a full definition of Permitted Development, please visit the Planning NI website.

**FACT:** The ‘rights of entry’ afforded by legislation allow the Department to access listed buildings to determine whether any listed building on the land is being maintained in a proper state of repair.

- When Listed Building Consent (LBC) is required, permitted development rights don't apply, and a Heritage Impact statement is required alongside any drawings or specifications.
- Unlike other buildings, exceptions can be made by Building Control for listed buildings. This is written into all Building Control Regulations - exceptions to the requirements are made for listed buildings to protect their special character. Special technical considerations and exceptions can also be made because of historic buildings and their particular construction.
- Unlike other buildings, the **setting of listed buildings is specifically protected**, and factored into planning decisions which are not listed building consent applications. So if a house is listed and a development is proposed which might affect our wider understanding of the building, both visually and conceptually, the impact of the changes on the listed building are taken into consideration by planners. This might include amongst other things:
  - The impact of a development on shared views of the building from all sides (not just the public view), and/or,
  - The approach to the building, and/or,
  - Long and short views into or out of the building.

- Listed buildings might avail of government funding for repairs. Certain buildings might qualify for some relief from rates or VAT, for example the 'Listed Places of Worship' scheme. These incentives are reviewed on a regular basis, and information is updated on the DfC webpage.
- If in doubt or looking for more information it is always best to speak to a local council planning authority, an experienced conservation professional, or contact HED.



The layout of the surrounding houses means views out of the historic building (centre) as well as views from both the front and the back from near and far are largely as original.

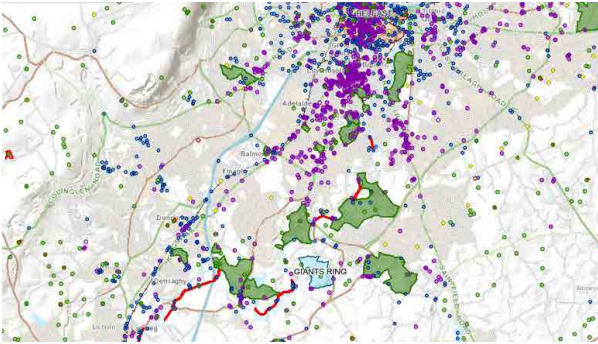


Image from HED Historic Environment Map Viewer.

**FACT:** DfC has published guidance to help listed building owners and agents understand how to make a good LBC application. Several helpful documents can be found on the DfC website page: [Historic Environment Advice and Guidance in the Planning Process](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/historic-environment-advice-and-guidance-planning-process), including guidance on setting and making better listed building consent applications or heritage statements.

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/historic-environment-advice-and-guidance-planning-process>

**FACT:** The Historic Environment section of the DfC website publishes up to date information via the '**Historic Environment Toolkit**' which has links to technical information, policy, funding opportunities and many other aspects of the historic environment, including those which apply to listed buildings.

