



# GUIDELINES

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**Guideline for seeking clearances for the works related to the protection and management of heritage sites**

**Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development**  
**Ministry of Home Affairs**  
**Thimphu**  
**February, 2025**



## **1. Introduction**

The Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development under the Ministry of Home Affairs is the central agency responsible for protection and management of heritage sites across the country. Following the concept of Gross National Happiness, with preservation and promotion of Culture being one of the four pillars, the first institution for protection of heritage sites was the establishment of Special commission for Cultural Affairs in 1980s. Since then, protection of heritage sites took significant milestones with introduction of several office orders, memos, followed by movable cultural property act in 2005, and finally the draft cultural heritage bill of 2016.

The main methodology for protection and management system followed by the Department is through a need assessment and approval system based on the principle of value-based protection solely overseen by the Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development. However, in order to enhance the service delivery through the decentralized approach while ensuring the protection, the new guideline with decentralized framework for seeking clearances for the works related to the protection and managements of heritage sites was established in June 2022, which guides Dzongkhags and Thromdes to exercise and administer the protection and management of heritage sites within their jurisdiction. This is the revised guideline and the old guideline of June 2022 will be revoked by this February 2025 guideline.

## **2. Framework for protection and management of heritage sites- registration and designation system**

As per the Draft Cultural Heritage Bill (CHB) 2016, the Department has embarked on developing an inventory of the heritage sites across the country and accordingly registering and designating them. Registration and designation are an important tool for the 'value-based approach' adopted for the effective management and protection of heritage sites in the country. We currently have

close to 3000 plus heritage sites in the country and it is impossible to have all the heritage sites in the country managed and protected at the same level all the time due to the resource constraints. Moreover, the importance and significance of all heritage sites are not at the same level. Thus, it is essential to identify and segregate the heritage sites according to their importance and significance through the process of registration and designation. Registration and designation is undertaken based on a set of criteria developed by the Department through survey, documentation, and assessment of the sites as per the CHB. The Department currently registered 260 heritage sites and identified 503 heritage sites with the Potential for qualifying to be registered (Refer to Annexure 1). However, there is a need to update these data(s), as it requires more research and collaboration between the Dzongkhag administration, Department, and other relevant stakeholders. These data will be shared with respective Dzongkhags as and when there is revision in the list.

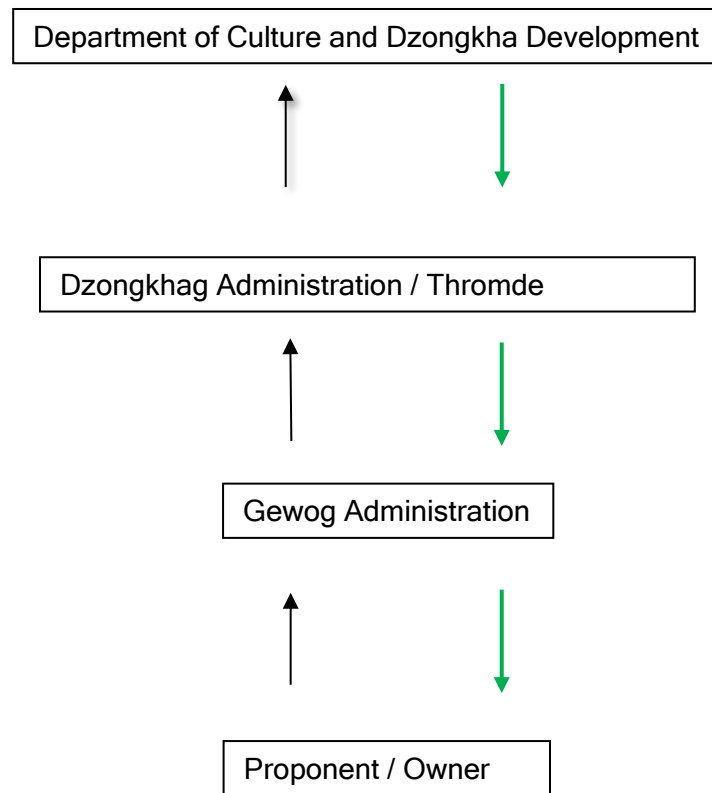
### **3. Protection systems in place**

Since the inception of the concept of the protection and management of heritage sites, different systems were followed as discussed below.

