



Just wash and go: new protection means that vandals' efforts can be hosed off with hot water without damage to ancient stonework

# A soluble solution to beating graffiti

BRITAIN'S architectural heritage could be saved from graffiti thanks to two new protective substances that have been tested at the government's Building Research Establishment at Watford, Hertfordshire, writes Sean Hargrave.

Spray-on barriers already exist, but they form a varnish-like layer that grips a surface so strongly it is almost impossible to remove it without damaging the facade it is meant to protect. Many organisations that own or maintain important buildings are reluctant to use such coatings because they would be unable to redecorate or ren-

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ovate a property's exterior walls without first removing the varnish layer and damaging masonry. This leaves many monuments and listed buildings unprotected from graffiti.

However, researchers at the Building Research Establishment are experimenting with two new protective coatings that do not form a varnish layer.

The new technologies, developed by two British companies, Delta in Stirling, Central Scotland, and Tensid

UK in Chertsey, Surrey, suspend tiny wax-like molecules in a white-spirit solvent. This produces a paint that resembles milk in texture and acts like a clear emulsion when applied to a building.

The protective layer's wax particles repel graffiti paint, preventing it from reaching the building's facade, yet ensure that the barrier, as well as the unwanted message, can be simply washed away by a high-pressure hose pumping water at

95C. After removing graffiti, maintenance staff would need to apply a replacement coating to protect the stonework from further attacks.

The £20,000 research programme — funded by English Heritage and Historic Scotland — has now been completed. Its findings will be presented to English Heritage next month.

Mathew Murray from the Heritage Support Service of the Building Research Establishment has yet to complete his report but it will suggest that the new protective coatings do work, though they are not useable on every type of material.