

Case Summary: Ref. 202002570
Sector: Government

Complaint against the Department for Communities

An architect was told by the Department for Communities (DfC) he had to stop work on a project to restore a historic monument because he didn't have the right conservation qualifications.

The architect said that because he was a UK Registered Architect he was qualified to carry out all types of architectural design work. He also produced a letter from his professional body which said: "*there is no strict requirement for an architect to have specialist accreditation in order to carry out conservation work*".

He complained to us, saying that the Department's decision was unfair.

We asked the Department about the man's complaint and looked at its criteria for getting the work carried out. We found that while some documents said the use of an accredited conservation consultant was *recommended*, others said it was a *requirement*.

This caused confusion as it was interpreted by some in the Department that the architect *must* have the accreditation, rather than the reality which was that the accreditation was preferred, but not essential.

After we pointed this out to the Department it acknowledged the confusion and apologised to the architect for the misinterpretation and the impact it had on him.

We asked the Department to make sure it brought this issue to the attention of the relevant staff to prevent similar confusion in the future.