



What does an edifice's "protected" status signify, and what does it imply?

Legal framework

A "protected" building is subject to the Cantonal Protection of Cultural Properties Law (LSPC) of 2018, and its rules of application.

This measure corresponds to those we previously referred to as "listed". It has been in existence since the first Protection of Historic Monuments Law in 1902. Today Neuchâtel counts some 800 monuments and objects (fountains, signs, etc.) which are protected under the title of 'Historic Monuments' – a list which is regularly updated.

This protection is a result of an entry in the Real-Estate or Land Register listing its precise details (volume, frontage, dimensions, etc.).

How do I get my building "protected"?

A building is "protected" as a Historic Monument by order of the State Council. This decision is based on the dossier and advice of the Cantonal Commission for Cultural Properties, and with the agreement of both the proprietor and the commune.

The building must be of interest to the built heritage domain and Neuchâtelois history, be it by geographical value and situation, or historical, archaeological, technical or artistic value.

It is very rare that protection be withdrawn. Total destruction in a fire can prompt this decision, and it is again the State Council that decides the fate of the building, using the recommendations submitted and basing its decision on past instances of heritage protection.

Procedure to follow for transformations

All transformations of "protected" buildings are subjected to a decision letter from the Economy, Security and Culture Department (DESC). The verdict will be decided based on a dossier presented by the Heritage Conservation Section.

Announcement

Proprietors wishing to undertake work must inform the Heritage Conservation Section, even if it is only simple maintenance work.

Pre-project

For complex sites, it is recommended to contact the Heritage Conservation Section without delay. This course of action allows the project feasibility to be evaluated, additional research carried out (if necessary) and avoidance of unnecessary additional expenses or delays.

Project

The requestors must conform with the Cantonal Construction Laws (LCC) and make the request for building permits ad hoc.



Which conditions need to be met to apply for financial support?

For financial support to be granted, protected cultural properties are judged on three categories:

- Objects of national interest: based on the list published by the Confederation
- Objects of regional interest: with a 1st group Neuchâtel's Cantonal Architectural Ranking (RACN) not present in the previous list
- Objects of local interest: with a 2nd group RACN

Rates

According to the rules of application (as revised in 2012), financial support can be solicited on a cantonal and federal level. The percentage of this subvention varies according to the nature of the object.

On a cantonal level:

- Building or object of national interest: 20%
- Building or object of regional interest: 15%
- Building or object of local interest: 10%

A supplementary subvention which, when combined with the above mentioned subsidies can be added in the event of particularly delicate conservation-restoration work especially "protected" decorations and works of art. Please note that this amount cannot exceed a maximum of 25% of the total cost of the project.

On a federal level:

- Building or object of national interest: 25%
- Building or object of regional interest: 20%
- Building or object of local interest: 15%

Warning: not all work will receive subsidies

Only conservation/restoration work is eligible for financial support; maintenance and public security do not qualify for subventions.

① Refer to the French page and see the standard subventions for conservation and restoration work on protected buildings

Who decides?

Based on the dossier presented by the Heritage Conservation Section, the decision for cantonal subsidies is taken by:

- Order of the Department (up to CHF 5'000.-)
- Order of the State Council (over CHF 5'000.-)
- A decision by the "Grand Conseil" (over CHF 700'000.-)



A federal subsidy is subject to:

- A grant by the Heritage Conservation Section (signed by the Head of Department), according to the terms of the quadrennial-programme convention between the Federal Culture Office (OFC) and the canton who deals with their repartition

In the event of a conflict of interests

Necessity dictates that the granting of subventions must precede the opening of all building sites, so long as it matches the following conditions:

- Compliance with the directives of the Heritage Conservation Section whilst the conservation work is being executed
- Consulting with an architect where the magnitude and nature of the work demands
- Ease of access for the experts in charge of ensuring the craftsmanship of the work being carried out
- Conferring of a report detailing the interventions carried out at the close of the building works
- Granting of the permits before work and the breakdown of costs and invoices at the end of the work

Is technical support available?

The Heritage Conservation Section has a long history of expertise in conservation/restoration work, as well as diverse technical competencies with regards ancient constructions. It can, case by case, introduce proprietors or architects to the cantonal or federal experts in specific domains.

① Refer to French pages and know more about Ethical/Technical rules