



# CASE STUDY: BRO CHURCH

Revising a Conservation and Management Plan  
*Assessment of Guidelines Developed within the SMC Project*

# Abstract

The aim for an increasing sustainable management also means great challenges. Within the SMC project we have developed guidelines with the ambition to improve the writing of conservation and management plans, so they can promote sustainable management to reach a higher level.

To evaluate out these guidelines we have used Bro church and its existing CMP as a case study. In the case study we have made a comparison between what is said in the guidelines and the existing CMP with the ambition to revise it following the guidelines.

The case study has shown that the guidelines can be helpful to discover gaps in an existing CMP. In the case of Bro church it became clear that important parts in the guidelines didn't have any counterparts in the existing CMP of Bro church; such as 'Understand the place', 'Use and reuse' and a discussion of different values in a broader context. Another important area of improvement from the guidelines is how to benefit from dialogue and collecting information from local parish members.

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To download a copy of this report go to <http://smcproject.org.ee>

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

This report is part of the project *Sustainable Management of Historic Churches at the Baltic Sea Region* (SMC) One main objective create guidelines for writing conservation and management plans CMP to assess the guidelines, they were applied to two churches: Bro church on Gotland, and Pöide church on Saaremaa.

## 1.2 Objectives

This case study of Bro church has actually two Objectives. First to test how the guidelines work when revising an existing CMP. Hence it is important to emphasize this reports main purpose, which is to investigate and somewhat evaluate the guidelines by using Bro church as a case study. There for it is not at first hand an investigation of the church and its management or organization. Secondly, as a result, the ambition is to present a revised CMP based on the SMC guidelines to the congregation of Bro church.

## 1.3 Bro church as case study

In the process of developing the guidelines it has been reasonable to choose a church on Gotland that is also well known to the participants within the team. Because forehand knowledge has been a great help to have a holistic view on the guidelines and on Bro church and its significance as a case study. It has been easier to judge the oral and textual information as well as the impact of different actions, documented in the archive. According to this, the decisions concerning the development of the guidelines have been able to be more balanced.

Bro Church is a parish church, built around year 1200. The choir and sacristy were built in the middle of the thirteenth century. The church nave was built around year 1300. Today the church is used regularly for religious services, and some times for concerts and lectures. As a historic building it gives very good representation of the medieval churches of Gotland. The parish is also in a situation that is shared with many other parishes in Sweden with a decline in visitors to services and high costs maintenance and heating.

Placed about 10 kilometers north east outside Visby, just beside the road, the church has for a long time been a natural stop for tourists passing by. This particular function has generated a consciousness among the locals about its importance.

Important to mention is that the internal organization within the Church is changing, This means that the congregations of the north of Gotland are united and centralized within one big parish *Nordertredingen*. Of course, this has an impact on how to manage the individual churches both daily and in the long term.

## 1.4 Material and method

### 1.4.1 The Guidelines

The full guidelines, and a short version in Swedish are available on the project web site:  
<http://smcproject.org/ee/>.

## 1.4.2 The existing Conservation Management Plan

The CMP for Bro Church was written in 2009 by the Swedish architect (SAR/MSA), Jan Utas. The first plan includes sections on responsibilities, purpose, delimitations and previous work; the history of the church, building description, technical installations, inventories, safety and description of the condition. The remaining parts are inventory lists and a plan and suggestions for which actions to take. Drawings, photographs and time schedules are compiled in appendices.

In general it's a comprehensive plan with a focus on conservation and maintenance. In relation to the new guidelines some areas of possible improvement were noted. Generally a critique, which has been frequent to the CMP's written in Sweden, was that they were produced by experts, for experts. This can create distance between the people living near and using the church and the document. The most important challenge was to involve the parish members and staff in the process. Further more the following sections were added to the plan:

- Understand the Place
- Use and Reuse
- Economics
- Implementation

## 1.4.3 Create a reference group

As a strategy to succeed with the case study and try out the guidelines, a reference group was created. The group was consisting people from the congregation, the parish and the local historic society. The group provide valuable input especially regarding the sections on 'Understand the Place' and 'Use and Reuse'. From a methodological point of view is important to consider the input critically.

## 1.4.4 Interviews

Interviews were used to generate information that answers to a section in the guidelines which is called; 'Assessing significance' with the subtitles 'People as an evidence resource', 'Assessing community and stakeholder values'; interviews as a method seemed as a natural decision.

During the first meeting with the reference group, possible informants that could help pursue the case study were identified. The aim with the interviews was to collect material for the sections 'Understand the place' and 'Use and reuse'. By investigating what people from the parish thought and wished for; we could get information to assess different values and significance.

