

WORLD HERITAGE IN SCOTLAND



World
Heritage
Sites

A Short Guide

April 2023



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Cover images clockwise from top left:

The Antonine Wall at Bar Hill
© Rediscovering the Antonine Wall.

Aerial view of Edinburgh with the New Town in the foreground
© City Of Edinburgh Council.

Forth Bridge seen from North Queensferry.

Standing stones at the Ring of Brodgar
show the natural cleavage of the local stone.

Aerial view of New Lanark.

Dun from Ruaival
© Crown Copyright HES.

INTRODUCTION

This short guide is an introduction to World Heritage matters in Scotland. It explains what World Heritage Status is and what it means, summarises key concepts associated with the World Heritage Convention, outlines the responsibilities and benefits attendant upon achieving World Heritage Status, and sets out current approaches to the protection and management of World Heritage Sites in Scotland.

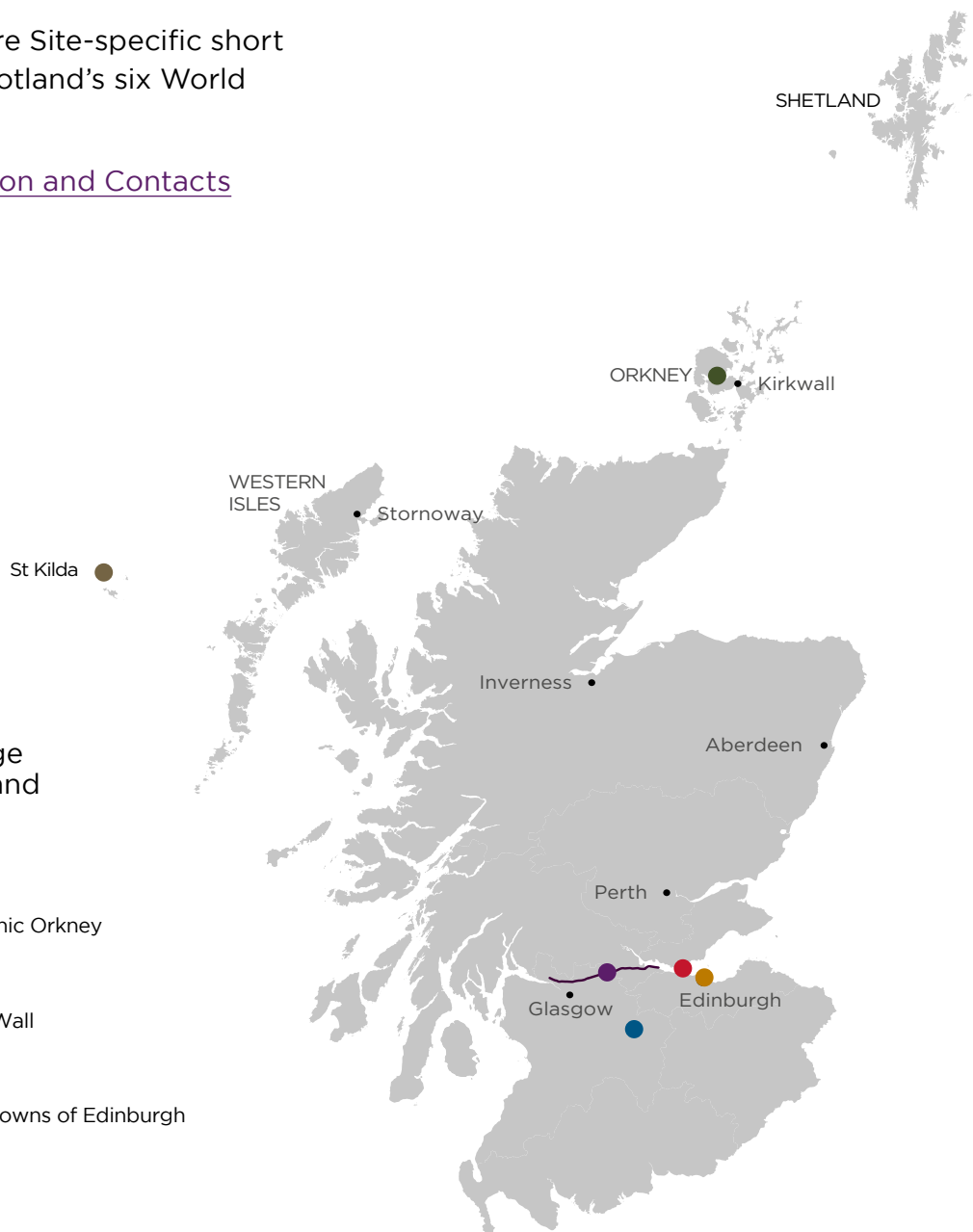
Accompanying this are Site-specific short guides for each of Scotland's six World Heritage Sites.