#### **3.1. System before new decentralized approach**

Any kind of work related to heritage sites must have approval from the Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development. This was ensured by following systematic sequence of application process where the proponent/owner submits the application to the Gewog Administration informing the status of the heritage sites along with the justification for the proposed work. The Gewog administration after verifying all the document submitted then forwards the application to the Dzongkhag administration, who then further forwards to the Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development upon verification. The Department accordingly reviews the submitted application and provides approval for the proposed work on the heritage site. The Dzongkhag Administration or Thromdes is the main focal agency for the Department and any kind of correspondence regarding the proposed site is done with the Dzongkhag or Thromde Administration.

The Department is also responsible for providing technical support for preserving and promoting heritage sites. The following figure shows the set procedure for appraisal and approval system followed before the decentralized approach.



*Figure 1. System before new Decentralized approach*

#### 4. Mode of submission

Any kind of proposal application from the Dzongkhag can be submitted to the Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development through any one of the following modes of submission:

- I. Since fiscal year 2020-2021, the Department has developed online system of submitting application and the submission can be done by respective Dzongkhag Cultural Officer.
- II. The application can be directly emailed to Department focal Madam Sonam Zangmo at [zangmo113@gmail.com](mailto:zangmo113@gmail.com)
- III. The application can be submitted in hard copy to the Department.

The Department recommends submission of application via online system or email to ensure the faster service delivery as the hardcopy takes longer time for Department to receive.

## **5. Window for submission**

The window for submission of application on the works related to heritage sites is open for three months from 1<sup>st</sup> July until 30<sup>th</sup> September of the fiscal year. The three-month application window is set primarily to ensure that heritage site-related works are completed on time within the fiscal year. By setting this timeframe, the process allows for better planning, approval, and execution of projects, preventing last-minute rushes as the fiscal year ends in June.

This application window is applicable only for planned activities with funding from RGoB. Regarding those application with private funding, the submission window is open all year round. However, applications submitted during the three-month application window will receive priority over other applications.

## **6. Classification of works**

The works on the heritage sites are broadly classified into following categories based on their nature of work, as described below:

### **I. New Construction**

Construction of any kind of new religious structures. It applies to all category of buildings.

### **II. Reconstruction**

Complete dismantling and rebuilding of heritage structures. It applies to all categories of heritage buildings

### **III. Renovation**

Any kind of work which may or may not impact the architectural form and structural integrity of heritage structure. Renovation is further classified into two categories:

#### **a. Minor renovation**

Those activities which will not have any impact on the heritage building, both structurally and architecturally. Such activities are rather meant for upkeep and sustenance of the heritage buildings. The activities include:

- Replacement of timber floors
- Replacement of roof sheets
- Painting works on structures exclusive of debri
- Relocation/addition of timber partition walls
- Plinth protection works
- Re-electrification works
- Installation of security and surveillance system (Fire and CCTV)

#### **b. Major renovation**

Those activities which will have impact on the heritage building, both structurally and architecturally. Such activities require careful planning and expertise to execute the work, without which may lead to irreversible damage to the heritage building. The activities include:

- Extensions: works related to extension of the existing buildings resulting in the increase in size of the building.
- Repair and replacement of timber components for the entire roof
- Partial dismantling and reconsolidation of structural walls
- Repair and consolidation of walls - wall stitching works
- Replacement of rabsay/windows and door components
- Replacement of Kachen, Dung and cham.

### **IV. Site Development works**

Any kind of work within the heritage site. Activities include:

- Construction of retaining walls
- Construction of boundary walls
- Construction of gates
- Ground extension works



- Laying of doleps

## V. Other Developmental works

Any kind of developmental works, not included in the earlier work categories, within the heritage sites. Activities include:

- Road construction
- Electricity line construction
- Telecom works
- Any other works not included in the earlier 4 work categories

## 7. Turn Around Time (TAT) of the Department

In order to ensure efficient and quick delivery of the work, the Department works on set TAT for different categories of application based on the nature of work as per following table.

Sl#	Work category	TAT (Working days)
1	New construction	30 days
2	Reconstruction	30 days
3	Renovation (Major)	30 days
4	Renovation (Minor)	7 days
5	Site Development works	7 days
6	Other Developmental works	Case specific

*Table 1. TAT for Applications*

This TAT includes time required for submission of additional/missing documents to the Department. The failure to submit the required documents within the set timeline will result in automatic rejection of the application. The concerned Dzongkhag will have to reapply for the application with the completed documents. The timeline for submission of required documents varies depending on the type of work and will be communicated to respective cultural officers by the Department focal officer.

