

Chapter 1

Introduction

Scotland's historic environment audit

- 1.** Scotland's Historic Environment Audit (the audit) is an ongoing project which will over time provide an assessment of the state of Scotland's historic environment. The immediate focus of this report is a survey of associated data, designed to inform future decisions on what baseline data to use for the future audit process.
- 2.** The long-term aim of the audit is to provide a comprehensive set of statistical information about the state of Scotland's historic environment, including the extent and condition of our assets, the threats they face and the contribution they make to our economy and quality of life.
- 3.** The main focus will be on information that is of practical use for the sector in managing the historic environment. The aim will be to compile statistical information that can be analysed and then used by all groups which have an interest in the historic environment. As such, the audit will take the form of a set of measurements for which base data will be established, using existing datasets or by gathering new ones; the actual audit proper will be undertaken by repeating the measurement process periodically and setting out the results. Where more fundamental research is required, this will be pursued separately from the formal audit process.
- 4.** The audit was set up in 2005 in response to a report¹ to Scottish Ministers by the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS). Ministers instructed Historic Scotland to take the audit forward in phases by:
 - gathering available information on the historic environment, analysing it and presenting it on a dedicated website;
 - establishing a stakeholder advisory group to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and to provide advice on reports on the state of the historic environment; and
 - identifying gaps in the evidence base available to the historic environment sector and priorities for filling these.

¹HEACS. 2004. Report and Recommendations on the need for a heritage audit in Scotland and how to take it forward.

5. During 2006/07 we focused on delivering the Minister's requirement to take the audit forward in phases. We:

- established an Historic Environment Audit Stakeholder Advisory Group (HEASAG) to provide advice on the audit;
- liaised with English Heritage, Scottish Museums Council, Sport Scotland and the National Service for Archaeology in the Netherlands to learn from their experiences of auditing and to share methodologies;
- took forward a report to establish a better understanding of our historic environment, based on an analysis of existing information; and
- developed a dedicated audit website to present information about the audit (www.heritageaudit.org.uk).

Scope of this report

6. This report is intended to fulfil the Ministerial instructions to gather available information and to identify gaps in the evidence base. In this report we therefore:

- set out for the first time an analysis of a range of easily accessible, existing information to inform our understanding of the historic environment (Chapter 2);
- present a set of possible headline indicators on a range of aspects of the historic environment that might be considered for the audit process (Chapter 3); and
- highlight gaps in our knowledge base (Chapter 4).

7. We devote more space to designated sites because, at the moment, more is known about them. However, where possible, we draw on available information to paint a fuller picture of the state of the wider historic environment in Scotland. We have drawn the scope of this report fairly tightly and it focuses on figures, accompanied by the minimum necessary in terms of commentary and discussion.

Structure of the data

8. We have grouped information into three themes as follows:

- **Theme A:** Identification, designation and condition of the historic environment
- **Theme B:** Managing and resourcing the historic environment
- **Theme C:** Benefits from the historic environment

9. We look at the following asset classes, with information provided from sources across the historic environment sector:

- World Heritage Sites (Historic Scotland)
- Scheduled Monuments (Historic Scotland)
- Listed Building Records (Historic Scotland)
- Gardens and Designed Landscapes (Historic Scotland)
- Designated Wreck Sites (Historic Scotland)
- Conservation Areas (Local Authorities)
- National Parks (National Park Authorities)
- National Scenic Areas (Scottish National Heritage)
- Ancient Woodlands (Scottish National Heritage)
- Battlefields (Battlefields Trust)

10. We also include data provided by RCAHMS, SMRs/HERs and from the Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA).

Geographic distribution of assets

11. Most of the data presented in this report provide a national picture. However, some data are broken down to provide statistics for each local authority area. Readers should interpret these data carefully as many factors affect the distribution of historic environment assets. The underlying geology of Scotland and the subsequent history of human habitation, social and economic development have shaped the character and appearance of the historic environment and have determined what sites and structures may have previously existed in an area, and what survives. The number and distribution of historic environment assets will relate to historic patterns of settlement determined by economic cycles of prosperity and growth or decline and abandonment. In addition, historical patterns of survey and research into the historic environment and the activities of government from the 19th century onwards will determine what is known and what is designated as being of importance or significance. Therefore, different geographic areas can be expected to be characterised by different densities of historic environment assets of different qualities and types. To set this in context Annex 20 provides key statistics on the population and area of each local authority.

Next steps

12. The next stages in the audit process will be the determination of the measures that will be chosen for the audit. This will be done during 2007/08. Thereafter, research will be commissioned to establish base data for the measures: this is likely to take several years. Once base data has been gathered, the audit will periodically re-gather the same data on the measures. This should allow the identification of trends in the sector.

13. Historic Scotland would be very happy to receive any comments on this report. They should be sent to heritage.audit@scotland.gsi.gov.uk