See [Further Information and Contacts](#) for more information.

World Heritage Sites in Scotland

Key

- 1 Heart of Neolithic Orkney
- 2 St Kilda
- 3 The Antonine Wall
- 4 New Lanark
- 5 Old and New Towns of Edinburgh
- 6 Forth Bridge



WORLD HERITAGE IN SCOTLAND: KEY FACTS

- World Heritage Sites (WHS) are exceptional places of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) described by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) as belonging to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.
- The UK currently has over 30 WHS of which six are in Scotland: the Heart of Neolithic Orkney; St Kilda; Frontiers of the Roman Empire: Antonine Wall; New Lanark; The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh; and The Forth Bridge.
- Five of Scotland's WHS are [inscribed](#) under cultural [criteria](#), while St Kilda is inscribed under both natural and cultural criteria.
- Once a WHS is inscribed on the World Heritage List under the World Heritage Convention, States that have ratified the Convention have a duty to protect, conserve and present the Sites for future generations.
- Each WHS has a Management Plan that sets out how the Site will be managed to ensure the OUV is preserved.
- National guidance requires that planning authorities protect WHS and their settings from inappropriate development.



UNESCO AND THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

[UNESCO](#) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world that is considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty, the [Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#) adopted by UNESCO in 1972. Usually referred to as the World Heritage Convention, it was ratified by the UK Government in 1984. Governments of countries that have ratified the Convention are referred to as [States Parties](#). They identify and nominate sites to the World Heritage Committee to be inscribed on the [World Heritage List](#).

WHS are cultural and/or natural sites considered to be of “Outstanding Universal Value” which have been [inscribed on the World Heritage List](#) by the UNESCO [World Heritage Committee](#). The Committee is responsible for the implementation of the Convention. It meets once a year and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected by their General Assembly.

The Committee determines whether a site is inscribed on the World Heritage List. It examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed Sites and asks States Parties to take action when these Properties are not being properly managed. It also decides if Sites should be added to the [List of World Heritage in Danger](#) or, in rare cases, deleted from the World Heritage List. It is supported by the World Heritage Centre which acts as its Secretariat.



*Distance slab from the Antonine Wall;
© Hunterian Museum.*



*Carved stone object from Skara Brae;
© National Museums Scotland.
Licensor www.scran.ac.uk.*



*Middle: Early Christian carved cross;
© Crown Copyright HES.*

ADVISORY BODIES

Three international non-governmental or inter-governmental organisations advise the World Heritage Committee:

Stones of Stenness.



ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) provides evaluations of cultural and mixed properties proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List. It is an international, non-governmental organisation which works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places based on the principles enshrined in the 1964 International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (known as the Venice Charter).

ICCROM (The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) is an inter-governmental body which provides expert advice on how to conserve Sites, as well as training in restoration techniques.

IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) is an international non-governmental organisation that provides technical evaluations of natural heritage properties and, through its worldwide network of specialists, reports on the state of conservation of listed Sites.



