

Chapter 4

Data gaps

138. In chapters 2 and 3 of this report, we have:

- developed a framework to present historic environment data, which groups information into three themes. Theme A is about identification, designation and condition of the historic environment; Theme B is issues concerned with managing and resourcing; and Theme C is all about the benefits from the historic environment;
- presented a summary of the data that is currently readily accessible and easily useable for the historic environment audit; and
- identified a set of possible headline indicators to measure change in Scotland's historic environment.

139. The most comprehensively measurable data available are for a small minority of designated sites managed for public access or as visitor attractions. Such flagship sites make up only a tiny proportion of the wider historic environment, but are important in both economic and social terms. However, a very high proportion of the economic and social value derived from the historic environment is likely to reside in the wider historic environment. There is a great deal of information about the historic environment but it has been collected for a wide range of purposes, using differing methodologies, over a long period. It is therefore difficult at present to produce a coherent and consistent report using such diverse data.

140. In this chapter we identify the data gaps in the historic environment knowledge base and consider areas for further study. These are set out below, grouped under the three themes.

Theme A: Identification, designation and condition of the historic environment

Identification and designation

141. A number of organisations provide our basic inventory of the historic environment. Much of the information has been collected to answer different questions from those now being asked. For example, information on the physical condition of archaeological sites and buildings has only rarely been systematically recorded. The main gap is the reconfiguration of existing data and data structures to ensure that there is a consistent and measurable baseline against which other criteria can be quantified and the profile assessed.

142. Most of the measures we have included in this report relate to the designated historic environment. Further discussion is needed to agree what other (undesignated) historic environment assets we could reasonably measure and report. The research and survey of our archaeological and architectural heritage is an ongoing and wide-ranging task and collecting the data for this inventory or baseline of historic environment assets is dependent on resource allocation and prioritisation. Identifying known gaps, such as battlefields and the total inventory of older or potentially listable buildings could be one priority. Bringing consistency to existing data, in addition to an awareness of bias, such as that caused by intense fieldwork in some areas and not others, could be another important priority.

143. The majority of maritime records in SMRs/HERs and the RCAHMS database relate to documented losses around Scotland's coasts, with no known seabed location. As such they provide an indicator of seabed archaeology but further enhancement is required to provide a comprehensive management tool for the marine historic environment.

Condition

144. We do not currently have enough information to provide a national picture of the current or changing condition of the wider historic environment. The list below summarises the key data gaps in relation to condition.

- The Buildings at Risk (BAR) register provides good quality information on condition. However, it is not comprehensive nor is it a representative sample of all older or potentially listable buildings. Historic Scotland has commissioned a new three year project with the Scottish Civic Trust to improve the coverage of the BAR. The BAR and the SSLG's research³² may offer useful methodologies and a good basis for more representative sampling. Further work would be needed to explore this and to develop suitable measures of the condition of historic buildings (and other aspects of the built historic environment) – and perhaps to explore the effect that listing or other designations has on condition.
- Historic Scotland's Monument Warden Records (MWRs) provide comprehensive condition information about scheduled monuments on land. However, there is no reliable detailed information on the condition of Scotland's unscheduled monuments (around 90% of all ancient monuments), nor is such limited information as does exist collected according to consistent methods. MWRs, and the Monuments at Risk Survey (MARS) may provide useful methodologies and a good basis for more representative sampling (any sample drawn would need to be statistically well-informed to provide reliable data). Further work would be needed to agree methodologies, to gather robust data and to develop suitable measures on the condition of ancient monuments.
- Further work would be needed to define measures and to source information on the condition of other historic environment assets, including battlefields and other historic areas and open spaces.

³²Safeguarding Glasgow's Stone-Built Heritage: Skills and Materials Requirements
Scottish Stone Liaison Group (SSLG), 2006

- This report has not explored, in any detail, the factors that affect the condition of the wider historic environment. Many of these factors are difficult to measure and it is not straightforward to quantify their effect, although some idea of this is provided by the work on the Historic Land-use Assessment. To record and analyse trends, this type of study would have to be repeated over time. An equivalent study of historic towns would also be invaluable in this context. Further work would be needed to explore these issues and establish if any suitable measures can be developed.

Theme B: Resourcing and managing the historic environment

145. Official statistics do not currently separately gather data on Listed Building Consents and Conservation Area Consents.

146. Further analysis of Historic Scotland's casework files could reveal trends and patterns of the nature of works for which Scheduled Monument Consent is sought.

147. We would need to develop a suitable measure of the representation of historic environment issues in community plans.

148. We do not have a comprehensive picture of employment in the historic environment. It is not a straightforward thing to measure and further work would be needed to develop suitable ways to measure employment and to gather data according to consistent definitions.

149. We do not have a comprehensive picture of investment in the historic environment. Further work would be needed to develop suitable ways to measure investment; and to collate data from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

150. There is a wide range of information on the availability of traditional skills and materials. Further work would be needed to agree suitable measures of the availability and need for traditional skills and materials.

Theme C: Benefits of the historic environment

151. This first report has not examined in any detail the wider range of values and benefits deriving from the historic environment. In particular, we would like to undertake future work to investigate the following areas:

152. We have yet to propose suitable measures of the availability of and participation in traditional craft skills; historic environment education programmes; lifelong learning; and the training of non-professionals through initiatives such as Scotland's Rural Past and Shorewatch.

153. There is a lot of data on numbers of visitors to historic environment attractions. However, we do not currently have measures or data to estimate how important the historic environment is in encouraging people to visit Scotland.

154. The economic value of the historic environment contributes to much more than tourism. HEACS has been asked by Scottish Ministers to report on the economic significance of the historic environment in Scotland. Further work would be needed to review this work and other existing material; to develop suitable measures of economic benefit; and to gather nationally consistent data.

155. It would be useful to know more about who participates in the historic environment, who is excluded and what are the barriers to greater access and participation.

156. In 2006, Historic Scotland commissioned some high level questions in an omnibus survey to begin to investigate attitudes towards the historic environment. The results of this snap-shot survey, which showed very positive attitudes to the historic environment, are presented in this report. Further work would be needed to develop a set of questions that could be used to measure trends in attitudes to the historic environment.

157. A number of UK and world-wide studies show that the historic environment makes a valuable contribution to cultural identity and quality of life and that there are many benefits to investing in the historic environment. To date, little research has been undertaken in Scotland.