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MANAGING CHANGE IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

World Heritage

September 2016





Above: Modern gates leading to the Antonine Wall at Croy Hill fit into the setting while also enhancing physical access to the Site and local landscape.

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Cover image: The cultural landscape of St Kilda is an outstanding example of land use resulting from a type of subsistence economy based on the products of birds, cultivating land and keeping sheep. It reflects age-old traditions and land uses, which have become vulnerable to change particularly after the departure of the islanders. St Kilda is also inscribed for its diverse natural heritage and marine environment.

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MANAGING CHANGE IS A SERIES OF NON-STATUTORY GUIDANCE NOTES ABOUT MANAGING CHANGE IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT. THEY EXPLAIN HOW TO APPLY GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

The aim of the series is to identify the main issues which can arise in different situations, to advise how best to deal with these, and to offer further sources of information. They are also intended to inform planning policies and the determination of applications relating to the historic environment.

INTRODUCTION

This note sets out the principles that apply to developments affecting World Heritage Sites, and the roles and responsibilities that organisations have to care for and protect these Sites. It should inform planning policies and help with decisions relating to planning applications affecting Sites. It also provides guidance on assessing the impact of development on World Heritage Sites.

This guidance note applies only to cultural World Heritage Sites. Scotland has six cultural World Heritage Sites: The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh, The Heart of Neolithic Orkney, New Lanark, Frontiers of the Roman Empire: The Antonine Wall, The Forth Bridge, and St Kilda. St Kilda has World Heritage status for its natural heritage as well as its cultural importance. For information about the natural heritage aspects of St Kilda World Heritage Site, see the websites of Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Trust for Scotland.

KEY ISSUES

1. The World Heritage List represents the most significant, unique or best examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage. There are six World Heritage Sites in Scotland.
2. All World Heritage Sites have an associated Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV), which explains the importance of the Site.
3. Each World Heritage Site has a Management Plan. Management Plans provide a framework for the long-term protection and sustainable management of the Site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
4. When changes to World Heritage Sites are planned, adverse impacts should be avoided where possible. Assessment should focus on the impact these changes could have on the OUV of the World Heritage Site.
5. Planning authorities should take World Heritage Sites into account when preparing Local Development Plans and making decisions on planning applications.

I. WORLD HERITAGE SITES AND OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

World Heritage Sites are designated through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention (1972). World Heritage Site status is the only international designation for cultural heritage. World Heritage Sites are considered to have Outstanding Universal Value.

UNESCO defines Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as being 'cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity'. OUV is therefore the reason that World Heritage Sites are considered to be of international importance. Any impacts on or changes to a World Heritage Site should be assessed in terms of its OUV.

OUV is defined for each Site when it is added to the World Heritage List (inscribed). It can only be changed by agreement with UNESCO's World Heritage Committee. The OUV for each World Heritage Site is explained fully in its nomination document and summarised in a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV). These documents set out the reasons for the Site's inscription, and explain how the Site should be protected, conserved and managed for the long term.

Attributes

Attributes are the specific qualities that convey the Site's OUV. Attributes can include both tangible and intangible elements. Tangible attributes might include buildings, monuments, landscapes or natural features. Less tangible attributes might include traditions, language, literature or art. Attributes can also include relationships and links between features and with their wider context or environment.

Attributes are described as having 'authenticity' and 'integrity'. This means that they relate clearly and coherently to the original form of the Site and so demonstrate aspects of its OUV. For further information, refer to UNESCO's Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

2. POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

National policy and guidance

Scottish Planning Policy recognises the international importance of World Heritage Sites and requires planning authorities to protect and preserve a Site's OUV. This responds to the international importance of World Heritage Sites and the obligations associated with their inscription.

Local policies and guidance

The purpose of local policies is to protect the OUV of the Site, in recognition of its international status. Local Development Plans set out local policies, and often give more detail in supplementary guidance. These documents are the main

source of reference in making decisions on planning applications. Strategic Development Plans may also contain policy on World Heritage Sites.