*New Lanark by John Winning
c. 1818; © New Lanark Trust.*

THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

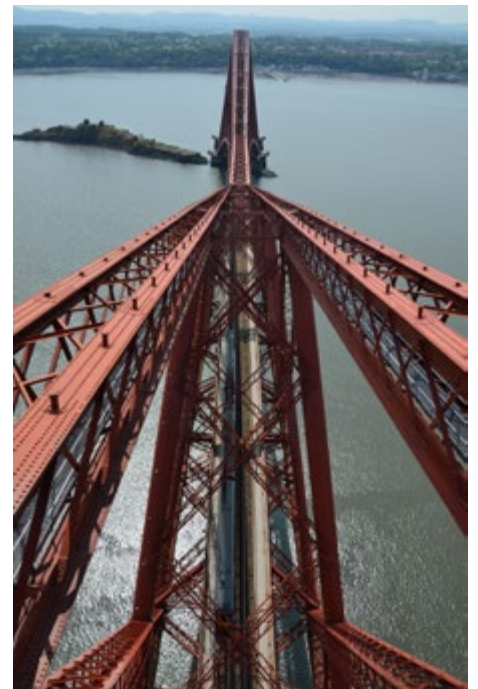
The World Heritage Committee has developed [Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#). They detail the criteria under which **OUV** is assessed in order for a property to be inscribed as a WHS.

In addition to meeting at least one of these ten [Criteria](#) a Site must also demonstrate [Authenticity](#) and [Integrity](#) as defined in the Guidelines. The Guidelines also describe procedures for the protection and conservation of WHS. They are aimed at the States Parties to the Convention, Site managers, and partners and stakeholders involved in the protection of WHS. These Guidelines include:

- The production of a **Management Plan** for each WHS to bring together all responsible parties and ensure a coordinated approach to its management.
- Legislative and regulatory measures at national and local levels that assure the survival of the Site and its protection against development and change that might negatively impact the **OUV**, or the integrity and/or authenticity of the Site.
- Where deemed necessary for the proper protection of the inscribed Site, an adequate [buffer zone](#) be provided.
- That States Parties submit [Periodic Reports to UNESCO](#) on their implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the state of conservation of the WHS on their territories.



Old and New Towns of Edinburgh, Gladstone's Land.



View from the top of The Forth Bridge.

OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

WHS are inscribed on the World Heritage List because they are deemed to have OUV: that is, they have been judged to be of such importance to all humanity that they transcend national boundaries. This is a high accolade that brings with it responsibilities and international scrutiny. OUV is a cornerstone of the protection of WHS for UNESCO and for States Parties, and protection of OUV is now built into guidance for heritage protection across the UK.

Each WHS has a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV). This Statement provides a clear, shared, understanding of the reasons for the Site's inscription on the World Heritage List, and of what needs to be managed in order to sustain the OUV for the long term. The Statement of OUV underpins the management and conservation of the WHS.

For the World Heritage Committee and the Advisory Bodies, the SOUV is an essential reference point for monitoring, Periodic Reporting, possible inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger and deletion from the List.

*The Forth Bridge
and Forth Road Bridge.*



BUFFER ZONES

When necessary for the proper protection of the WHS, UNESCO require that an adequate buffer zone should be provided. A buffer zone is an area surrounding the WHS that gives an added layer of protection to the Site. This should include the immediate setting of the inscribed Site, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the Site and its protection. However, the buffer zone does not form a part of the inscribed property.

UNESCO's Operational Guidelines state that a buffer zone is an area surrounding the nominated property which has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. Buffer zones can be used to highlight an area where potential impacts need to be given careful consideration by developers and decision-makers.

See the Site-specific short guides for information about buffer zones associated with individual WHS.

*Heart of Neolithic Orkney, landscape around Ring of Brodgar;
© Kieran Baxter.*



PLANNING AND WORLD HERITAGE

Both Scottish Government and Local Authorities have key roles to play in realising the aims of the World Heritage Convention. While no additional statutory controls result from World Heritage designation, national and local planning policies support the protection of WHS and their OUV. WHS are a material consideration in the planning system.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by *The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006* is the principal piece of primary legislation guiding planning and development in Scotland. Other key primary legislation includes: *The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953*; *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979* and *The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997*.

Natural heritage is covered by a range of legislation including *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & C.) Regulations 1994, as amended*; *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*; *The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004*. *The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010* also applies.

NATIONAL POLICY AND STRATEGY

Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 requires planning authorities to only support development proposals where the Outstanding Universal Value of a WHS or its setting is protected and preserved.

All six Scottish WHS incorporate statutory designations (e.g., Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Inventory Gardens & Designed Landscapes) which are material considerations for Local Authorities when determining applications for planning permission where there are direct impacts.

