

Historic environment

Scotland's historic buildings and monuments are unique and irreplaceable; attracting millions of visitors and generating income and jobs.



Summary

Scotland's historic environment includes thousands of historic buildings and monuments, attracts millions of visitors each year and generates income and jobs.

Although there are good data to describe individual parts of the historic environment, it is difficult to assess the current and changing state of the whole because of a lack of nationally consistent data.

The key pressures are development, lack of maintenance and investment, inappropriate land use, climate change and visitors. The key responses to these pressures are to enhance and improve policy, legislation, guidance and investment to improve condition.

Our historic environment is irreplaceable and we should protect it for future generations.

Introduction

What is the historic environment?

Scotland's historic environment is the physical evidence of past human activity as well as associated concepts that we cannot see or touch such as stories and traditions. It includes archaeological sites and monuments, buildings, gardens and landscapes, artefacts and archives.

Importance of the historic environment

Scotland's historic environment makes Scotland distinctive as Scotland. Our whole environment, whether rural or urban, on land or under water, has a historic dimension that contributes to its quality and character. It has been shaped by human and natural processes over thousands of years. This is most obvious in our built heritage: ancient monuments; archaeological sites and landscapes; historic buildings; townscapes; parks; gardens and designed landscapes; and our marine heritage, for example in the form of historic shipwrecks or underwater landscapes that were once dry land.

Scotland's historic environment makes a valuable contribution to our:

- quality of life and sense of well being
- economy and employment – especially in the tourism and construction industries
- educational resource
- cultural identity

The historic environment is estimated to contribute [in excess of £2.3 billion](#), (2.6%) of Scotland's national gross value added (GVA) and to account for 2.5 % of Scotland's total employment (directly supporting 41,000 full time equivalent employees). [This is comparable with many of other important Scottish industries](#). It is a strong driver for tourism and inward investment - attracting more than [16 million visitors](#) each year—and it promotes a positive image of Scotland, at home and abroad, providing a sense of place and cultural identity.

Heritage-led regeneration benefits both communities and the economy, stimulating regeneration of the built environment and generating work in the construction industry. The historic environment also provides strong opportunities for participation and volunteering across Scotland and contributes to education and training programmes in schools and colleges and in up-skilling the construction workforce. The care and maintenance of the historic environment is an important factor in the economic security of Scotland's construction industry. It also supports, develops and promotes Scotland's traditional building skills and the use of traditional building materials.

The historic environment plays a role in reducing Scotland's carbon footprint through the sensitive re-use of historic buildings thus minimising the need for new building materials.

Components of the historic environment

Some elements of Scotland's historic environment are designated. The designation process aims to identify the most important parts of the built environment so that their significance is recognised and their protection enhanced.

Designated assets currently include:

- 5 [World Heritage Sites](#)
- 47,672 [listed buildings](#)
- 8,205 [scheduled monuments](#)
- 390 [designed gardens and landscapes](#)
- 645 [conservation areas](#)
- 8 [protected wrecks](#)
- 7 [scheduled wrecks](#)
- 1 [Historic Marine Protected Area](#)
- 28 [nationally important battlefields](#)

Scotland has two [National Parks](#) and 40 [National Scenic Areas](#). These contain many important historic environment features, and are discussed further in the [Landscape](#) topic.

Much of the historic environment is undesignated. The [Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland](#) (RCAHMS) and local authority Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) also hold information on historic environment assets, which are not necessarily nationally important or statutorily protected but which nonetheless contribute to Scotland's overall historic environment. There are currently 295,784 RCAHMS records of historic assets or events, which are available [online](#). There are 283,238 records held by local authority SMRs.

Description of the historic environment



The historic environment enriches Scotland's landscapes and townscapes and is central to the country's distinctive character. It also makes a major contribution to Scotland's national identity, culture and economy. The various designated elements that make up Scotland's historic environment are explained below.

World heritage sites

Scotland has five World Heritage Sites (sites of outstanding universal value) under the terms of the [UNESCO World Heritage Convention](#).

Four are cultural World Heritage Sites:

- [Edinburgh Old and New Towns](#);
- [New Lanark](#);
- the [Heart of Neolithic Orkney](#);
- [the Antonine Wall](#).

[St Kilda](#) is a mixed cultural and natural World Heritage Site.

Properties in Care

A Property in Care is an ancient monument and/or historic building that is cared for by [Historic Scotland](#) under the terms of the [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#).

There are [345 properties](#) in the care of Historic Scotland.

