

ST KILDA

World Heritage Site Management Plan 2012-17



the National Trust for Scotland
Urras Nàiseanta na h-Alba
a place for everyone àite don h-uile duine



FOREWORD

We are delighted to be able to present the revised Management Plan for the St Kilda World Heritage Site for the years 2012-2017.

St Kilda is a truly unique place. The spectacular scenery and wildlife, both on land and in the seas surrounding the islands, the archipelago's isolation and inaccessibility, and the evidence, abundant for all to see, of the people that made these islands their home, make St Kilda truly exceptional.

In this respect, St Kilda showcases Scotland to the world by displaying the most important features of our heritage, our rich natural and cultural traditions, and our awe inspiring landscapes and scenery.

It is therefore of no surprise that St Kilda has been designated as a World Heritage Site for both its cultural and natural attributes. The accolade of dual designation is a rarity, with St Kilda being one of only 29 mixed World Heritage Sites in the world, and one of only two in Northern Europe. Scotland is proud to be home to such a special and unique environment and one that epitomises the UNESCO World Heritage designation.

The importance of the archipelago and the fragility of the eco-system make it imperative that a mechanism is in place that ensures the continued effective management of this cultural and natural treasure. The National Trust for Scotland has owned St Kilda since 1957 and should be commended for the excellent work it has undertaken in this time, particularly their

continuing programme of research and conservation. The management of the World Heritage Site is, however, a collaborative approach also involving partners from Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Ministry of Defence. As custodians of St Kilda, all of the partners should be thanked for their excellent work over recent years, and the new Management Plan will continue to build on these efforts.

The very nature of St Kilda means that the challenges are different to those of other World Heritage Sites. By identifying and addressing key short and medium term issues around protection, conservation and management, the Management Plan aims to embrace these challenges, and sets out a thirty year vision for the property, ensuring that the longer-term future of St Kilda is properly considered.

We are extremely grateful to all who have contributed to the development of this Plan, from the main management partners to those who engaged with the consultation process. It is essential that this collaboration is continued to ensure the integrated management of the various interests on St Kilda.

World Heritage Site status is, as we are all aware, a great responsibility and one which Scotland takes very seriously. We are confident that the implementation of this Management Plan will help guarantee that current and future generations will continue to enjoy, learn from and be inspired by this magnificent World Heritage Site.

[Fiona Hyslop](#)

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs

[Stewart Stevenson](#)

Minister for Environment and Climate Change



ST KILDA WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012-17

The islands of St Kilda are owned by the National Trust for Scotland, which has overall responsibility for management of the archipelago. This Management Plan for the St Kilda World Heritage Site has been agreed by the National Trust for Scotland and Key Stakeholders (see below), who are committed to working together to implement the Plan.

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29th August 2012

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Urras Nàiseanta na h-Alba
a place for everyone àite don h-uile duine