The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) (2019) sets out a series of principles and policies for the recognition, care, and sustainable management of the historic environment.

Our Place in Time – The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland provides a framework for all parts of the historic environment sector (and beyond) to work in partnership to deliver positive outcomes for our historic environment.

A UK Marine Policy Statement covers marine matters across the UK and a National Marine Plan for Scotland sets out national policies for the sustainable development of Scotland's seas. This sits alongside and overlaps with terrestrial planning policy.

MANAGING CHANGE IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT GUIDANCE NOTES

A series of thematic Managing Change Guidance Notes produced by HES provides best practice advice to help guide changes to the historic environment. One of the guides focuses on [World Heritage](#). It should be used to inform planning policies and help with decisions relating to planning applications affecting the WHS.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

A LDP establishes the main principles of a planning authority's policies to protect WHS and their settings from inappropriate development. In support of the LDP, the planning authority can issue Supplementary Planning Guidance covering these policies in more detail. See the Site-specific Short Guides for more information on relevant LDP policies and Guidance.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES, OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE AND SETTING

Where a development proposal has the potential to affect a WHS, the planning authority should protect and preserve its OUV. As noted above, there are a range of designated heritage assets within Scottish WHS. In all cases where a proposed development may impact upon a designated heritage asset or their settings, or where a planning authority considers that a development proposal has the potential to impact on a WHS, they must consult HES.

The setting of a WHS supports its OUV. Setting is more than simply the immediate surroundings of a site, and HES's Managing Change Guidance notes that setting often extends beyond the property boundary, or 'curtilage', of an individual historic asset into a broader landscape context and considers the elements that contribute to an understanding of setting. The setting of a WHS is not identical with any buffer zone it may have, and the absence of a buffer zone does not reduce the role of the setting in supporting the OUV of the Site.

Skara Brae



KEY ORGANISATIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#) (DCMS) is responsible for the UK's general compliance with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and for nominating sites for inscription. It acts as the UK State Party. This means that the World Heritage Committee channels all communication through DCMS. Historic England advise DCMS on cultural World Heritage issues. As an international convention, the World Heritage Convention is a reserved matter under the *Scotland Act 1998* (Schedule 5, Part 1 Paragraph 7) and as the responsible UK Government department DCMS acts as the UK State Party. However, under the post-devolution concordat, DCMS looks to Scottish Ministers to ensure compliance with the Convention in relation to Sites in Scotland, and to identify Scottish sites that should be on the UK [Tentative List](#) for possible [nomination](#) as WHS.

The mechanisms in place to protect Scottish WHS are devolved matters, and any enquiries from the World Heritage Committee in relation to existing Scottish Sites are passed on by DCMS. In Scotland, Strategic Policy for World Heritage sits within the Culture and Historic Environment Division in the Scottish Government, who support DCMS in carrying out the UK State Party role on behalf of Scottish Ministers and liaise with the UK Commission for UNESCO and ICOMOS UK.

[Historic Environment Scotland](#) (HES) is a Non Departmental Public Body and a registered Scottish Charity (SC045925) created by the *Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014* that brought together Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical

Monuments of Scotland. Established as the lead public body for Scotland's historic environment, HES has the general function of investigating, caring for and promoting Scotland's historic environment. HES is a Management Plan partner for all six Scottish WHS.

Proposals for natural WHS designations are made via the [Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#) (DEFRA) by the Scottish Ministers, supported by advice from [NatureScot](#). NatureScot is funded by the Scottish Government and promotes care for and improvement, responsible enjoyment, greater understanding and awareness, and sustainable use of the natural heritage.

[ICOMOS UK](#), the UK National Committee of ICOMOS, is an independent charity with a UK wide and international mission to promote and support best practice in the conservation, care and understanding of the historic environment. They advise on aspects of World Heritage and sites for nomination across the UK.

[Local Authorities](#) are key partners in the protection and management of all Scottish WHS, both through the development and implementation of planning policy and through their engagement in Site - specific Management Plans.

