ARTS HERITAGE FIELD RECORD · AH-FIELD-04

Intervention decision record

Use this after a survey, when someone proposes work to historic metalwork. It keeps three things apart: what was seen, what might be causing it, and what is proposed. It then lists the questions still open before a qualified conservator makes a decision. It does not approve work, specify treatment or confirm consent.

This record is not an approval, specification, consent or condition grade. It contains no treatment methods or chemical recipes.

1. Three separate steps

1. Observation — What was seen, where and how closely. No causes, no judgements.
2. Interpretation — A possible cause. From appearance alone it stays a hypothesis until a specialist investigates.
3. Proposal — What is suggested, including doing nothing or monitoring. Not a decision until a conservator makes one.

2. Details

Site / building

Element or object

Date

Recorded by

3. Observation, interpretation and proposal

1. Observation — what was seen

2. Interpretation — possible cause

Interpretation status

☐ Not yet interpreted ☐ Hypothesis from appearance only ☐ Confirmed by specialist investigation

Confirmed by (name and method)

3. Proposal — what is suggested

4. Questions before a decision

Tick an answer only when it is recorded somewhere. Every unticked question is still open.

Is the condition recorded as observation, with what was not seen closely stated?

A decision cannot rest on parts nobody looked at.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Has the significance of the element, its finishes, marks and earlier repairs been assessed?

Cleaning, stripping or replacement can remove evidence that cannot be recovered.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Have doing nothing, monitoring and routine maintenance been considered as options?

Minimum intervention starts by asking whether intervention is needed now.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Is the proposal the least intervention that addresses the confirmed cause?

Treating a symptom without the cause usually means the problem returns.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Is it recorded whether the proposal can be reversed or re-treated later, and what would be lost if not?

Irreversible steps need stronger justification and a fuller record.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Has a specialist considered the compatibility of new materials with the existing metal and neighbouring materials?

New metals, fixings or coatings in contact with old fabric can create new problems.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Has the need for statutory consent been checked with the relevant authority for this site?

Protected sites may need consent before work; this record cannot confirm that.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Have health and safety risks (old paint possibly containing lead, work at height, hot work, public access) been assessed by a competent person?

Safety assessment is separate from conservation judgement and must not be assumed.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Is there a plan to record the element before, during and after work and to keep that record?

Future decisions depend on knowing what was done and why.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

Notes, evidence and who answered

5. Readiness

Count the questions still unticked and the items still missing. The record is ready only when nothing is outstanding — and then it is ready to put to a qualified conservator for decision, never approved.

Outstanding items — list here

6. Material questions to put to a specialist

These are prompts, not facts about your object and not treatment advice.

Cast iron

Could heat, impact, levering or forcing crack it? What would a specialist check before any dismantling?

Wrought iron
Is it confirmed as wrought iron? Would replacement in a different ferrous metal lose historic fabric or evidence?

Mild steel (e.g. windows)
Is any galvanising or earlier coating present, and would the proposal remove it?

Bronze and copper alloys
Which surface layers (patina, coating, wax) are intended or significant? Is any proposed cleaning reversible?

Lead and zinc
Is the proposal near soft metals or seals that could be damaged or create a health risk?

Mixed metals and fixings
Will new fixings or repairs put different metals in contact, and has a specialist considered that?

7. Scope, limitations and sources

This is an original Arts Heritage aid. It has not been independently reviewed and does not claim compliance with any standard. It does not replace a conservator's judgement, a structural or safety assessment, or a statutory consent decision, and it contains no treatment methods or chemical recipes.

General guidance consulted when writing the questions (not a citation for each line):

· Principles of Repair for Historic Buildings — Historic England — https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/principles-of-repair-for-historic-buildings/

· Metals in Conservation — Historic England — https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/maintain-and-conserve-metals/

· Materials for Historic Building Repairs — Historic England — https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/building-materials-for-historic-buildings/

Notes, sketch or location plan