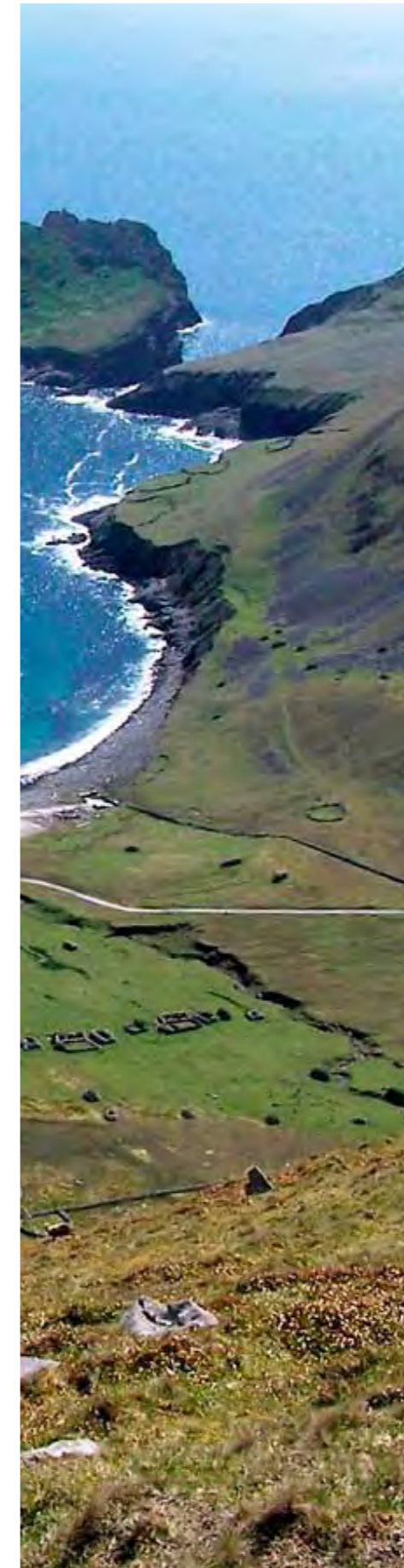
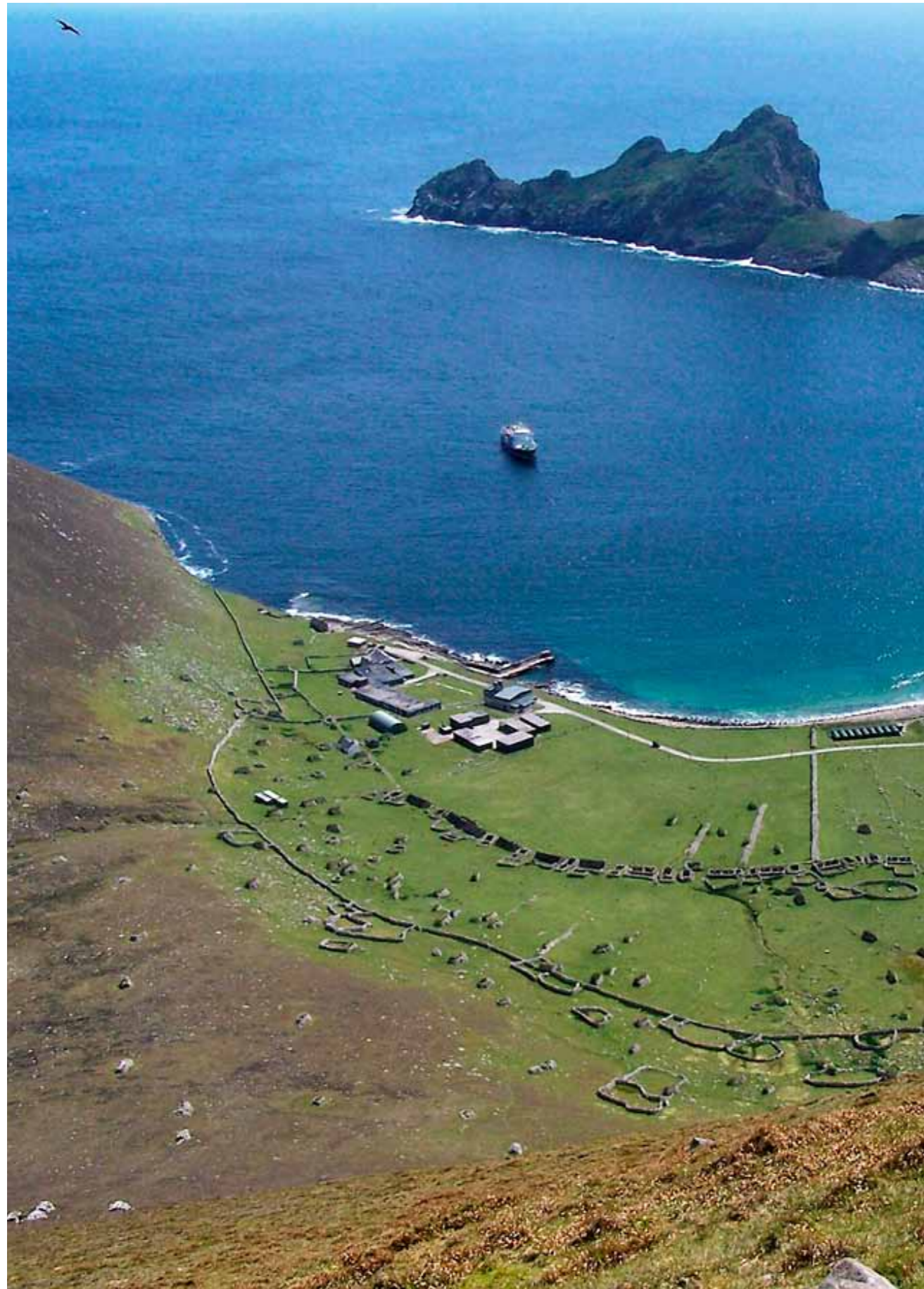