## 8. Decentralized approach- new administrative framework

Since June 2022 with the establishment of new administrative framework, the Department follows following process for any kind of work related to heritage sites.

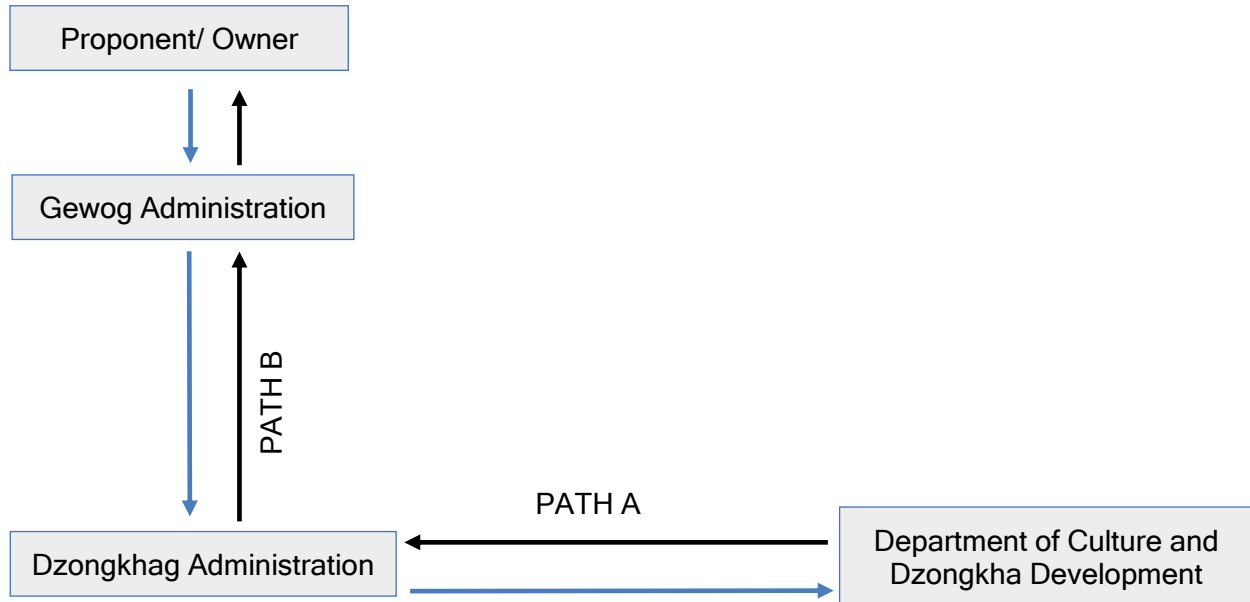


Figure 2. Representation of Decentralized approach

### Path A approach:

The Path- A approach will be followed for any kind of work proposed for following heritage sites:

- Registered Heritage Sites (HS)
- Potential Heritage Sites (HS) for registration

The Path-A approach is also applicable for the following works:

- Reconstruction of heritage buildings.
- All four categories of work on "choetens".
- Construction of new religious structures.

Department will follow two statuses for any kind of application submitted:



- Approved: Those application whose proposed works are approved as proposed or with recommendation.
- Rejected: Those applications whose proposed works are rejected based on the reasons and justifications from the Department.

### **PATH B approach:**

The path- B approach will be followed for following works on any other heritage sites other than the registered heritage sites and those with the Potential for registration (Refer to the list provided). The work category is as follows:

- Renovation work
- Site development work

The Dzongkhag or Thromde must submit a copy of the approval letter or any other administrative actions undertaken to the Department under Path B. If in case, the Dzongkhag/Thromde administration recognizes heritage sites that has the potential for registration, you are requested to inform and update the Department accordingly.

## **9. Implementation of Decentralized approach**

The DCDD will implement this new administrative framework strategically in a phase-wise manner for the following reasons:

- Ensure no compromise exists in the Cultural Heritage Value (CHV) associated with the heritage sites.
- Avoid haphazard planning and development on the premises of heritage sites.
- Gradually build the technical capacity in the local government.
- Review/ check the efficiency of the Dzongkhag administration and Thromde in scrutinizing and approving works on heritage sites.

