



Energy use and Heritage: what are the answers?

Reducing energy consumption and encouraging use of renewable energy are two particularly important objectives. Although sometimes presented as antagonistic ideas energy usage issues and heritage issues are both fundamentally following the same goal: sustainable development, as this allows us to preserve and protect our irreplaceable natural and cultural resources. It is therefore necessary to proceed with a meticulous case-by-case analysis of aims in both domains so as to find the best solution for each individual site.

Peripheral insulation

According to the State Council Directive of the 20th May 2009, the use of peripheral insulation is forbidden around the following:

- Protected built sites
- Inventoried built sites
- Ranks 0 to 3 in long-term inhabited zones (ZAL) or outside urbanised zones (HZ), based on Neuchâtel's Cantonal Architectural Ranking (RACN)
- Sites ranked 4 when situated in a context or site recognised as having a particularly important heritage value according to UNESCO inscription guidelines or the Federal Inventories of Protected Heritage Sites (ISOS) and Landscapes (IFP)

Exceptions can be made for small external insulation, or on less visible facades (see the directive mentioned below). Once a building permit has been granted, the Energy Service is responsible for submitting dossiers ad hoc to the Heritage Conservation Office, who will then prepare a decision letter (signed by the Head of the Department).

Solar panels, windows and roof insulation

Article 3 of the Cantonal Energy Law (2nd January 2013) notes that the preservation of heritage buildings and sites is a burden on standard systematic measures of energy efficiency. The Heritage Conservation Office is consulted as part of the process of granting construction permits. Federal legislation also allows for exceptions to the requirements of energy efficiency.