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar


HISTORIC SCOTLAND
ALBA AOSMHOR

Ministry
of Defence


Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

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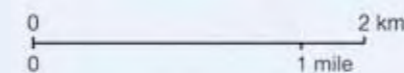
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APPENDICES

SUMMARY



| NTS GROUP | TOTAL AREA (HA) |
|---|---|
| Countryside & Islands North | 854 ha (owned by NTS) 24,201.4 ha (area of World Heritage Site including marine environment) |
| GRID REFERENCE | DATE(S) ACQUIRED |
| 57° 50 N, 08° 34 W (NGR – NA095995) (central point) | 1957 |
| LOCAL AUTHORITY | INALIENABLE? |
| Comhairle nan Eilean Siar | Yes |
| PROPERTY MANAGER | DESIGNATIONS |
| Susan Bain | World Heritage Site |
| ADDRESS | Special Area of Conservation |
| The National Trust for Scotland | Special Protection Area |
| Balnain House | National Nature Reserve |
| 40 Huntly Street | Site of Special Scientific Interest |
| Inverness | Geological Conservation Review Site |
| IV3 5HR | Marine Consultation Area |
| Tel: 01463 732 645 | National Scenic Area |
| | Scheduled Monument |
| PLAN PREPARED BY | |
| Victoria Cairns | |



MAP
of
ST KILDA OR HIRTA
AND ADJACENT ISLANDS & STACS
(WYVERNESHIRE)

Surveyed by John Matheson F.R.S.E. F.R.S.G.S.
(late of H.M. Ordnance Survey).
Assisted by A.M. Cockburn R.N.

Scale 1:100,000 or Six Inches to One Mile

Height in Feet
Depth in Fathoms

ST KILDA
(1875 ACRES)

BORERAY
(107 ACRES)

SOAY
(107 ACRES)

