Pan-professional Accreditation in UK Building Conservation

Background, Development and Operation

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The inter-professional challenge: RICS: 1988

In historic building grant-aided work why should architects be favoured in official documentation to oversee government funded conservation projects when building surveyors are equally (and probably better) qualified to do the work?
The need for Accreditation in Building Conservation: the underlying issues
Our house, in the middle of our street

After the recent collapse of two historic houses in London, Naomi Stungo reports on the perils of restoring ageing properties.
The Initial Steps – 1992 to 1995

- 1992: RICS Accreditation Scheme supported by the College of Estate Management, Reading (for individuals)
- 1995: RIAS Accreditation Scheme (for individuals)

Both schemes required ‘portfolios of evidence’ to be submitted to reveal competency in practice based on 5 ‘projects’ – but ‘projects’ are the result of team effort, so how to interpret the competence of an individual, and what is relevant in doing so?

Historic Buildings Council for Scotland

“Fundamental difficulties have been experienced in seeking to achieve appropriate quality and standards in a number of Historic Buildings Repair Grant scheme cases”......so....... “within a 3 to 5 year period professional body accreditation should become a condition for lead professionals working on Historic Buildings Repair Grant projects”
Historic Buildings Council for Scotland

“We understood that some bodies were not yet sufficiently comfortable with that prospect, although confidence was growing. We hope that the work …… with the professional bodies, to ensure that a sufficient number of specialists had been endorsed to meet the level of work in the sector, would enable accreditation to become mandatory for grant within the next two or three years”

2002 English Heritage Grant-aid requirements

“The Grant Recipient must engage a competent professional, that is, a registered architect, RICS conservation accredited chartered building surveyor, or chartered engineer, or team comprising of such professionals, with appropriate conservation knowledge, ability and experience to plan and specify the work in detail, and to inspect the works whilst they are in progress”
The Conservation, Repair + Maintenance (CRM) Bubble

- CRM account for almost 50% of all construction industry activities
- UK value of CRM is £6b/annum (+ DIY value at £7.9b/annum)
- Quality and value of built heritage is not fully recognised
- Building owners have low expectations

The Conservation, Repair + Maintenance (CRM) Reality

- A new-build bias exists in industry training and education
- Vocational craft training offers little on building conservation
- CRM is not taught in undergraduate professional education
- CRM is learnt on the job – uncertainty in approach and results
Identified cause for concern – lack of client support

• Building owners cannot readily find expert guidance

• The numbers and levels of skills in local authorities dealing with heritage issues are inadequate

• Professional Institutes have varied in their support for conservation specialists and have had unsatisfactory, non-transparent means of offering advice to clients on choosing professional agents

Identified cause for concern – self certification

• In 2002, of c5,400 RIBA registered UK architectural practices up to 1,740 firms professed some interest, experience or competence in building conservation, but ……

• The majority of UK architects, building surveyors and engineers operating on historic buildings have no specialist postgraduate qualifications in conservation
Drivers for change – key issues from 2005 - 2010

• Government Heritage Bodies Historic Building Grant Schemes
• Various industry body skills report findings
• Sustainability and climate change agendas
• Carbon neutral and energy efficiency agendas
• Professional body growth in awareness of CRM

Building professional accreditation – basic challenges

• How to improve the abilities and competences of ‘individuals’
• Find common denominators to span disciplines
• Devise structure and guidelines for schemes
• Identify appropriate ‘evidence’ of competence
Methodology and approach – outline parameters

- Commissioning client requirements for a common procedure
- Consider robust intentions, aims and objectives
- Enable relevant dialogue across professional disciplines
- Establish and enable the pan-professional ‘Edinburgh Group’
‘Edinburgh Group’ – operational challenges

- Assess scheme documentation
- Devise guidance and pro-forma for: Applicants + Assessors
- Administrative processes/tracking
- Formal certification/ attribution?
- Re-accreditation cycle?
- Use of 1993 ICOMOS Education and Training Guidelines
- Establish support mechanism (www-based free access facility)

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ICOMOS
GUIDELINES ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE CONSERVATION OF MONUMENTS, ENSEMBLES AND SITES (1993)

a. Read the asset
b. Understand its history and technology
c. Understand its setting
d. Find and absorb available information
e. Understand its behaviour
f. Diagnose its causes of decay
g. Produce readable reports
h. Know and apply International Charters etc
i. Make balanced judgements about it
j. Recognise when to seek advice
k. Give expert advice on it
l. Document the work on it
m. Work in multi-disciplinary ways
n. Work with others to solve issues
Professional Body methodology and approach – The challenge of Client acceptance

• Promote the schemes for client benefit
• Allow a run-in time to launch scheme
• Establish complaints and review procedures
• Avoid ‘closed shop’ allegations
• Deal with white-list/black-list perceptions
Related post-scheme issues to be considered

• Provision of suitable Regional CPD support and availability
• Who ‘educates the educators’ and ‘trains the trainers’?
• Effect responsible ‘policing’ of standards and quality
• Allow for effective integration with clients’ experience
• Dealing with client complaints

The Various Building Conservation Accreditation Schemes

• Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) 1992
• Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) 1995
• Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC) 1998
• Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland (RIAI) 2001
• Conservation Accreditation Register for Engineers (CARE) 2003
• Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologist (CIAT) 2008
• Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) pending 2010
http://www.aabc-register.co.uk

http://www.riai.ie/consumer/protected_structures/conservation_accreditation/
Introduction

The Conservation Accreditation Register for Engineers (CARE) has been established to identify engineers skilled in the conservation of historical structures and sites, be they buildings, bridges, harbours, riverbanks, canals, industrial sites or natural landscapes. These engineers may either be working as lead consultants on projects where engineering is dominant or sub-consultants where there is a significant structural engineering content. They must have an appreciation of disciplines and interests extending well beyond their professional training as engineers and show that they understand the philosophy and methods of the conservation of historic work.

http://www.careregister.org.uk

Requirements to be addressed:
1) Cultural Significance
2) Architectural and Aesthetic Qualities and Value
3) Investigation, Materials and Technology
4) Social and Financial Issues
5) Implementation and Management of Conservation Works

RIBA Press Release: 23 June 2010

The RIBA Register has been developed in conjunction with English Heritage, CADW, NI Environment Agency, RSUA and the RSAW. It will become active during the Autumn of 2010 and will operate on three levels of membership:

Conservation Registrant (CR): For those working on the repair, maintenance, alteration and refurbishment of heritage buildings, e.g. unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas, locally important historic buildings and the general pre 1919 building stock.

Conservation Architect (CA): Suitable for those working on Grade II listed buildings, regionally important historic buildings and in sensitive historic environments.

Specialist Conservation Architect (SCA): For those working on historic buildings of outstanding national importance, such as Grade I and II* listed buildings or scheduled monuments, and with highly specialist skills in one or more aspects of conservation.