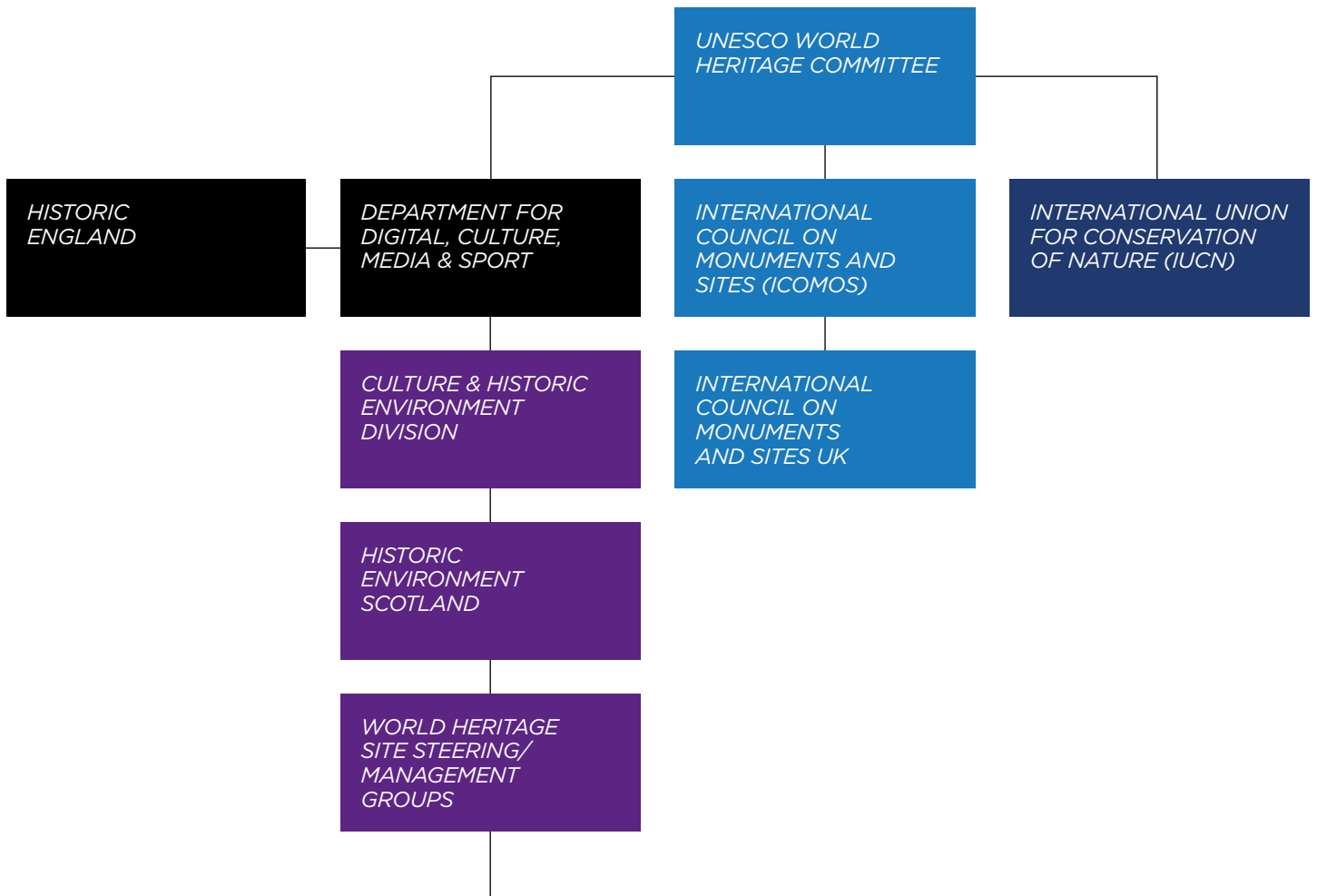
A number of Trusts and Charities have direct responsibility for the management and protection of part or all of some WHS, while others are partners in Management Plans. For more detail about the roles and responsibilities of specific agencies and organisations in the management of the individual WHS, please see the Site-specific guides.