Listed buildings

Historic Scotland lists buildings of special historic or architectural interest and maintains an associated dataset of listed building descriptions available on the [Historic Scotland](#) website.

The lists ensure that the planning process takes the needs of the historic environment into account and guides the management of change. [Scotland's Historic Environment Audit \(SHEA\)](#) shows that there were 47,672 listed buildings in Scotland in March 2012, an increase of 507 since 2008 (the baseline date for SHEA).

The number of records relates to listing entries, not individual buildings or ownerships. A number of individually owned properties, such as a terrace of houses, may be covered by a single listing entry.

Buildings are assigned to one of three categories according to their relative importance. All listed buildings receive equal legal protection, and protection applies equally to the interior and exterior of all listed buildings, regardless of category.

- **category A:** buildings of national or international importance, either architectural or historic, or fine, little-altered examples of a particular period, style or building type (around 8% of the total);
- **category B:** buildings of regional or more than local importance, or major examples of a particular period, style or building type, which may have been altered (around 50% of the total);
- **category C:** buildings of local importance, lesser examples of any period, style or building type, as originally constructed or moderately altered, and simple traditional buildings that group well with others in categories A and B (around 42% of the total).

Scheduled monuments

Scheduled monuments are sites or monuments of national importance that are legally protected under the [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#). Historic Scotland maintains the schedule of monuments.

There were 8,205 scheduled monuments in Scotland in March 2012, an increase of 184 since 2008. The oldest scheduled monuments date from around 8,000 years ago, before the advent of farming in Scotland. The most recent scheduled monuments include Second World War defences. In between is a wider range of monuments of all types, including prehistoric chambered cairns, Roman forts, early medieval carved stones and industrial mills. They may be recognisable as banks, ditches, walls, or other upstanding structural remains, but much of a monument may survive beneath the ground, often extending for a considerable distance beyond the visible remains.

Information on scheduled monuments and GIS maps of scheduled areas is available from the [Historic Scotland data](#) website.

Gardens and designed landscapes

There are 390 sites on [the inventory of gardens and designed landscapes](#) in Scotland, compiled and maintained by Historic Scotland. Sites on the inventory are considered to be of national importance and should be taken account of in the planning process.

Conservation areas

Conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities as:

"...areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

There were 645 conservation areas in Scotland in March 2012, compared to 636 in 2008. Information on Scotland's conservation areas is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Wreck sites

There are sixteen nationally protected wreck sites across Scotland. Of these, [eight wreck sites](#) are designated by Scottish Ministers (through Historic Scotland) under the [Protection of Wrecks Act 1973](#). Seven other offshore wrecks are scheduled under the [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#). There is also a single wreck protected as an Historic Marine Protected Area under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Further information on Scotland's marine historic environment is contained in [Scotland's Marine Atlas](#).

Battlefields

There are 28 nationally important battlefields on the [Inventory](#) of Scottish Battlefields maintained by Historic Scotland.

Undesignated assets

By far the largest part of the historic environment is not protected by designation and is in private ownership.

The scale of the undesignated built heritage is considerable and is illustrated below:

- there are 125,685 archaeological monuments recorded by the [Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland](#) (RCAHMS), of which only 9,967 are linked to scheduled monument designations. This suggests that 92% of known archaeological sites and monuments in Scotland are undesignated;
- RCAHMS holds 140,197 records relating to historic architecture. Of these, 71,660 records (51%) are not linked to listed building records;
- 455,000 Scottish dwellings were built pre-1919 (traditionally constructed). Which means that one fifth (19%) of our housing stock is now over 90 years old. These properties comprise the bulk of the vernacular architecture which contributes to Scotland's unique character;
- RCAHMS holds 20,675 records relating to maritime heritage. However, there are only 16 protected wrecks in Scotland, suggesting that 99.9% of recorded maritime heritage is undesignated;
- 92% of gardens and related sites (sundials, garden features etc) recorded by RCAHMS are undesignated;
- RCAHMS holds 297 records relating to battle sites or battlefields, only 28 of which are on the Inventory of nationally important battlefields.

Why are some assets not protected?

There is a wide range of undesignated archaeological sites, monuments and areas of historical interest (including battlefields), historic landscapes, gardens and designed landscapes, woodlands and routes such as drove roads, which does not have statutory protection. There can be a number of reasons why a historic environment asset is not designated, including:

- the asset has been assessed for designation but will have failed to meet the required criteria;
- the asset has not yet been assessed for designation;
- the asset is not of a type that can be designated;
- the asset has not yet been recorded.