## What is a Heritage Impact or Design and Access Statement?

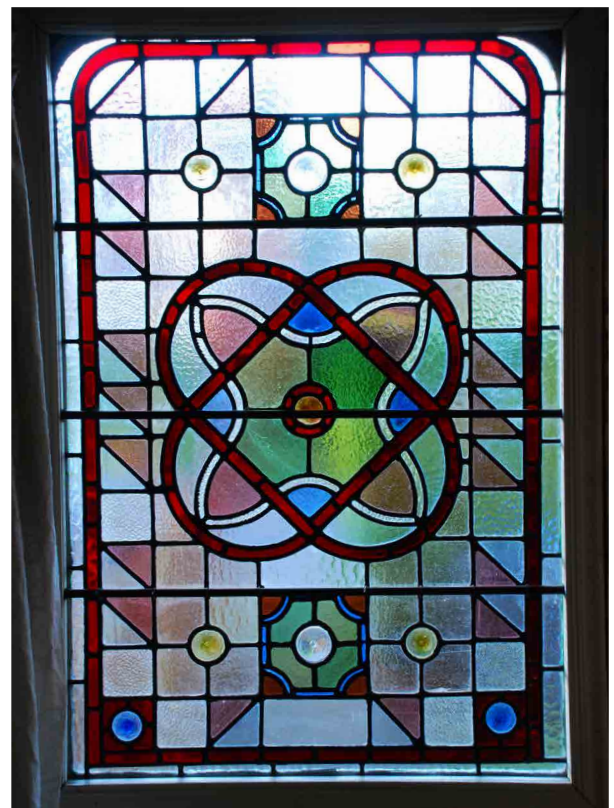
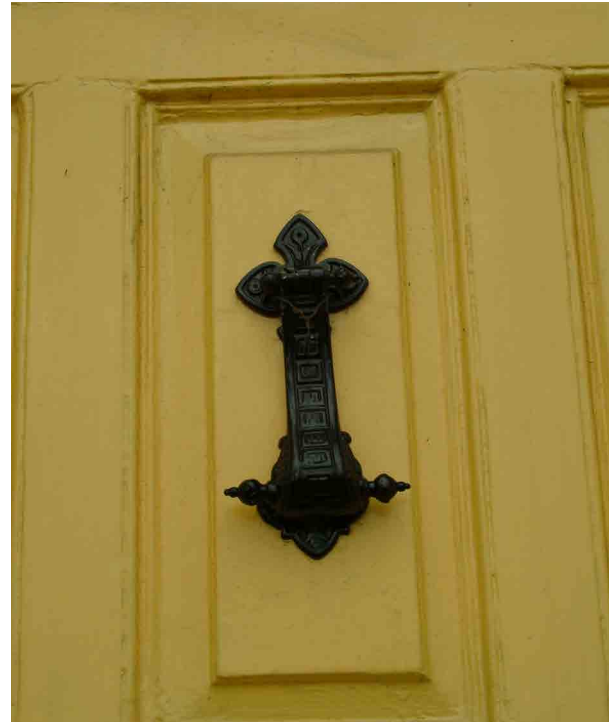
When any work is proposed to a listed building, the changes need to be explained and illustrated in full. There also needs to be justification for the changes.

Before considering the consequences of change, however, there needs to be an understanding of the building: the significance of the building or its various areas or component parts. An important aspect of any Design and Access Statement (Heritage Impact Statement) is an assessment of the significance now, before work starts. In fact, an assessment of significance should be carried out before any design of works start, as it should help inform the design process.

Both the details of the proposed changes (technical and visual) and the justification are included in the Design and Access Statement document. LBC applicants use this document to illustrate - using historic documents, photographs, surveys, technical drawings and any information relating to the significance of the building - how the existing special interest has been considered, alongside what is being proposed.



If historic materials, plan form, layout, details, setting, or any of the features of an historic building which contribute to its special interest may be lost or compromised by changes within the plans and drawings accompanying the LBC application, the works need to be justified, and there needs to be a demonstration of how options have been considered to minimise the loss – all of these are included in the Heritage Impact or Design and Access Statement.



Typical details which can be lost if overlooked or not noted as being retained on drawings include joinery, ironmongery and decorative glass. These special fixtures and fitting form an important part of the character of listed buildings and are often bespoke to the building.

**FACT: Scheduled monuments** are different to listed buildings. Under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 (the 1995 Order) the Department has a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of monuments. The present schedule of some 2,000 sites has been compiled since the introduction of the Ancient Monuments (NI) Act, 1926 and work continues towards protecting a

representative sample of all site types. Once a monument has been scheduled, the consent of the Department is required before any works are carried out which would alter, damage or add to the ground or fabric of the protected site. Structures occupied as a dwelling house or buildings which are in active use for ecclesiastical purposes cannot be scheduled.



A Crannog in Carrick Lough, County Fermanagh.



Crevenish Castle, County Fermanagh.

# 4

## Buying and owning listed buildings

Myth: “Listed buildings are unattractive to buyers and owners”

This myth often causes issues during a transition period, for example when a building is newly proposed for listing or is about to be offered for sale. The reasons people give for believing this myth are varied.

Myth: “The listing of my building will devalue it”

The most common perception, which would appear to be unique to Northern Ireland, is that listing is an imposition, and one that decreases the value of a property.



Historic shopfronts like this one in Main Street, Strabane, are attractive and a talking point, unique and something of value to retailers.

**FACT:** If we are not careful about the work undertaken to a listed building it might be possible to devalue it. Badly designed and ill-considered extensions and alterations could result in loss in the market value of a historic property; however, a historic property with its original historic features is an asset. Maintaining the building is to invest in and retain its value, the same as any other building, listed or not.