Five interviews took place and the informants were from the congregation and/or local parish citizens. Below are examples of questions:

- What has the church meant to you, your family and relatives? Both today and historically.
- What do you know about the church and its surroundings?
- What factors have influenced the church and its surroundings through the ages?

- What is the use of the church today? What needs are there and how does it look in the near future? What is the function?
- What is important for the tourists? What is your view?
- What do you consider to be particularly important regarding the management of the building? What do you want?

Even though it was a small number of interviews, the answers were informative about how to manage the church, different alternatives for proper use and significance of the place. It may also be evidence how important this section is in the guidelines. Both how it strengthens a feeling of participation and important knowledge among the informants; and how it generated information that could help to improve the existing CMP.

After the interviews the informant's answers were compiled and the guidelines were again considered for guidance how to revise the existing CMP.

## 2 WORKING PROCESS AND RESULTS

*The following chapter is a description and discussion of how the guidelines were applied during the working process and revising the existing CMP. Section 2.2 follows the headings of the guidelines.*

### 2.1 Experiences from the workflow

Speaking in scientific terms this case study can be considered as qualitative; one selected church and a limited number of informants and a high grade of knowledge about the church within the Gotland SMC group. This was believed to come closer to a conceivable future situation when writing a CMP for a congregation. Therefore one might say it's a method closer to a real situation.

The assessment was carried out according the following process.

- Looking through existing CMP
- ***Consider the guidelines***
- Looking through documentary evidence in the archives
- Create a reference group
- Interviews
- ***Consider the guidelines again***
- Writing a revision of the existing CMP
- Evaluation of the new CMP according to the guidelines
- Presentation of the revised plan

Another reason was to minimize the risk to miss something of importance. As shown, a basic thought with the structure of the scheme was on regular basis return to the guidelines for guidance.

#### 2.1.1 Consulting the reference group

This part goes somewhat beyond the guidelines because it was also a moment to get the congregation interested in the SMC project. Contacts were taken with people from the parish, the local historic society. Soon after cooperation was established, 120 invitations that informed about the SMC project were distributed in the local community. By coincidence the invitation and the actual meeting took place in the harvest season though many of the parish people are farmers. This fact was actually a lesson what concerns developing CMP's, try to get people engaged and find the right timing for it.

Nine people turned up to the I meeting. The meeting was rather successful and clearly showed the high value in talking to people from the local community and share their views. But it also clarified the importance of remaining critical to what was said, as undue generalizations and personal conflict can up in this kind of discussion.

During the meeting, SMC project was presented with the aims of the project and the guidelines as part of the results. After the presentation the discussion was free and a lot of valuable information came forward about good things, bad things, fears, challenges and wishes. Some participants also come with interesting proposals how to manage the church and create a greater local interest for it. It stood clear how beneficial it can be for the process creating/revising a CMP.

Important to mention is the lack of answers concerning one particular question, which was; how the existing CMP had worked out? This testifies at least two things; first a failure of the communication and implementation of the CMP. Secondly it may also be a lack of interest.

### 2.1.2 Archive studies and church visit

To understand the place and create a holistic perspective it was necessary to look through the local and regional archives to know what kind of actions that had taken place since the existing CMP was written and to properly revise the plan. The archive material showed what had been done to the church since the existing CMP was written, but also inspection protocols and complete inventory lists were important to look at.

Looking through the archival material, it stood clear that it was well documented and also interesting to compare with the oral information that was received from the reference group and the interviews.

Concerning the inventories, it became clear that the existing CMP was not complete in that case. However, it is a practical problem to include such a long list in the CMP as an appendix part. There's a need to remind the parish to update the inventory list and search for objects that were missing during a inspection 2010 05 05 (Dnr: 433-313-10).

### 2.1.3 Revising the existing CMP

Using the guidelines it became reasonably easy to revise the CMP when considering the information from interviews and the findings from the archives. But as a whole it has to be compared with the existing CMP frequently; because the guidelines helped to detect the gaps that were in the existing plan.

### 2.1.4 Evaluation

To achieve the best results an evaluation has to be done on different levels. First it has to be a valuation within the SMC team to see how the guidelines worked out according to the revised CMP. Secondly there's a need to evaluate the new CMP in itself together with the congregation. On the the first part of this can be carried out within the time frame of the project.

### 2.1.5 Implementation

When the SMC project and Bro church case study are finished, the revised plan is meant to be presented to the congregation and parish citizens. None the less it is a very important part of the case study and a significant section in the guidelines. Uppsala University will follow up on this in the years to come.

