



Consultation Reply

Draft Circular 2/26

PA Circular on Agricultural Land Holdings, Restoration Projects, Visual Simulations, and Minor Amendment Requests

13/05/2026

Reference is made to the draft circular 2/26 referred to the Council of the Kamra tal-Periti for feedback on 30th April 2026.

The Kamra tal-Periti is hereby providing its feedback, including requests for revisions and clarifications.

1. Amendment to Agriculture Constraints

The Kamra acknowledges the Authority's intention to correct long-standing issues in the mapping and linking of agricultural land to approved agricultural stores. The shift toward linking only the land parcels required by policy is a welcome improvement.

However, the Kamra strongly recommends the introduction of an **Ownership Declaration for agricultural land holdings**, equivalent to that required for development sites. This measure would ensure that applicants have legal title or control over the land being linked, prevent disputes and fraudulent claims, and improve the accuracy of the Authority's GIS records.

2. Declaration of Adherence to General Restoration Principles: Façade Restoration

2.1 Restoration and the Definition of Development

The Kamra reiterates that **restoration works do not constitute “development”** as it falls outside the definition of development as established in Article 70(2) of the Development Planning Act, Cap. 552.

For this reason the issuance of regulation or guidance by the Planning Authority on restoration falls outside its legal remit as defined in the Act itself.

2.2 Technical and Procedural Concerns

Without prejudice to the above premise, the Kamra supports the intention to streamline submissions, but is concerned that the proposed declaration oversimplifies restoration practice and risks undermining conservation standards. The Kamra's principal concerns are as follows:

A. Oversimplification and Risk of Misapplication

The declaration treats a wide range of façade interventions as uniform and low-risk, disregarding the fact that restoration methodology must be tailored to the building's type, condition, significance, and complexity. If made available to all warrant holders irrespective of conservation expertise, it may encourage superficial submissions rather than well-reasoned proposals prepared by qualified conservation architects.

B. Lack of Differentiation Between Building Categories

The declaration does not distinguish between vernacular buildings in UCAs, buildings of heritage value, and scheduled properties. These categories require different levels of documentation and scrutiny. A single declaration form cannot adequately address this spectrum.

C. Unclear Scope of Application

If the declaration is intended to simplify submissions for schemes such as *Irrestawra Darek*, this must be explicitly stated. Without clear boundaries, the declaration risks being applied to complex cases where a full Restoration Method Statement (RMS) is necessary, resulting in fragmented submissions and inconsistent review processes. \

D. Technical Ambiguities

The Kamra identifies several inconsistencies and omissions that require revision:

- The requirement for a full property description is disproportionate for routine façade works.
- Exclusions and limitations are unclear, particularly the boundary between minor stone replacement (listed as an intervention) and structural replacement (excluded).
- Cleaning methodologies are overly restrictive and should allow specialist techniques—such as controlled micro-abrasion or laser cleaning—where justified and approved.
- Vegetation removal guidance lacks safeguards regarding herbicide use, environmental controls, and substrate compatibility.
- Methodology for metal apertures is incomplete.
- Plastic repair guidance omits dutchman repairs, desalination, and poulticing.
- Concrete repair guidance introduces internal slab logic irrelevant to façades and fails to distinguish between historic and modern concrete.
- Repointing guidance requires clearer direction on mortar composition and joint profiling.
- Services guidance is too narrow and should address routing, reversibility, and visual impact.

E. Need for Clear Thresholds and Conservation Principles

The declaration must specify:

- Who determines whether a case qualifies for the simplified form,

- the criteria for such determination, and
- clear thresholds for when a full RMS is required.

The process should explicitly reflect a conservation hierarchy based on **minimum intervention, compatibility, reversibility, and respect for original fabric.**

3. Best Practice Guide – Visual Simulations (2026)

The Kamra cannot comment on this section as the draft 2026 guidelines have not been made available. The Kamra requests that the Authority publish the draft for consultation and allow adequate time for professional review.

4. Submission of Minor Amendment Requests by Perit of Case

The Kamra welcomes this update, and shall be issuing its own circular to members of the profession further on the related professional issues that made this necessary.

Conclusion

The Kamra welcomes the Authority's efforts to improve administrative clarity but urges substantial revisions to ensure legal correctness, proportionality, and alignment with conservation best practice. The Kamra remains available for further dialogue to ensure that the final circular is technically sound and legally robust.

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