**FACT:** A UK-wide investigation shows that listing has had no impact on the property value of period homes. In fact, it has been shown that living in a Conservation Area, or even near a Conservation Area, can increase the comparative value of a property.

**FACT:** The setting of a listed building is one of the criteria for listing, and is also protected. This can safeguard a listed structure from unwanted and/or inappropriate development nearby or within any aspect of its setting, including the approach to the building, thus helping to maintain the value of a property. **Guidance on Setting can be found on the DfC website.**

(Above image) A listed building for sale, County Antrim.

# Myth: “Listed buildings are unattractive to buyers because they can’t be changed or modernised”

**FACT:** The normal planning policies and building control requirements also apply to listed buildings. However, listing allows owners, through the listed building consent process (as described above), to highlight what is significant about a building or site, to make sure that any future works which may go ahead don’t result in the loss of this significance.



Listed buildings can be adapted for modern living. Separating old from new is one way of ensuring that modern services don’t undermine building foundations, as in this thatched dwelling.



A change of use can mean a positive future where the building is maintained and cared for – if it is sensitively carried out to ensure that the special characteristics of the building can still be seen, understood and considered during the design and building phases.

The potential attraction of a listed building to a buyer is the historic character and architecture of the building. It may also be the setting or surroundings of the listed building. It is these ‘values’ which the listed building consent process is there to protect.



The unique selling point of the Titanic Hotel in Belfast, seen here under construction, is its special history, contributing to commercial success.

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## Myth: “Listed buildings are unattractive to buyers and owners because they are too expensive to look after”

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All buildings age and deteriorate; however, what we do to them can affect the rate of that deterioration. As is the case with all buildings, ‘a stitch in time saves nine’, and regular maintenance like gutter cleaning, checking ground levels and gulleys around a building as well as general maintenance of roofs and chimneys should be no more costly than looking after any building, and should save on repairs.



Window at Limavady Workhouse  
(Photo credit - UAH David Bunting).

**FACT:** When it comes to repairing historic buildings, the timber in historic windows is of such a superior quality compared to modern timber that it is much more practical (and less expensive) to repair windows than replace them, unlike modern windows where the reverse can often be true. It is important to remember that older buildings, not just those that are listed, are different from modern buildings technically, and from a functional point of view certain works might result in damage to the building or at least cause future problems. Using the wrong materials and applying the wrong principles to repairs, alterations, etc. can actually accelerate the rate of decay and deterioration – costing more money, whilst using appropriate materials and a sympathetic approach should result in a much slower rate of decay and deterioration. If well looked after, listed buildings can remain in use for hundreds of years.

**FACT:** Maintenance works and general ‘like for like’ repairs do not normally require listed building consent. But sometimes repairs can be so extensive that they might be considered to have an impact on the building’s special interest and therefore could require consent, for example the permanent removal of render. If in doubt, consult with an experienced conservation professional, whether it be for instance a plasterer with conservation experience or a surveyor making recommendations for a mortgage application who understands the negative implications of installing certain damp proof courses in an historic building.

**FACT:** Speaking to a conservation specialist can save money, because they have an understanding of the whole technical picture. For example, good advice for damp issues in a wall might be to install a French drain, re-set ground levels to fall away from the building and simply let the walls dry out. An inexperienced person might incorrectly recommend installing an injected chemical damp-proof course and foil backed dry-lining. The first solution uses common sense and is inexpensive. The second is much more expensive, and would not have addressed the real issue – water ingress – and would have caused more harm to the building than good, by encouraging moisture to build up in the walls.



Often, new materials and chemically injected sealants or foils aren't required to eliminate damp – a good maintenance routine and the clearing out of gutters and gulleys can prevent vegetation rooting in the walls of a building.