World Heritage Sites may have their own Local Development Plan policy, or they may be included in policies relating to

The wider landscape setting of Heart of Neolithic Orkney provides the essential context of the monuments, including other monuments that support the OUV of the World Heritage Site. The monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas were deliberately situated in the landscape, and lie in a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnecting ridgelines. They are also visually linked to other contemporary and later monuments, and form a fundamental part of a wider, highly complex archaeological landscape which stretches over much of Orkney. Ring of Brodgar kite image © Kieran Baxter



other heritage designations. There may be separate planning policies for buffer zones (areas around the Site that help to protect the OUV).

Site Management Plan

Each Site has a Management Plan, which sets out how it is to be managed sustainably. This includes the shared vision, long-term goals and shorter-term objectives to preserve the Site's OUV.

The Forth Bridge is the world's first monumental scale steel bridge and is a keystone achievement in bridge building and steel construction. It has iconic status as a triumph of historic engineering and continues in use today as a major transport artery. Here the later Forth Road Bridge can be seen in the foreground.
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The plan helps to explain the special qualities and values of the Site and establishes a framework for decision-making. Plans also provide information on threats and opportunities.

Other cultural heritage policies

World Heritage Sites or individual elements within them may also be protected by other cultural heritage designations. This means that other cultural heritage policies may apply to them. Some protected heritage assets, such as listed buildings, may require separate consent from the planning process. It is therefore important to find out if there are any other designated assets that might be affected by proposals, and to consult relevant policies and guidance relating to them.

Each designated asset has to be considered in its own right. The fact that a designated feature falls within the World Heritage Site or its buffer zone also means that its relationship to the reasons for the Site's inscription must be carefully considered. Impacts on designated features, whether individually or collectively, may also impact on a Site's OUV. In some cases, this may be more significant than the impact on an individual designated feature.

Individual planning authorities can provide advice about consent requirements and local cultural heritage policies.

3. PROTECTING OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

International context

World Heritage Sites are subject to international scrutiny in addition to national and local scrutiny. UNESCO provides clear *guidelines* for the required management, monitoring and reporting processes. These are briefly outlined below.

UNESCO requires national governments to ensure that the OUV of a World Heritage Site is protected and managed for the future. This is done through the relevant statutory and regulatory systems.

Governments must ensure that each World Heritage Site has a coordinated approach to the management of the Site and the protection of its OUV. They must put a suitable management system in place to allow this.

Governments must also monitor the state of conservation of their World Heritage Sites. They are required to notify the World Heritage Committee of any issues that might adversely affect a Site's OUV. This process is known as reactive monitoring. If the condition of a Site is a matter of concern, the World Heritage Committee may request a more detailed State of Conservation report.

Governments also have to undertake a Periodic Reporting process every six years. This involves preparing a detailed report of each Site's condition for the World Heritage Committee.

In exceptional circumstances, the World Heritage Committee may place a Site on the List of World Heritage in Danger or remove it from the World Heritage List.

National context

When a Site is included on the World Heritage List it becomes a material consideration in the planning process. This means that those making decisions on planning applications must take it into account. No additional consent is needed for undertaking works which might affect a World Heritage Site

The OUV of World Heritage Sites is protected through existing designations and regulations. *Scotland's Third National Planning Framework* (NPF 3) recognises the value of World Heritage Sites as part of the historic environment. National guidance for planning (Scottish Planning Policy) and the historic environment (Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement 2016) emphasises the need to consider the impact of development on OUV.

Planning authorities should have appropriate policies in place to protect the OUV of World Heritage Sites and their settings. These may include supplementary guidance and policies for buffer zones where they exist. A summary of current policies for each World Heritage Site is set out in the relevant *World Heritage Short Guide*.