## 2.2 Additions to the existing CMP

### 2.2.1 'Understand and describe the place'

The interviews generated some input related to the topic 'Understand the place'. Such a section partly exists in the original CMP, but doing the revision and combining the outcome from the interviews with what is stressed in the guidelines, it opened up for a deeper and wider understanding of Bro church as a site.

In the existing CMP, there is a short description of the site in itself, but it's not connected to what it actually means to local people and how it's affected by the type of organization and management.

For instance, following the guidelines and the outcomes from the interviews, the case study shows that the reorganization and unification of the northern congregations, has caused great concern. There is a void; the parish doesn't exist as an independent administrative unit anymore. A common expression was also that the church is very important to the local inhabitants, but also to people that have moved from Bro and occasionally return home for holidays. Another important outcome from the case study was that parts of the congregations' staff do not have any personal or emotional connection to the church. Because during the reorganization of the northern congregations, the informant had become part of a working team moving between several churches for undertake the management; 'I'm doing what I'm told to do', was an expression. Such information can be of importance when writing a CMP. If staff members with responsibility don't have any bonds to the place, but the writer of a plan tries to emphasize such a connection the result may be a lack of balance.

Another common expression, during the interviews, was the church's high importance for visiting tourists. Located just by the road, the church is a natural stop along the way as the informants expressed it. This is such facts that are important to consider when writing a CMP, also from a perspective to make it more alive, interesting and a have local connection.

### 2.2.2 'Describing the place - as it is now' and 'Assessing significance'

The discussion in the guidelines about building description is something that is generally well worked through in Swedish CMP's. This is also the case with Bro church, but the guidelines open up and enlighten a need to emphasize the significance on a broader scale. An example is the wooden root, placed in the tower as a bearing beam. In fact it is a tree where the root is sticking out outside the wall. A Carbon 14 measurement has shown that it is from the late middle ages. In the eyes of the parish members, this something that adds to the significance as compared to other churches.

### 2.2.3 'People as evidence resource' and 'Assessing community and stakeholder values'

The case study shows the benefit that can come out of informative dialogues with local people; e.g. the importance of the church and if they know some other person that can have important information to share. In the existing plan, there is a total absence of local voices. The case study shows the many opinions and the knowledge about the church that exists among parish members. Interesting examples are that several of the informants mentioned the German tourists as something important for bringing attention to the church and the font as a significant key object. But there was also one informant who expressed a lack of interest for the church and the ecclesiastical.

### 2.2.4 'Categorizing cultural values – using value typologies'

In section one, stage two in the guidelines, value typologies are being presented and discussed. In the existing CMP values are not being explained in an explicit way. Here the guidelines can be a great help to more clearly identify and formulate the values.

### 2.2.5 'Conservation'

Writing a CMP, its whole idea is to ensure a proper preservation of a historical site. Of course this is something that pervades the existing CMP of Bro church. But compared with the SMC guidelines there are some discrepancies. In section two and the paragraph 'Conservation' the guidelines highlights how a CMP has to be implemented among all the people working with the church. This something that has to be revised in the new CMP and it also shows the importance of presenting it to people. Such statements can be supported with the outcome of the interviews, where several expressed an awareness and concern about the church.

### 2.2.6 'Use and reuse'

One of the most important sections in the guidelines is the paragraph 'Use and reuse' which discusses the need to find a proper use for the church in a situation with declining interest for the ecclesiastical. This subject is not discussed in the existing CMP, even that it has been a great issue for quite some time and it's increasing. Again the outcome from the interviews and the meeting with the reference group becomes important. A majority expressed a great concern about the current situation and for the future of the church. But there were ideas for improvement as well. For instance, occasionally the church is used for lectures and concerts. One informant expressed a wish to also have theater in the church. Another informant had the opinion that the church as a building didn't fit well for such events. None of the informants had any input about theological questions as the situation was.

# 3 CONCLUSIONS

## 3.1 Conclusions

The case study have shown that the SMC guidelines can be a useful tool when revising an existing management plan in order to make the plan more pragmatic and a living document.

The assessment has shown the importance of close interaction with the members of the parish and staff during the process of writing or revising a CMP. Another aspects of this is that internal conflicts are identified but not necessarily solved.

The local and personal involvement and attachment to the building has probably been one of the main factors in preserving the building during past centuries. This must also be considered in the future.

After revising the CMP it has to be actively implemented this is crucial in the process making the CMP a living document. To live up to such ambition, the idea is to present the CMP to the parish members and show how it is supposed to be used. The CMP must be closely linked to daily routines and decision making process in a longer time perspective. A regular cycle of revising the plan must be defined.

# 4 LITERATURE

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