[Scottish planning policy 23: planning and the historic environment](#) sets out Scottish Government policy relating to undesignated assets in the planning system. In essence, planning authorities are expected to consider the potential to protect these resources through the planning process.

Historic land-use assessment

[Historic land-use assessment](#) (HLA) is an ongoing project undertaken by RCAHMS and Historic Scotland. It is a key approach for understanding the historic environment as a whole and aids in assessing significance. It is designed to map past and present land use across Scotland to help us understand how today's landscape is influenced by human activities in the past. Around 80% of Scotland had been mapped using HLA by March 2012.

Condition of the historic environment

It is difficult to assess the current and changing state of all of the elements that make up the historic environment because of a lack of nationally consistent trend data, from which evidence of change can be determined. The sector is working together to develop an evidence base.

Although there is only limited nationally collated information on the condition of the historic environment, the presence of management plans and regular inspection regimes for many built heritage assets means that a considerable amount is known locally.

The sources listed below provide useful national data on condition of the historic environment.

Condition of listed buildings (buildings at risk register)

Established in 1990 and managed by Historic Scotland, the [buildings at risk register \(BARR\) for Scotland](#) highlights properties of architectural or historic merit throughout the country that are considered to be at risk or under threat.

Buildings at risk are not necessarily in poor condition; they may simply be standing empty with no clear future use.

A [national report on A-Listed buildings at risk](#) is available from the BARR website. Key points are:

- in 2013, 8.0% of A-listed buildings (nationally or internationally important) are at risk, compared to 8.2% in 2011 and 8.7% in 2009;
- a-listed entries in rural areas are more likely to be at risk than those in urban areas;
- nine out of ten A-listed BARR entries are vacant.

Changes in the proportion of A-listed buildings at risk are used to measure the '[Scotland performs national indicator: improve the state of Scotland's historic buildings, monuments and environment](#)'. The Scotland Performs Technical Assessment Group has awarded a 'Performance Maintaining' arrow for this indicator.

Condition of scheduled monuments

Historic Scotland's Field Officer reports (previously known as monument warden reports) provide the only systematically generated, detailed condition data about ancient monuments in Scotland. The data relate only to scheduled monuments and need careful interpretation. It is not possible to extrapolate figures to produce estimates of condition and risk among the population of ancient monuments as a whole. However, the range of issues faced by unscheduled monuments is likely to be very similar.

Historic Scotland undertook analysis of the condition of scheduled monuments based on Field Officer reports. Key findings are reported in the 2012 [Scotland's Historic Environment Audit \(SHEA\)](#) and are summarised below.

- the percentage of monuments in an optimal or satisfactory condition has increased over the last 13 years, and is currently around 87%;
- there is a direct relationship between condition and risk, with monuments in an optimal or satisfactory condition likely to be associated with a low risk of future deterioration;
- there is an increasing trend of monuments assessed as being at high or immediate risk of further deterioration. Currently around 12% of monuments fall into this category;
- particular monument types appear more vulnerable than others. There is a significant variation in condition between each category of monument. Prehistoric and roman monuments are in general in a better condition than ecclesiastical, secular and industrial monuments;
- around 28% of scheduled monuments show an improvement in condition over time, with 26% showing a decline;
- around 26% of monuments show an decrease in assessed risk over time, with a further 26% showing an increase.

Pressures affecting the historic environment



Development pressures

Short-term visions for the development of places for housing and other needs, such as energy generation and transport infrastructure, can result in inappropriate development and demolition, which can affect the character of a historic area or an individual building or monument.

Maintenance

Maintaining our built heritage can act as an incentive for area regeneration. There is a need for a greater focus on long term sustainability and better repair and maintenance of traditional buildings because these are the buildings we live and work in. As our building stock gets older it will require increasing levels of maintenance. Lack of maintenance, or repairs which are poorly executed, are increasingly matters of concern.

Scotland has a long tradition of high quality and innovative use of building materials, reflecting the regional diversity of materials and geology in particular, but also reflecting socio economic changes over time. The shortage of traditional skills, suitably qualified craftsmen and locally-available materials is a concern for the maintenance and repair of the historic environment. This is further discussed in the Historic Scotland document [establishing the need for traditional skills](#).

Land use and land use change

Changing land use and land-management practices, and certain agricultural and forestry practices, can put pressure on the historic environment. For example, light grazing by sheep is often a benign and beneficial way of maintaining monuments in good condition. By contrast, ploughing a monument over successive years can lead to the attrition and loss of

archaeological remains, while the growth and spread of tree roots and scrub can disturb and damage buried archaeological deposits and undermine above-ground masonry.