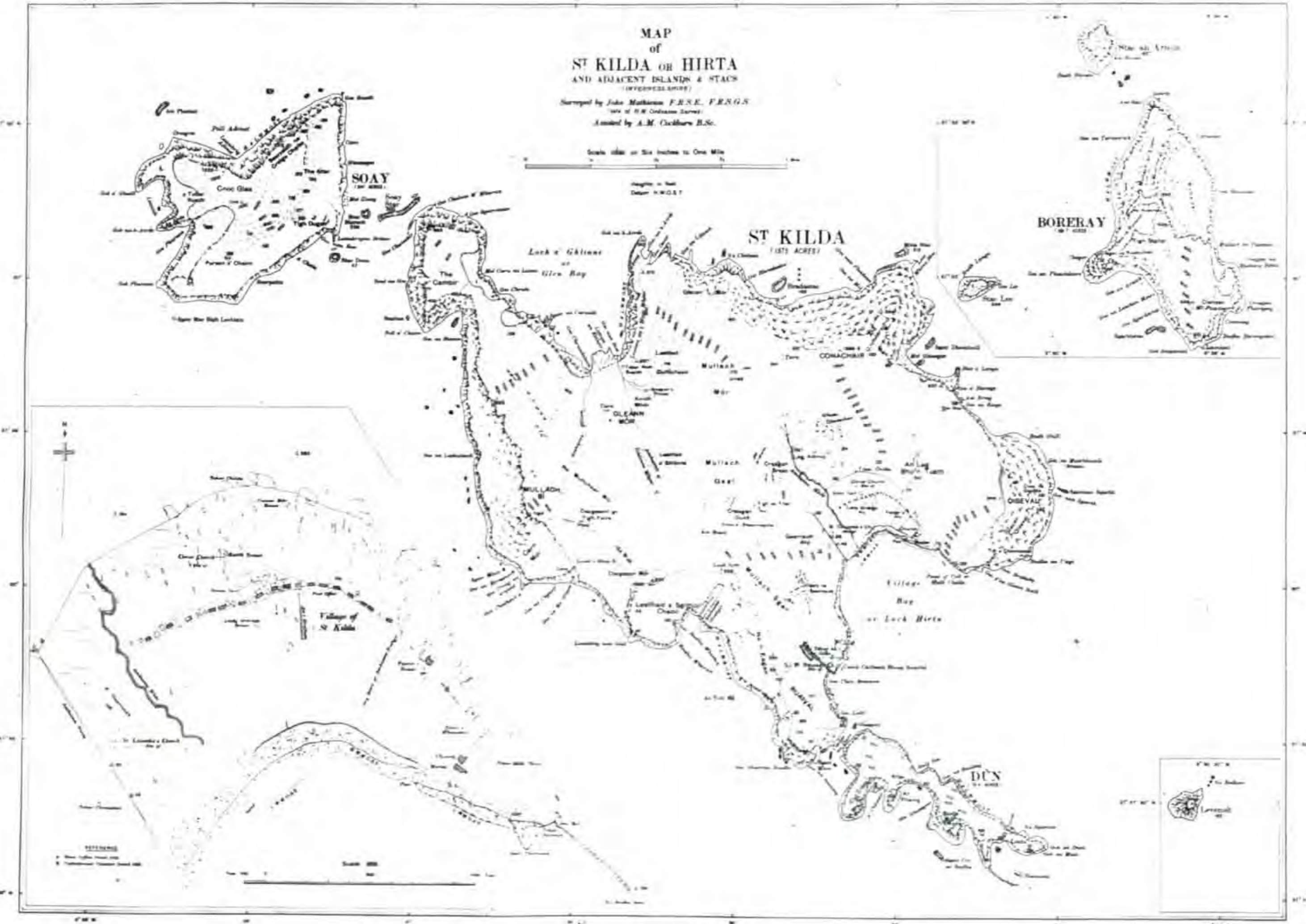
Loch a' Ghlinne
or
Glen Bay

Village
Bay
or
Loch Hirta

DUN
(107 ACRES)