The distinctive skyline of Edinburgh is one of the key attributes of the World Heritage Site. Key views around, into and out of the World Heritage Site have been captured in a Skyline Study that is instrumental in understanding their importance in protecting the Site's OUV from harmful development.
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Each World Heritage Site in Scotland has an active *Management Plan*. This is delivered by key partners, for example local authorities, Conservation Trusts and agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage. Management Plans explain the significance of the Site, set out a vision for its sustainable management, and establish a framework for the protection and enhancement of its OUV.

A World Heritage Site, or parts of it, may also be protected through national or local heritage designations. These might include heritage assets such as scheduled monuments or listed buildings, which have consenting

regimes separate from the planning system. The normal statutory and regulatory controls for each designated asset still apply within World Heritage Sites.

Defining the World Heritage Site

Inscribed area

Once a Site has been added to the World Heritage List, only UNESCO's World Heritage Committee can change its defined boundaries. The extent of the inscribed area for each Site can be found on our [website](#).

Buffer zone

Some World Heritage Sites have a formal buffer zone, established as part of the Site's inscription. The buffer zone is not part of the inscribed Site. It defines an area around it that helps protect its OUV.

In most cases, the buffer zone will include:

- the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site
- important views to or from it
- features or other attributes that support its OUV.

In some cases, the buffer zone may include buried archaeological evidence on the edge of the inscribed Site.

The aim of the buffer zone is not to preclude all development in the area. It is designed to ensure that all proposals for development within it are considered carefully, as they may have the potential to affect the World Heritage Site. When development is proposed in a buffer zone, it should be considered in terms of likely impact on the OUV, and the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site itself.

Setting

'Setting' is the way the surroundings of a historic asset or place contribute to how it is understood, appreciated and experienced.

The setting of a World Heritage Site can extend more widely than the limits of any formal buffer zone. Planning authorities may have identified key views that are important for a Site's OUV, to allow the impact of development proposals to be assessed against this baseline.

More guidance on assessing impacts on setting is available in a separate guidance note in this series: [*Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting.*](#)

The Antonine Wall (seen here at Rough Castle) constitutes the most north-westerly section of the Roman frontier system. Today the Wall passes through a highly varied modern urban and rural landscape, but the setting of the monument has been largely retained across the length of the Wall, allowing the mindset of the Roman engineers to be envisaged and its scale and setting appreciated.

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4. ASSESSING IMPACT ON OUV

Over time, changes will occur within World Heritage Sites. These may or may not impact on the Site's OUV. Impacts can be beneficial, neutral or adverse. Planning authorities have to consider development proposals carefully, to ensure that a Site's OUV is protected and preserved for the future. Development proposals that affect the setting of a World Heritage Site, or that fall within its buffer zone, must also be carefully considered in terms of the potential impacts on the Site's OUV.

Developers should assess the impacts of proposed development on OUV. Planning authorities will then consider this when making decisions on applications. They will also consider visual impact, impacts on buried archaeology, and the cumulative impacts of small-scale changes.

The following stages will help in assessing the nature of potential impacts on World Heritage Sites.

Stage 1: Understand the World Heritage Site

Understanding a World Heritage Site includes:

- understanding the extent of the inscribed area, and of any buffer zone
- understanding the Site's OUV, attributes and key components
- identifying any designated heritage assets within the Site and its buffer zone
- checking specific policies governing the Site.

For each Site, the primary sources are the Nomination Document, the [Statement of Outstanding Universal Value](#), and the Attributes Statement (where available). Information on other heritage assets within or close to the Site can be found on [Pastmap](#).



The New Lanark Mill Hotel (right) is a sensitive restoration and reuse of one of the key buildings within the World Heritage Site. The Rooftop Garden on Mill No. 2, at centre, cannot be seen from within the village but allows visitors to experience spectacular views of the Site. New Lanark Trust's decision to develop the garden was influenced by the views of Robert Owen, who owned and managed the New Lanark cotton-mills from 1800 - 1825. He believed strongly in the importance of the environment and natural history, and argued that a pleasant environment was essential for happy, healthy communities. © New Lanark Trust



Stage 2: Assess the potential impact of proposals on OUV

Assessing impact on a Site's OUV should include consideration of the relevant policies for the World Heritage Site, the buffer zone and the setting. Assessment should cover issues such as specific attributes, designated assets and key views.

