



Natural Stone Database for Northern Ireland: A Research-Industry Partnership funded by EU Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme

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Restoration of our stone-built heritage is a complex process requiring skilled workmanship and expert knowledge. It is widely accepted that specification for stone repairs to listed buildings and monuments should be based on scientific rationale rather than anecdotal evidence. However, in Northern Ireland the lack of authoritative data on the performance of natural stone used on our historic buildings mean that there is no reliable data on which to base decisions for repair specifications.

To tackle this problem the Industry-Research partnership of Consarc Design Group (Conservation Architects) and Queen's University Belfast have been awarded funding by Environment and Heritage Service under the EU Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme to set up the 'Natural Stone Database for Northern Ireland'. The aim of the project is to put in place measures to address the severe and ongoing damage to our stone-built heritage caused by weathering, pollution and inappropriate repair.

The project will:

- Identify heritage needs through a comprehensive surveying programme of listed stone buildings and monuments;
- Define the characteristics of building stone used in Northern Ireland (local and imported) through analysis and testing;

- Identify available stone resources.

This information will be produced as a web-based database that will be freely accessible to all building owners, architects and conservation professionals. This will be supported by a seminar programme and published literature on stone restoration specific to Northern Ireland.

The project employs 3 full-time staff (project manager and 2 research assistants) and will be completed by December 2007.