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/buildings-advice-and-maintenance>

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Myth: “Historic buildings are unattractive to buyers and owners because they aren’t energy efficient compared to modern buildings”

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**FACT:** In the past, buildings were constructed of materials and used principles of construction fundamentally different to those used for most modern structures. Historic buildings are often formed with materials that are permeable, flexible, and able to manage moisture, being designed to allow moisture to enter and leave the building fabric itself. They do not rely on ‘air-tightness’ as a means of conserving energy, something which can cause confusion when comparing them to new builds. As well as this, they can also absorb a degree of movement,

and generally have greater mass (and therefore better heat retention) in their solid masonry walls than modern buildings. Today’s buildings tend to be more rigid, made up of imported materials, and designed to be impermeable, often relying on chemical sealants with a short lifetime expectancy (for example 10 - 25 years) to keep water out. ‘Part F - Energy Efficiency’ of the Northern Ireland Building Regulations recognises the special properties of Historic Buildings, and acknowledges that they are working buildings whose breathable properties should be retained.

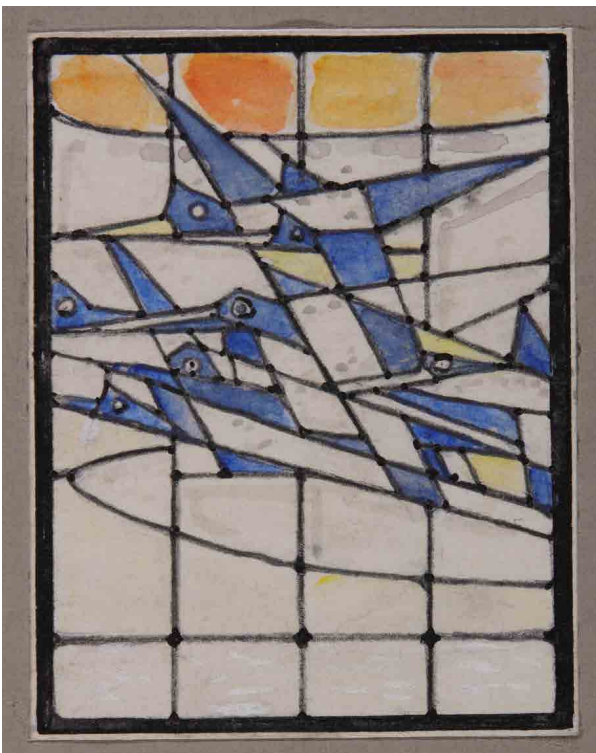
(Above image) Thatch at 42 Woodend Road, Strabane.



**FACT:** If materials intended for modern buildings are applied to historic or older buildings there can be unintended technical consequences.

**FACT:** Extensive research has been carried out by Historic Environment Scotland and Historic England, which shows the marginal differences between heat loss through single-glazed historic windows with timber shutters or thick curtains, and double glazed windows.

Northern Ireland Building Control Regulations are based around the British Standards. BS7913 is the standard which is used to acknowledge the difference between historic and non-historic buildings, and make allowances for their special technical requirements. Building Control can also allow for exceptions to works to listed buildings if modern interventions would compromise the special character of a listed building. This is called 'Article 3A' of the Building Regulations, and can be discussed with any local council Building Control office in the event of an application.



(Left image) A bespoke design for a stained glass window by W.F. Clokey & Co Ltd, Belfast. Image courtesy of HERoNI.

# 5

## Fears and anxieties about listing and listed buildings

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Together with the myths about listing, there are genuine concerns which people have about 'taking on' custodianship of a listed building. This may be at the stage of purchasing such a building, or when a property they have owned for many years is being newly listed.

### I am buying a listed building that has unauthorised works to it, am I going to be prosecuted?

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The threat of criminal prosecution relates to those who have undertaken unauthorised works to a listed building. For a new purchaser, where there have been works carried out without listed building consent, there could be

enforcement issues to face and this would apply to a future owner as well as any present owner.

If you're thinking of purchasing a listed building and there is any doubt over previous works undertaken, it is best to seek professional advice about:

- What enforcement procedures might be pursued,
- Whether the changes do or don't have and/or,
- What rectification works might be required to comply with or even avoid enforcement.

When considering rectification work it should also be remembered that these works might be subject to obtaining listed building consent themselves. Wherever there has been unauthorised work undertaken, always talk to your local Council.

“Listing means I will need to restore my house”

**FACT:** Protection through listing applies to a building or structure at the point it was listed. Buildings might be considered significant because of the way their fabric reveals the effects of change over time or illustrates changing values. There is no requirement to re-create what isn't there at the time of listing. Listing is about the future: protecting what is authentic and special, and ensuring that future change doesn't compromise what is significant, or our understanding of a building's special interest.



