

CIF VIEW: HERITAGE CONTRACTING & CONSERVATION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

BY JEANETTE MAIR



There is an ever increasing demand for main and specialist heritage contractors who have the competence, i.e. knowledge and skills, to conserve, repair and restore the wide range of heritage structures and sites in Ireland.

APPROACH

The success of each project is dependent on the competence, attitude and approach of the contractors who carry out the work.

The skills of the traditional craftsmen involved, coupled with effective management of the works programme, are essential elements for the client.

The Register of Heritage Contractors provides an accredited listing of such competent main contractors and specialist contractors in the field of built heritage conservation.

The Register is overseen by an independent Board comprised of senior figures from the construction industry, the professions, third level institutions and conservation bodies (including: Construction Industry Federation; Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland; Office of Public Works; The Heritage Council; Irish Georgian Society; Limerick Institute of Technology; Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Fingal County Council).

The Board works to ensure that all heritage projects in the fields of conservation and restoration meet the highest quality standards.

Registered Heritage Contractors are assessed against prescribed standards by an Assessment Committee which reports to the main Board.

Requirements for registration include: prior validated experience, business/industry requirements, and the requirement for annual renewal and continuous professional learning and development.

In addition, all Registered Heritage Contractors are required to observe a Code of Ethics.

STANDARD

The Register of Heritage Contractors thus represents an increasingly regarded quality standard for contracting within the field of conservation and restoration (heritage) projects.

Registered Heritage Contractors are advantaged when it comes to tendering for heritage work, not only by virtue of their registered status, but also by the level of traditional building skills in-house.

Support for traditional building and conservation skills is essential to the on-going repair of our built heritage.

And it is widely acknowledged that the economic recession severely impacted construction to the extent that the industry now faces a serious skills deficit.

Government investment in this sector is beginning to mirror the long-held view of the heritage contracting industry itself which is that targeting investment in this skilled sector results in the creation of sustainable construction jobs and contributes to economic regeneration.

Actions introduced by Government to date such as the "Town and Village Renewal Initiative" and the "Living City Initiative" are steps in the right direction.

Furthermore, jobs created in conservation tend to be locally-based in small to medium sized enterprises with a



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balanced regional spread.

It is widely accepted that mechanical and electrical engineering works play a critical and often a central role in many of today's prestigious heritage projects – particularly those of a national, economic and cultural importance.

Mechanical and electrical engineering works have the power to be one of the most transformative factors to ensuring the practical utilisation of such buildings; thereby preserving them and sustaining their fabric into the future by putting them to productive use.

IDENTIFY

In 2016 the Heritage Registration Board together with the OPW sought to identify those in the Specialist Mechanical and Electrical Contracting sector with the capacity and competence to undertake works of this nature.

The Heritage Registration Board has now produced a special application form for those interested in applying for registration on the Register of Heritage Contractors as a Specialist Contractor – Building Services (Mechanical and Electrical).

If you are interested and would like to have an informal discussion with regard to Heritage Registration, please contact Jeanette Mair, manager of the Register of Heritage Contractors, CIF, by, Tel: 01-4066035 or email: jmair@cif.ie.

For clients, a full list of Registered Heritage Contractors is available on the Register's dedicated website.

Further information, news and CPD events, together with applications forms and guidelines, is also available on the website: www.heritageregistration.ie. 