Climate change, coastal erosion and pollution

It is expected that climate change will lead to Scotland becoming warmer and wetter. More rainfall will mean that traditional buildings will be wetter for longer periods of time resulting in increased weathering of stone, algal and fungal growth and corrosion of metals.

Rising sea levels, along with increased storm events that are also a result of climate change, mean that we can be confident that coastal erosion is a real and increasing threat to coastal heritage. Some of Scotland's unique and special sites such as [Skara Brae](#) in Orkney are most at risk. Further information about the impacts of coastal erosion on Scotland's coastal heritage available the website of [The SCAPE Trust](#).

Historically, high pollutant concentrations in urban areas, notably black smoke and sulphur dioxide, caused significant damage to the fabric of buildings. Although levels of these pollutants have declined over recent decades, they have left a legacy of damage particularly to materials such as sandstone which have made them more vulnerable to ongoing decay today. Furthermore, the previous soiling and damage to buildings led to widespread stone cleaning which commonly has had a damaging effect on building fabric. Consequent poor quality repairs using inappropriate materials such as cement continue to cause damage to this day.

Sustainability of traditional buildings

Traditional buildings have embodied energy (the energy required to extract, process, manufacture, transport and install building materials). Although traditional buildings may provide a lower thermal performance than some new buildings, they save carbon by reducing the need for new buildings.

However, reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with the upkeep of older buildings, while maintaining their cultural significance, is a key challenge. All measures to improve energy efficiency in traditional buildings need to be considered carefully with thought given to the carbon footprint, longevity and sustainability of existing and replacement materials. In improving energy efficiency, it is important to avoid damaging effects on traditional buildings. For example, reducing air leakage in buildings to prevent heat loss may result in condensation and mould growth, with damaging effects on the building fabric and the health of people living there.

Visitors

While changes in the way our environment is used for tourism, leisure and sport can generate additional revenue and enable its understanding and enjoyment, increased visitor numbers can also lead to pressures. For example, visitors can accidentally damage monuments by wearing footpaths across sensitive features, lighting fires, or simply by not being aware of the presence and importance of a site. Any potential adverse impact needs to be assessed before visitors are actively encouraged to visit a site.

Consequences of a change in the historic environment



Deterioration and loss of our historic environment

The historic character of our built environment is important to our quality of life and sense of identity. Many of its elements are precious; if it is lost or damaged, it cannot be replaced. Such a change may reduce the cultural significance or detract from the appearance or quality of historic environment areas.

Contribution to economy and jobs

The report 'Economic Impact of the Historic Environment in Scotland (ECOTEC, 2008)', commissioned by the Historic Environment Council for Scotland (HEACS) and available on the [HEACS](#) website, shows that the historic environment contributes in excess of £2.3 billion (2.6%) to Scotland's national gross value added (GVA) and directly supports more than 41,000 full-time equivalent jobs. This research demonstrates that the economic contribution of the built heritage, including the retention and development of traditional construction skills, is comparable with many other significant Scottish industries, including those traditionally taken as measures of the health of the Scottish economy. The loss or degradation of the historic environment could therefore impact on the economy and jobs.

Contribution to tourism

Tourism is one of the most important industries in Scotland. One in five (21%) of adults visited a historic or archaeological site during 2011, according to the [Scottish household survey](#). [Visit Scotland](#) data for 2011/12 shows that more than 16 million tourists visited historic environment attractions (including castles, historic buildings, gardens and landscapes), which accounts for more than one in three of recorded visits to Scottish attractions.

Changes to the built heritage may affect its potential as a strong driver for tourism and investment. For example, the loss or degradation of buildings, monuments the historic character of an area might lead to a reduction in visitor numbers to that particular location, with subsequent impacts on the local economy.

Cultural identity and educational resource

The historic environment underpins the sense of place and cultural identity that plays a large part in the maintenance, sustainability and regeneration of communities and in promoting a positive image of Scotland across the world. It is also a significant learning resource, which can support statutory formal education, further education and lifelong learning. Changes in the historic environment may affect this contribution, and could in the long term be detrimental to both sense of place and cultural identity and the retention of an important educational resource.

Response by society



It is important to safeguard the built heritage while promoting an understanding of the positive role it can play in the maintenance, development and regeneration of communities, their culture and economy. The protection of the historic environment is not about preventing change. Change should be managed intelligently and with understanding to achieve the best outcome for the historic environment and for the people of Scotland.