A glazed dome floods light into the middle of the upper floor in Belfast's Central Library.

“Listing my building will mean that my privacy will be compromised/ I will have unwanted visitors to my property”

**FACT:** No information is available to the public about listed buildings or their owners except the address of the property, the grade, historical information and the external description of the listing. Only photographs taken from a public place can be published, unless by consent with the owner.

**FACT:** There is no onus on the owner of a listed building to allow any member of the public to access any aspect of their property.

**FACT:** There are expressly organised dates like the 'European Heritage Open Days' in Northern Ireland, where building owners can advertise for people to visit their listed buildings and learn more about them, but this is on a voluntary basis only.

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## “Listing my building is in breach of my human rights”

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The listing of buildings under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 is as a result of public policy. The decision to include a building on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest is within a statutory regime, the aim of which is the preservation and protection of the special interest of those buildings. It is recognised through this legislation that it is in the public interest to protect buildings, through listing, for future generations.

As well as being part of regional legislation, the listing of buildings is undertaken in all other parts of the United Kingdom. The legal protection of buildings for future generations also applies to the Republic of Ireland, countries across Europe and globally. Conservation policy is based on international charters concerning the historic environment. More can be understood about these charters by reading the HED ‘Conservation Principles’ document, which can be found on the DfC website.

**FACT:** Innovation does not exclusively mean new. For example an existing mill wheel could be used to generate electricity.

## “I want to be ‘green’ and ‘future-proof’, but historic buildings aren’t sustainable compared to modern buildings”

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**FACT:** A 2019 study carried out by Technological University Dublin and Carrig Conservation on behalf of Historic England, entitled ‘Understanding Carbon in the Historic Environment’ found that when carbon emissions of retrofit works are compared with those from demolition of an existing building and construction of a new Building Regulations compliant replacement, it would take approximately 60 years to recoup the construction related carbon emissions.

Sustainability comes from the retention of an historic building, one which was made using predominantly local, high quality materials. Constructing new buildings may mean importing new materials (potentially from abroad therefore further increasing carbon emissions), losing embodied energy and creating waste through demolition of existing buildings and adding to landfills.



Windows were designed with separate elements which can be repaired individually over the space of centuries, unlike modern windows which often need to be discarded and replaced in full after a comparatively short life, contributing to landfill.

**FACT:** Historic buildings can adapt better than modern buildings to climate change. They were built to have their component parts - like windows and masonry - repaired rather than wholesale replaced in the event of storm damage. The buildings were designed to allow moisture in, and sufficiently ventilated to allow moisture out. This means that well maintained historic buildings, which maintain their ventilation strategies and use breathable materials such as lime mortar cope well over time with flooding and water ingress.

## Myth: “I don’t need to be bothered about the fact the building is listed”

**FACT:** Unauthorised works to a building could attract criminal prosecution and/or enforcement procedures. These can have significant implications in terms of costs to the property owner as well as the possibility of having a court judgement against them.

**FACT:** Allowing any building to deteriorate has potential financial consequences, in the form of loss of value to decay. An Urgent Works Notice (UWN) may be served by the Local Council. An UWN is a direct way of securing repairs urgently necessary for the preservation of a listed building (or building in a Conservation Area). The Department also retains the right to issue an urgent works notice where a building is council owned.

UWNs allow local councils to take direct action to protect listed buildings, or the unused part of occupied listed buildings, that have deteriorated to the extent that their preservation may be at risk. It also allows them to tackle buildings situated in a Conservation Area, where their preservation is important for maintaining the character or appearance of the Area.

**FACT:** There are also technical considerations, to ensure the longevity of the building, to preserve it for the future.



Interior of Bangor Castle sent in by EHOD visitor Philip Hutton after European Heritage Open Days 2014.



**Probably the most important reason to be bothered about owning a listed building is to be reminded of the enjoyment of owning a listed building:**

- The pride in being the custodian of something unique and special, something with internationally recognised protection and,
- The joy and learning to be found in caring for something which is so valued that it has special legislation in place to protect it for future generations.



Harbour Commissioners Office, Belfast interior and detail – every aspect tells a story from city to individual scale. (Photo credit - UAH David Bunting).









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