The main tools for assessing impact on OUV are:

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

EIA is a process for identifying the environmental effects of development proposals. It aims to avoid, reduce and offset any adverse effects. Certain types of development, and development in environmentally sensitive areas, are more likely to require EIA.

This aerial view shows the Forth Bridge (top) in its wider context, with the Forth Road Bridge (centre) and the new Queensferry Crossing under construction (bottom). Visible from the Bridge and other key viewpoints, the new Crossing demonstrates that in some cases major change around the WHS can be accommodated without negative impact on the OUV of the Site. © Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland. Licensor canmore.org.uk

UNESCO's guidelines state that 'Impact assessments for proposed interventions are essential for all World Heritage properties.' World Heritage Sites are specifically mentioned in the EIA regulations as a factor which might influence whether or not EIA is required.

The EIA process should address the impact of proposals on a Site's OUV and its specific attributes. [*Further guidance*](#) is available on the Scottish Government's website.

Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA)

HIA is used to assess and evaluate impacts on OUV. This includes any effects on specific attributes, setting and underlying archaeology.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has produced [Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments](#). UNESCO encourages assessors to refer to this and use it as a starting point in considering impacts.

When an EIA is required, this assessment should be incorporated into the process. When EIA is not a formal requirement, it is still essential to assess the impact of a proposal for change on the OUV of the World Heritage Site. The planning authority or conservation body may therefore request an HIA to show how proposals will affect OUV.

Design and Access Statements/ Conservation Statements

Planning regulations require that some types of development will require a [Design and Access Statement](#). This normally applies to applications for national and major developments. However, local applications within a World Heritage Site will also require this.

These statements should ensure development proposals are based on a carefully considered design process. They should allow the applicant to explain and justify their proposals and help all those assessing the application to understand the design rationale that underpins them.

It is also good practice to submit a Conservation Statement where relevant.

This should inform the design process, by setting out the historical development of a Site and analysing its significance.

World Heritage Site Management Plans

Management Plans provide information about the OUV of a Site and set out the key issues in relation to its protection and sustainable management. Management Plans are periodically reviewed and updated. Plans for each World Heritage Site are available online, and can be found on the website of the organisation with lead management responsibility for the Site, or via the [Historic Environment Scotland website](#).



A new pathway connecting key parts of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site improved pedestrian access and road safety while respecting the OUV and the character of the Rural Conservation Area and taking account of local biodiversity.
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Stage 3: Mitigate impacts through design and enhancement

Proposals should seek to enhance the World Heritage Site and make a positive contribution to sustaining the Site's OUV for the future.

Good practice for mitigating adverse impacts identifies a hierarchy of preferred options. The highest of these is to avoid impacts. Where this is not possible, developers should aim to reduce impacts through design.

The above steps should help ensure that impacts on OUV are clearly understood. This information should be used to influence the design of proposals, aiming to increase beneficial impacts, and avoid and reduce adverse impacts.

Proposals should always seek to avoid adverse impacts on OUV. These may include incremental small changes with the potential to contribute to larger cumulative impacts. Pre-application consultation can help to identify such impacts at an early stage, and influence the development of proposals. Significant adverse impacts may result in a proposal being refused consent.

Opportunities to enhance World Heritage Sites should be identified as early as possible. Such measures are unlikely to avoid or reduce impacts, but may provide benefits for the historic environment. Contributions could include physical enhancements or improved access and interpretation.

The Scottish Storytelling Centre in the Old Town of Edinburgh is an example of a sympathetic contemporary intervention to the 15th Century John Knox House with a positive impact on OUV.
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Stage 4: Pre-application engagement

Historic Environment Scotland encourages pre-application consultation where a development may affect a World Heritage Site, or its setting, or is located within its buffer zone.