World Heritage Site Coordinators, and the NTS Western Isles Manager for St Kilda, coordinate and drive forward the implementation, monitoring and revision of Site Management Plans, promote the OUV and public benefit of WHS, increase awareness and understanding among partners, stakeholders, and the public,

and provide a central point for advice. They represent the Sites' and partners' interests and promote best practice in the management of WHS, locally, nationally and internationally, and produce and coordinate [Periodic Reports](#) to UNESCO.

WORLD HERITAGE SITE	MANAGEMENT PLAN PARTNERS	
	Local Authorities	Other Partners
Forth Bridge	City of Edinburgh Council Fife Council	Forth Bridges Forum Historic Environment Scotland Network Rail
Frontiers of the Roman Empire: Antonine Wall	East Dunbartonshire Council Falkirk Council Glasgow City Council North Lanarkshire Council West Dunbartonshire Council	Historic Environment Scotland
Heart of Neolithic Orkney	Orkney Islands Council	Historic Environment Scotland RSPB NatureScot
Old and New Towns of Edinburgh	City of Edinburgh Council	Edinburgh World Heritage Historic Environment Scotland
New Lanark	South Lanarkshire Council	Historic Environment Scotland New Lanark Trust
St Kilda	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council)	Historic Environment Scotland Ministry of Defence National Trust for Scotland NatureScot

WORLD HERITAGE GOVERNANCE IN SCOTLAND



OLD AND NEW TOWNS OF EDINBURGH
Coordinator: City of Edinburgh Council

ST KILDA
Manager: National Trust for Scotland

ANTONINE WALL (FRONTIERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE)
Coordinator: Historic Environment Scotland

FORTH BRIDGE
Operation: Network Rail

HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY
Coordinator: Historic Environment Scotland

NEW LANARK
Coordinator: New Lanark Trust



The Street, St Kilda.



Upper Bow, Old Town.

MANAGEMENT PLANS

In order to remain on the World Heritage List, States Parties must ensure that the OUV of the WHS for which they are responsible is maintained and preserved for present and future generations for the benefit of all humanity. UNESCO requires that Management Plans be produced for each WHS to bring together all responsible parties and ensure a coordinated approach to management of the Site. The Management Plan is also the means by which it can be demonstrated to UNESCO that the WHS has adequate management mechanisms in place to ensure its conservation. The starting point for the vision and long-term aims of each Management Plan are international obligations to uphold the World Heritage Convention.

Management Plans serve as framework documents designed to preserve OUV. They help to set out clearly the special qualities and values of the Site, to establish a framework for decision making, and to provide information on the threats and opportunities for the Site, so that it can be managed in a sustainable manner.

All of Scotland's WHS have a number of partners involved in their management. The success of a WHS (in terms of its promotion, protection and conservation) depends upon the input and shared vision of these partners. It is the responsibility of each WHS Steering Group or Management Board to decide how they want their Site to develop and move forward, and it is therefore critical that all partners understand the responsibility that they have and are prepared to commit time and resources to ensure the success of the Management Plan.

Each WHS is unique, and each Management Plan has to address the specific character and needs of the Site. See the Site-specific guides for more information about the management of individual WHS.



*Old and New Towns of Edinburgh
WHS Management Plan.*

MONITORING AND REPORTING

States Parties are expected to ensure that effective measures are in place for the protection, conservation and presentation of their WHS, to monitor potential impacts on OUV, and to bring any such issues to the attention of the World Heritage Committee (WHC). The WHC may seek further information or request a State of Conservation Report to enable it to assess any impacts on an inscribed property. This process is known as Reactive Monitoring.

Every six years, the States Parties are responsible for submitting a [Periodic Report](#) to the WHC on the application of the World Heritage Convention, including the state of conservation of all the WHS located on its territories.

Periodic Reporting is intended to provide: an assessment of the application of the Convention by the State Party; an assessment as to whether the World Heritage values of the Sites inscribed on the World Heritage List are being maintained over time; updated information about the individual WHS to record the changing circumstances and state of conservation of the Sites; and a mechanism for regional cooperation and exchange of information and experiences between States Parties concerning the implementation of the Convention and World Heritage conservation.

The Antonine Wall, Rough Castle.