The DCDD will review and further broaden and streamline the jurisdiction of administrative control by the Dzongkhag administration / Thromde as intended in the Path-B approach.

### I. The first phase of implementation:

Under the Path-B framework, the Dzongkhag administration / Thromde have the authority to review and approve the new construction, reconstruction, and renovation of ancillary structures only, as specified below:

- Toilets for a communal purpose.
- Kitchen and/or Kitchen with the attached store.
- Karmai khang (within 9 sqm. max)
- Mani Dungkor (2.5x 3 m) for proposal from a private entity on private land.

The construction material should be stone masonry, rammed earth, and timber. The number of the story is limited to one. Suppose the material is beyond the material mentioned above and the number of story is more than one, the application should be forwarded to the Department following the path A approach.

#### IMPORTANT NOTE:

- The Dzongkhag Administration/Thromde should neither consider nor have the authority to give clearances for works proposed on the state land.
- Any proposal on state land has to be referred to the Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development.
- Apart from the other state-owned land, the land under the ownership of community lhakhang and Zhung Dratshang lhakhang, institutions (e.g. schools, hospitals etc.) are considered as “*State-owned land*”.
- All the works related to choetens should be referred to Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development.

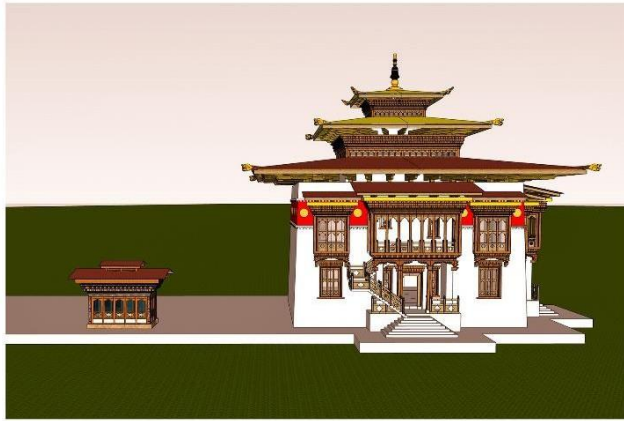
## 10. Guidance on what to look out for:

During the review of applications by the Dzongkhag administration / Thromde, the following are important checklist:

- a. **Visual integrity:** The proposed structure should not hinder or obstruct the visual integrity of the main Lhakhang.



- b. **Scale of the structure:** The proposed structure should be smaller than the main Lhakhang. Eg: For Mani Dungkhor, the proposed size should be less than 2.5x 3.0 meters.



- c. **Planning:** Ensure that the location is appropriately planned based on the existing structures. The proposed structure should support the daily functioning and enhance the living condition of the custodians.



Appropriate location of a new karmikhang (red roof).



Inappropriate location of a new karmikhang.



While the decentralized approach will happen phase-wise, we need a pragmatic "check and balance system." The check and balance system encapsulates:

- Increased awareness of the preservation and promotion of HS.
- Distribute Infographic pamphlets for easy understanding to the general public.
- Monitoring and supervision.
  - Regular and annual monitoring by DCDD
  - Adhoc site visits
- Fix and implement accountability measures

## 11. Requirement of documents:

The applicants must furnish the following details as part of the application.

### I. New Construction:

#### Checklist Documents

- ☐ Lag thram/ Ownership transfer documents if the land is being transferred/ Letter of Undertaking if an entity offers the land.
- ☐ Location of the HS (google image with geo-ordinates)
- ☐ Work modality- who will implement the work?
- ☐ Community clearance (signed by all households of the community, endorsed by the Gewog administration)
- ☐ Financial information (Specify the source of funding):
  - For government-funded proposals: Fund utilization plan that mentions if the proposed activity will be spilled over or not.
  - For privately funded proposals, submit a "letter of surety." For new construction works, further assurance is required for both structure and other associated works- debri, nangtens.
- ☐ Need assessment clearly stating the reasons for the need for new structures, etc. You may submit the need assessment report in any written format.
- ☐ Site plan
- ☐ Drawings (Architectural, structural and electrical drawings). For ancillary structures, submit only architectural drawings- elevation.
- ☐ Detailed estimate. For ancillary structure, you may not submit the estimate.

