

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the historic ceilings draft. The Institute is supportive of any promotion of good conservation in this area but we do have some comments.

There is a statement on page 15 that Listed Building Consent is required for repairs to listed buildings, which is incorrect. LBC is only required if the repair would affect the building's character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

This work is of interest but appears to cover previously well documented best practice - most prominently in Technical advice note (TAN 2) published by Historic Scotland (2nd ed 2002) entitled 'conservation of plasterwork' - this covers the vast majority of topics in the proposed publication. To not simply repeat other guidance this work could try to add something more to the subject area, possibly something practical and useful. You might consider if you could discuss the tell-tale signs that trigger concern and intervention in ceiling repair and the possible ways of assessing condition.

One area that could be potentially be bolstered in the proposed work is a discussion on the assessment of condition of plaster ceilings. Attaining objectivity and certainty is notoriously difficult to achieve. Questions are posed by clients, architects etc such as will the ceiling be 'safe' post conservation intervention and remedial treatments (see reattachment of plaster nibs etc)? Guarantees are virtually impossible to give and fall out with the 'risk appetite' of those entrusted with the operation of the building and those offering insurance (especially if they are in public spaces - see prominent newsworthy music hall failures etc). In addition, advances in Non Destructive Testing (NDT) are gaining some traction in the evaluation of historic plaster ceilings - techniques such as infrared thermography, penetrating radar etc can potentially establish delamination between layers / coats. Laser scanning is helping assess deformity in surfaces that can be indicative of fixing failure and underlying issues with the substrates etc. They in themselves do not guarantee a 'safe' ceiling but can be used to potentially give greater certainty beyond a percentage failure of plaster nibs or level of deterioration lathe etc.

I hope these comments help you to develop this guidance