Precipitous slopes and cliffs characterise St Kilda; © Crown Copyright HES.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AUTHENTICITY

Depending on the type of cultural heritage, and its cultural context, properties may be understood to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values (as recognised in the nomination criteria proposed) are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes including: form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES

To be included on the World Heritage List, Sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. These criteria are explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention which, besides the text of the Convention, is the main working tool on World Heritage. The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.

INSCRIPTION

The formal process through which the World Heritage Committee decides whether a property should or should not be added to the World Heritage List. When deciding to inscribe a property on the World Heritage List, the Committee, guided by the Advisory Bodies, adopts a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the property. At the time of inscription, the Committee may also make other recommendations concerning the protection and management of the World Heritage property.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes. Examining the conditions of integrity, therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property: includes all elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value; is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance; suffers from adverse effects of development and/or neglect.

NOMINATION

Countries (or States Parties) that have signed the World Heritage Convention, pledging to protect their natural and cultural heritage, can submit nomination proposals for properties on their territory to be considered for inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List. Nominations to the World Heritage List are not considered unless the nominated property has already been included on the State Party's Tentative List. If the Committee determines, based on the recommendations of its Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS and IUCN), that the nomination meets at least one of the necessary criteria, then the property proposed by the State Party is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

STATES PARTIES

States Parties are countries which have ratified the World Heritage Convention. They identify and nominate sites on their national territory to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. States Parties have the responsibility to protect the World Heritage values of the sites inscribed and report periodically on their condition.

TENTATIVE LIST

The first step a States Party must take in proposing a site for the World Heritage List is to make an inventory of the important natural and cultural heritage sites located within its boundaries, that it considers to be of outstanding universal value. This is known as the Tentative List, and provides a forecast of the properties that a State Party may decide to submit for inscription in the next five to ten years and which may be updated at any time. It is an important step since the World Heritage Committee cannot consider a nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List unless the property has already been included on the State Party's Tentative List.

UNESCO

United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) was founded on 16 November 1945. UNESCO has 195 Members and eight Associate Members. As defined by the Constitution, the purpose of the Organization is: "to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations".

WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE

The World Heritage Centre is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Convention and for the administration of the World Heritage Fund.

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year, and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected for terms of up to six years. The Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, allocates financial assistance from the World Heritage Fund and has the final say on whether a site is inscribed on the World Heritage List. It examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed Sites and decides on the inscription or removal of Sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is an international agreement that was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972. It is based on the premise that certain places on Earth are of outstanding universal value and should therefore form part of the common heritage of mankind. The countries who ratify the Convention (States Parties) have become part of an international community, united in a common mission to identify and safeguard our world's most outstanding natural and cultural heritage. While fully respecting the national sovereignty, and without prejudice to property rights provided by national legislation, the States Parties recognise that the protection of the World Heritage is the duty of the international community as a whole. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention is a treaty that has become, over the past 30 years, the foremost international legal tool in support of the conservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Today, 187 countries (called States Parties) have ratified the Convention, making it an almost universally accepted set of principles and framework of action.

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

In general, the World Heritage Committee adds about 25-30 Sites per year to the List. As of 2019 there were 1092 Sites on the List, located in 167 countries around the world, including 31 in the UK.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HEPS	Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
LDP	Local Development Plan
NTS	National Trust for Scotland
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPP	Scottish Planning Policy
SOUV	Statement of Outstanding Universal Value
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHS	World Heritage Site(s)

*View of Calton Hill
from Arthur's Seat.*





Mill one and waterhouses.



*Cruise ships visit
St Kilda in the summer.*



*The Antonine Wall
at Watling Lodge.*



The Forth Bridge from the Fife Coastal Path.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
WORLD HERITAGE TEAM

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MAJOR EVENTS DIRECTORATE, SCOTTISH
GOVERNMENT

Email: ceu@gov.scot

Tel: +44 (0)300 244 4000

KEY LINKS

Culture, Tourism and Major Events
Directorate, Scottish Government:
www.gov.scot/about/how-government-is-run/directorates/culture-tourism-major-events-directorate/

Historic Environment Scotland World
Heritage pages:
www.historicenvironment.scot/worldheritage

UNESCO World Heritage Centre:
whc.unesco.org