- Management and ownership details. Here, specify who will be responsible for management after completion of the work, e.g., Private/community. The document needs endorsement from gewog/ Dzongkhag administration / Thromde.



## II. Reconstruction:

Checklist	Documents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lag thram/ Ownership transfer documents if the land is being transferred/ Letter of Undertaking if an entity offers the land.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Location of the HS (google image with geo-ordinates)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work modality- who will implement the work?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community clearance (signed by all households of the community, endorsed by the Gewog administration)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial information (Specify the source of funding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For government-funded proposals: Fund utilization plan that mentions if the proposed activity will be spilled over or not.</li> <li>• For privately funded proposals, submit a "letter of surety." For new construction works, further assurance is required for both structure and other associated works- debri, nangtens.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pictorial documentation of the existing state of the structure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Damage and structural assessment report
<input type="checkbox"/>	History/ Chronology of works undertaken to date, including the source of funding
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drawings (Architectural, structural and electrical drawings). For ancillary structures, submit only architectural drawings- elevation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed estimate. For ancillary structure, you may not submit the estimate.

- ☐ Management and ownership details. Here, specify who will be responsible for management after completion of the work, e.g., Private/community. The document needs endorsement from gewog/ Dzongkhag administration / Thromde.
- ☐ Management of Nangtens during the reconstruction (Please submit a signed document indicating who will manage and look after them?)

### III. Renovation:

Checklist	Documents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lag thram/ Ownership transfer documents if the land is being transferred/ Letter of Undertaking if an entity offers the land.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Location of the HS (google image with geo-ordinates)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work modality- who will implement the work?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community clearance (signed by all households of the community, endorsed by the Gewog administration)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial information (Specify the source of funding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For government-funded proposals: Fund utilization plan that mentions if the proposed activity will be spilled over or not.</li> <li>• For privately funded proposals, submit a "letter of surety." For new construction works, further assurance is required for both structure and other associated works- debri, nangtens.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nature of work (specify the proposed activity)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pictorial documentation of the existing state of the structure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Damage and conditional assessment report (including the nature of work undertaken to date). This applies to only Major renovation works.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Architectural drawings for major renovation works. Other drawings should also be submitted according to the site situation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed estimate for major renovation works.

- ☐ Management and ownership details. Here, specify who will be responsible for management after completion of the work, e.g., Private/community. The document needs endorsement from gewog/ Dzongkhag administration / Thromde.
  
- ☐ Management of Nangtens during the reconstruction (Please submit a signed document indicating who will manage and look after them?)

#### IV. Site development work:

Checklist	Documents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lag thram/ Ownership transfer documents if the land is being transferred/ Letter of Undertaking if an entity offers the land.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Location of the HS (google image with geo-ordinates)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work modality- who will implement the work?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community clearance (signed by all households of the community, endorsed by the Gewog administration)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial information (Specify the source of funding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For government-funded proposals: Fund utilization plan that mentions if the proposed activity will be spilled over or not.</li> <li>• For privately funded proposals, submit a "letter of surety." For new construction works, further assurance is required for both structure and other associated works- debri, nangtens.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nature of work (specify the proposed activity)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Need assessment (State and justify why the proposal is necessary, referring to the existing state of the site)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pictorial documentation of the site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drawings (applicable for works with structural implications- e.g., retaining wall).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site plan

**Annexure 01:**

List showing the number of heritage sites (Registered and the Potential for registration) in the twenty Dzongkhags.

Sl.no	Dzongkhags	Registered sites	Sites having Potential for registration
1	Bumthang	43	84
2.	Chukha	4	27
3.	Dagana	6	17
4.	Gasa	8	29
5.	Haa	9	13
6.	Lhuentse	10	49
7.	Mongar	12	35
8.	Paro	41	0
9.	Pema Gatshel	3	3
10.	Punakha	18	21
11.	Samtse	3	3
12.	Sarpang	2	0
13.	Samdrup Jongkhar	2	4
14.	Thimphu	30	19
15.	Trashigang	20	90
16.	Trashiyangtse	13	4
17.	Trongsa	15	49
18.	Tsirang	1	1
19.	Wangdue Phodrang	19	48
20.	Zhemgang	6	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>503</b>