



**Meeting notes of a Council Meeting of the Institute of Historic Building  
Conservation held virtually via Zoom  
on Tuesday 21 January 2025, starting at 4.00pm  
Chair: Mike Brown, IHBC President**

**Present**

Matt Bentley  
Mike Brown  
Nichola Burley  
Des Cairns  
Sheena Campbell  
Joanne Curran  
Conall Doherty  
Alexandra Fairclough  
Rachel Godden  
Maeve Gorman  
Ruth Gray  
Judy Hewitt  
David Houlthby  
Michael Hurst  
Jill Kerry  
Trystan Lever  
Roy Lewis  
Andre Mangion

Katie McAndrew  
Katherine McClean  
Kim Miller  
Alison Montgomery  
Nathan Morrow  
Fiona Newton  
Claire Nodder  
Sean O'Reilly  
Rob Palmer  
Lydia Porter  
Alexandra Starritt  
Dawson Stelfox  
Kevin Stubbs  
Jonathan Thompson  
Mark Watson  
Iain Whittick  
Ben Williscroft

**Apologies for absence**

Rebecca Thompson, Deborah Mays and David McDonald

**Introductions & Minutes of Council meeting on 16 October 2024**

Mike Brown (President) opened the meeting. Council is a vehicle for the membership to pass comments to officers and it is his responsibility to pass these comments back to the trustees on the Board, it is a training opportunity and sounding board for topics of the day which can then be fed back to the Board. The other function is an opportunity for education and training and Council has had some excellent speakers. The minutes of the last Council meeting held on 16 October 2024 had been circulated any issues were invited via the online chat. No objections were received so the minutes were adopted as a record of the discussions.

**Council business**

Nominations for Vice Presidents

Mike Brown (MB) noted the meeting in October voted to allow the President (MB) to continue in post until the Vice President's succeeds as President in Spring 2025. The timing of this succession is not quite aligned currently but this will be

addressed going forward. There will be a vacancy for a Vice President, or Vice-Presidents, at the next meeting on 24 March as Rebecca Thompson, current Vice Chair, will be stepping up to the role of President. Under the articles there can be more than one Vice President, this allows for people to get involved without the expectation that they will have to take on the President role. MB commended the role to the meeting as rewarding, satisfying and of course good for the CV. <https://newsblogs.ihbc.org.uk/?p=42170>

#### Exploring a petition for charter

Sean O'Reilly (SOR) reported that work is progressing on the Memorandum which will be submitted to the Privy Council Office (PCO) with an intent to submit a formal application in due course. Drafting the Memorandum is supported by the learned and professional societies liaison officer at the Foundation of Science and Technology. The Privy Council Office fund that position to provide advice, support and guidance for organisations seeking to petition for charter. The hope is to submit the Memorandum within the next month or so. How long the PCO take to respond is unknown and will depend on if it comes back with questions.

A letter was sent to other organisations and groups within the sector asking for support/non objection and positive responses have come in from a wide range of organisations, including other chartered organisations. The most recent being from the Chartered Institute of Building, which in its letter said how taking this stepped had been beneficial for it.

The question was asked again about what IHBC will call itself if chartered. The advice from the PCO has been clear to keep it simple and have continuity, so just adding the word Chartered in front of the existing name would seem the obvious choice.

### **Council training**

#### 'The Wonderful Barn, a Fort and a Goal'

MB introduced Conall Doherty, a conservation accredited structural engineer and Affiliate of IHBC who is based in Northern Ireland. Conall graduated from Queen's University Belfast in 2010 with a MEng Structural Engineering with Architecture, he has worked in the Middle East, Australia and Germany prior to joining Design ID in 2018.

Conall focused on 3 projects he has worked on in recent years. The first is the Wonderful Barn in Co. Kildare just outside Dublin. The barn is conical in shape has five floors and an external staircase that winds around the building. It dates from the 1740s and was built originally as a grain store as part of a famine relief scheme. Urgent works were needed to the barn and other structures on the site which includes two conical dovecotes, a house, courtyards and a walled garden. The barn is partly rendered and partly covered with slate tiles. In 2012 works were carried out to the render on the top part of the building so when it came to repairing the render on the lower part samples were needed to ensure it was a match to the earlier repairs. The slate tiles on part of the lower tiers of the building are unusual and were not uniform in size or spacing, these had been pressed into the mortar and in places were failing and peeling off. Samples and methodologies were explored and a hot lime mix used due to the properties to achieve adhesion with nails used as a secondary measure.

On removal of vegetation the two dovecotes, which are also conical in shape and decorative, showed a range of repairs were needed to stabilise the structures. The canopies where the birds enter, which was made of slate, had either broken or were cracked so repairs were carried out retaining as much original material as possible and using stainless steel dowels to tie the sections together. Where one dovecote showed cracks it was unclear if these were historic or ongoing so monitoring will take place going forward.

The walls of the garden were covered in deep rooted vegetation so a section was removed to assess the damage and take samples of the original mortar. The walls were then cleared of vegetation and repointed. Soft capping was trialled using a method devised and agreed with the architect which allowed for a 'reservoir' for the soil to aid moisture retention this dome of soil was then capped with turf.

The second project was Fort Dunree on the coast of Lough Swilly in Co. Donegal. Originally a Napoleonic fort the site has undergone military expansion and development over time but was finally abandoned in the 1950s. The project was to stabilise structures rather than full scale repair due to funding constraints. There are a range of structures and materials used across the site, so a range of methods were used to deal with the problems many from the salty air. Military archives provided some drawings of the various structures which enabled understanding of the construction and informed the stabilisation solutions which are mainly shown as modern interventions. The wooden flat pack structure that had been clad in corrugated iron had suffered from exposure to salt air which allowed water ingress and damage to the wood, these have now been stabilised. With one particular mortar structure that had lost its roof there was in particularly bad condition. The proposal was to retain as much original fabric as possible and reinstate the roof, although as the building was only half a brick thick the new roof is to be supported on new internal peers.

[Fort Dunree | Design ID](#)

The third project was reuse of one wing of the Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast to house a distillery and community event space, the remaining wings are currently unused. The goal is a Victorian era prison made up of four wings that closed in the 1990s. Repairs were needed to stabilise the walkways, so a bonded steel plate was developed to cope with the loading, balustrades that had to be removed were used in other parts of the building to retain as much fabric as possible. Existing cast iron arches needed to be strengthened so these have been sandwiched with new steel that replicates the design of the original. On the ground floor the individual cells have been opened up to create more space with V columns used to support upper floors. This project won an award for creative and adaptive reuse.

[McConnell's Distillery, Belfast | Design ID](#)

Questions were invited. MB noted the thickness of the render and ask how slump was dealt with? Conall said 4 coats of render, each of the same strength, were applied over time so the problem of slump was avoided. SOR asked if any strategic issues have been encountered working across borders? The grant application process is different in the Republic of Ireland but oversight and regulation seemed quite similar and on a practical level there was lots of

knowledge sharing. The building has not been used as a granary for about 100 years, wider works are planned for the site so that it can be a paid for entry and used as an event space.

MB thanked Conall for his very interesting and useful talk.

**Council business continued**

Queries, suggestions and opportunities

MB said this is the section that is open to attendees to raise any issues now for the IHBC generally or for the Board. There were no further questions so he drew the meeting to a close.

**Close and date of next meeting.**

The date of the next meeting will be 24 March 2025, it will be hybrid held at the Charterhouse in London and virtually online.

The meeting closed at 5.08pm