For national and major developments, this is a statutory requirement in the planning process. For these, a 'proposal of application' notice (PAN) must be submitted to the planning authority. This aims to raise awareness of a proposal at an early stage, and offers the opportunity to gather community views to inform the process.

Pre-application discussions and processing agreements for national and major developments enable the project management of complex applications. This consultation should include information required to assess the impact

on OUV, and provides an opportunity to resolve conflicting views about the nature of any potential impact.

Historic Environment Scotland strongly encourages pre-application discussions for all proposals. Such discussions are best led by the planning authority, and should draw out particular requirements for individual proposals. This helps to inform the developer as early as possible about the scope of information required at application stage.

Planning authorities may advise prospective applicants to consult other bodies as part of this process. Depending on the location and type of proposal, this may include organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The Ministry of Defence structures on St Kilda do not form part of the Site's OUV. However, as the installation sits within the World Heritage Site care must be taken to ensure that changes to it do not adversely impact on OUV. © Crown Copyright Historic Environment Scotland





New Lanark would not exist without the ready power source offered by the River Clyde. The natural and designed landscape forms the setting and ambience of the Site and is intimately bound up with its value.
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Stage 5: The decision-making process

Role of the planning authority

Local planning authorities are instrumental in the protection of the OUV of World Heritage Sites. They manage development proposals through every stage of the planning process. The planning system is the primary way that policies regarding designated heritage assets are implemented, and impacts are managed.

Consultation with Historic Environment Scotland

Historic Environment Scotland gives advice on managing change affecting World Heritage Sites. Organisations that make decisions about development are legally required to consult Historic Environment Scotland if changes could affect a World Heritage Site.

If Historic Environment Scotland's advice is that the development should not go ahead, the planning authority must notify Scottish Ministers if it is considering granting consent. Scottish Ministers will then decide whether or not to call in the application, and make a decision on it themselves.

Role of UNESCO and its advisors

UNESCO's World Heritage Committee requires the State Party (the UK Government) to inform it at an early stage about any proposals that may affect the OUV of a World Heritage Site. This means that the Committee can assist in seeking solutions to protect the Site's OUV. The Scottish Government expects the planning authorities and Historic Environment Scotland to advise when such reporting is necessary. This procedure is an essential part of the decision-making process for managing change within World Heritage Sites.

The World Heritage Committee may ask for a detailed State of Conservation report to help it to assess the impact of a proposed change. The UK Government is responsible for this reporting process, with support from the Scottish Government.

In reaching decisions on cultural Sites UNESCO's Committee is advised by ICOMOS. It may be invited to comment on proposals as they develop, in order to help find solutions that avoid adverse impacts on OUV.

Other statutory consultees

Other organisations have a role to play in the decision-making process for World Heritage Sites. This might be as statutory consultees in the planning process, or as Site owners or managers: for example, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Network Rail.

Wider consultation

The Scottish planning system allows for consultation with interested parties and the wider public. This provides the opportunity for non-statutory consultees, such as Built Environment Forum Scotland or ICOMOS UK, to comment on proposals affecting World Heritage Sites.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Historic Environment Scotland is charged with ensuring that our historic environment provides a strong foundation in building a successful future for Scotland. One of our roles is to provide advice about managing change in the historic environment.

Policy

[Scottish Planning Policy \(2014\)](#)

[Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement \(June 2016\)](#)

Other selected Historic Environment Scotland publications and links:

[Short Guides to World Heritage in Scotland](#)

[Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting](#)

Other selected publications and links:

[Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage \(the World Heritage Convention\)](#)

[Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention \(2015\)](#)

Selected contacts

Scottish Natural Heritage World Heritage information:

www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature

UNESCO World Heritage Centre:

<http://whc.unesco.org>

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Text © 2016 Historic Environment Scotland
Design by Freight Design
This edition published September 2016