The key responses to the pressures set out previously are:

1. To enhance and improve legislation, policy, and advice and guidance.

- [the Historic Environment \(Amendment\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) tackles some long-standing practical issues relating to the care and management of Scotland's historic environment. The Act provides a much-improved legislative tool-kit for those working on the front line. It improves the ability of owners, tenants, business, the voluntary sector and the regulatory authorities to manage the historic environment;
- the [Scottish Historic Environment Policy](#) (SHEP) sets out Scottish Ministers' policies, providing direction for Historic Scotland and a policy framework that informs the work of a wide range of public sector organisations;
- a [public consultation on an Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland](#) was carried out in the summer of 2013. The Strategy, which will be published in early 2014, will set out a vision and strategic priorities for the historic environment in Scotland;
- Historic Scotland publishes [guidance on the management of change](#) for use by planning authorities and other interested parties; and guides for owners.

2. To promote and support planning processes that protect the quality of the historic environment and enable sustainable economic growth.

The planning process provides much of the balance needed to manage change in the historic environment. Many developments do not have a significant impact on the historic environment but, when they do, historic environment concerns must be taken account of. A local authority may impose a condition on a development to safeguard the historic environment and, in rare instances, may refuse a planning application. Scottish Government Planning Performance Statistics are available from the [Scottish Government](#) website.

- local authorities decided 39,826 planning applications in 2011/12. In reaching a decision in each case, the needs and interests of the historic environment will have been considered;
- listed building consent (LBC) must be obtained from the relevant planning authority to demolish, alter or extend a listed building in any way that affects its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest;
- unlisted buildings in conservation areas have protection through conservation area consent (CAC). CAC is normally required before unlisted buildings in conservation areas can be demolished. Around 9% (3593 in 2011/2) of all planning consents involve LBC or CAC. Numbers of consents have been relatively constant since 2000/01 and around 90% are granted annually;
- scheduled monument consent (SMC) is required from Scottish Ministers (through Historic Scotland) for any works that may impact on a scheduled monument. The protection of monuments and their setting is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Historic Scotland received 153 SMC applications in 2011/12 and 238 in 2010/11. All of these SMCs were granted, mostly with conditions to preserve historic significance.

3. Investment to improve the condition and understanding of the historic environment.

- private investment is the largest source of funding for the historic environment. Most assets are privately owned and the ability of private owners to invest sufficiently in the maintenance of historic buildings and places is crucial to the long-term management of the historic environment. Research produced in March 2013 by ECORYS, commissioned by Historic Scotland, suggests that the best current estimate of spend on historic building repair and maintenance (including historic industrial and commercial buildings and infrastructure) is £1.1 billion;
- grants can provide a major stimulus to conserving built heritage, benefiting both communities and the general economy by generating work in the construction industry and supporting tourism. Between 2002 and 2012, Historic Scotland awarded [grants](#) of more than £123 million that assisted repairs worth over £563 million;
- in 2011/12 the [Heritage Lottery Fund](#) awarded a total of £29.6 million in grants to 107 different heritage projects in Scotland, which reflects an increase on 2010/11 in both the total finance awarded and in the number of projects awarded a grant;
- [the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy \(CIPFA\)](#) figures show that in 2011/12, local authorities' net expenditure on heritage was £7.6 million;
- the voluntary sector plays a vital role in caring for the historic environment in Scotland and each year spends money from grants and charitable donations. For example, in 2011/12 the [National Trust for Scotland's](#) total expenditure was £42.1 million.

4. Investment to support, develop and promote Scotland's traditional building skills and the use of traditional building materials.

- skills training is integral to caring for the built environment, and takes a strategic approach in working with key industry and sector partners to further the needs of the traditional sector. Working in partnership with others to raise the profile of the sector, Historic Scotland has facilitated the development of new specialist vocational qualifications;
- Historic Scotland has also launched *A Traditional Building Health Check* scheme in partnership with CITB-ConstructionSkills Scotland. This will see a scheme of independent inspections to identify issues with Traditional Buildings, that when addressed will stimulate the repair and maintenance market, through using appropriately skilled and qualified contractors to undertake any work identified;
- more information on ongoing work to develop traditional construction skills in Scotland is available from Historic Scotland's [technical conservation knowledge base](#).

5. To ensure that the needs of the historic environment are reflected in flood prevention approaches.

- SEPA's [National Flood Risk Assessment](#) takes account of the likelihood of flooding from all sources, together with the potential impact of flooding on human health, economic activity, the environment and cultural heritage.

6. To encourage the development of management plans for heritage assets in order to ensure that change is well informed.

7. To ensure that accurate data are gathered, disseminated and used in decision making for the historic environment.