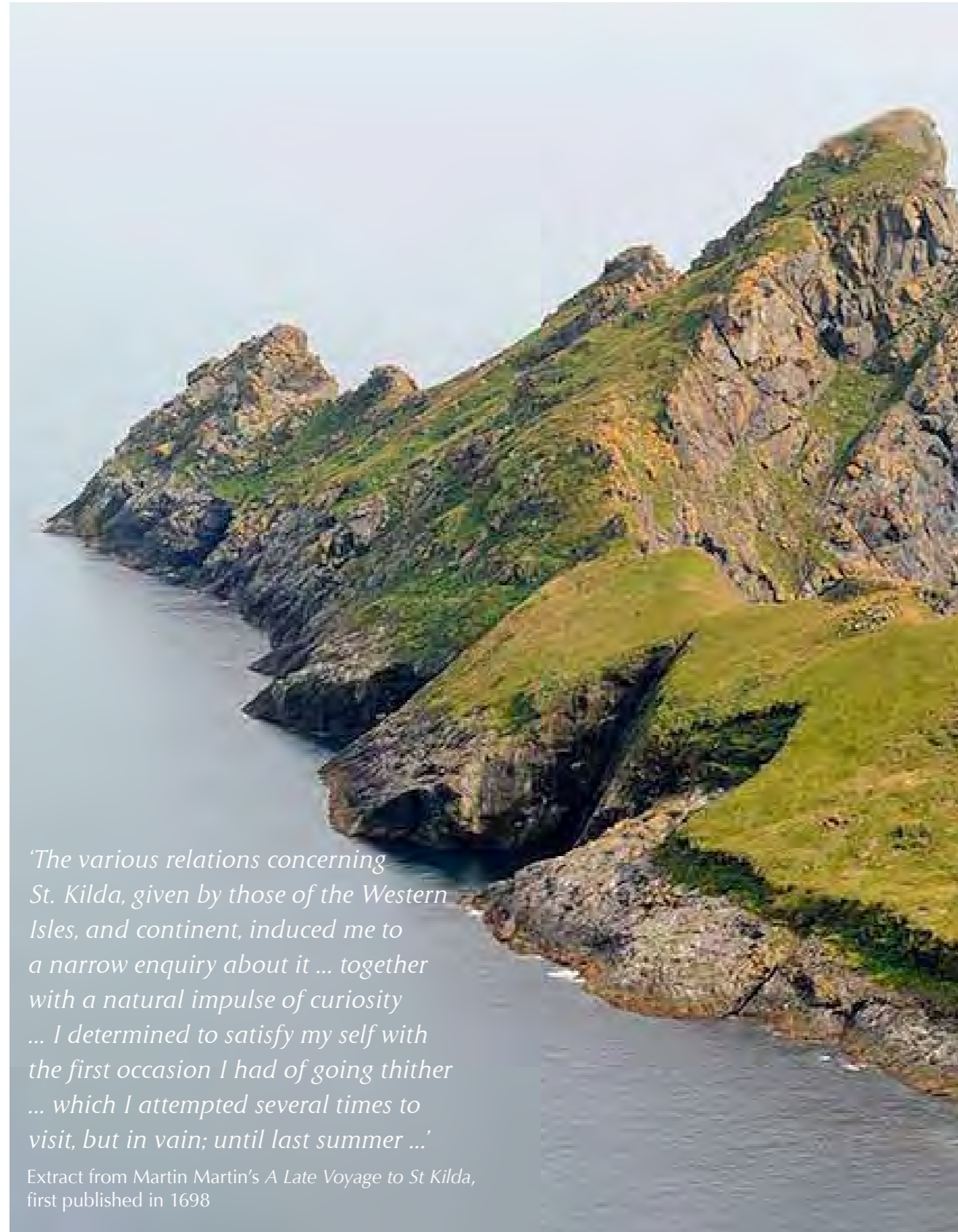
Village
of
St Kilda

NOTES
1. Shaded areas are
2. Dotted lines are
3. Dashed lines are



PART ONE

1.1 Introduction to the St Kilda WHS Management Plan



'The various relations concerning St. Kilda, given by those of the Western Isles, and continent, induced me to a narrow enquiry about it ... together with a natural impulse of curiosity ... I determined to satisfy my self with the first occasion I had of going thither ... which I attempted several times to visit, but in vain; until last summer ...'

Extract from Martin Martin's *A Late Voyage to St Kilda*, first published in 1698

1.1.1

Purpose and contents of the Management Plan



The St Kilda World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan 2012–17 articulates the significance of St Kilda, first and foremost in terms of its heritage, but also the opportunities it provides for access and education along with its social and economic importance to local communities and wider communities of interest. It sets out a framework for the long-term conservation and management of the archipelago and its key attributes, and provides a mechanism for bringing together all communities of interest, balancing and integrating differing views.

The Management Plan is a non-statutory document. It is the third St Kilda WHS Management Plan to address natural and cultural heritage interests in a balanced and integrated way and the second to do so from the basis of explicit agreement between key stakeholders closely involved in the management of the WHS. It has been developed by the National Trust for Scotland (Trust) in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Operational Guidelines and in collaboration with other key stakeholders who have an interest in the archipelago – Historic Scotland (HS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the local authority – Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES), and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and their agents. In addition, members of neighbouring communities and the general public have had an opportunity to influence the content of the plan. The Trust will lead implementation of the plan, working with stakeholders to deliver its objectives, as and when appropriate.

1.1.2



Parts to the Management Plan

The plan is divided into four parts:

PART ONE provides a description of St Kilda; an evaluation of its significance; the management framework that is in place for managing the archipelago; the key stakeholders and the roles and responsibilities of each organisation; and the designations, legislation and planning policies which are key drivers in the management of the archipelago. This section also identifies attributes that have not been included in the World Heritage inscription, but which are felt to be of significance in a national or local context.

PART TWO sets out the achievements of the 2003–08 Management Plan.

PART THREE defines the long-term Vision for the archipelago and sets out the Guiding Principles that will provide the parameters and framework within which all future management decisions will be made. It gives a brief synopsis of the current threats and key issues, and sets out the Objectives and Prescriptions that we aim to undertake in the coming five years. With each Objective is a rationale explaining the reasons behind each management approach and why the various actions are necessary.

PART FOUR provides a fuller description of the significant features of the archipelago and its history.

1.1.3

An Action Plan setting out detailed actions, priorities, roles and responsibilities, resource requirements and timescales has been produced to deliver the St Kilda WHS Management Plan. This has been produced by the Trust in consultation with key stakeholders. Actions within the Action Plan will be reviewed biannually by the Trust and key stakeholders at the Operational Management Group meetings and a report of progress

Implementation of the Management Plan

submitted to the annual Strategic Management Group meetings. New actions will be added where necessary to ensure the overall objectives as set out in the management plan are delivered.

The St Kilda WHS Management Plan will be reviewed and updated in 5 years and will stay current until a new management plan has been approved.

1.1.4

A World Heritage Site (WHS) is a site of natural and/or cultural heritage significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community.

WHSs can be nominated by any State Party that is a signatory to the UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*¹. By signing the Convention, each State Party pledges to conserve not only the WHSs within its own territory, but also to protect its national heritage. Nominations must set out the significance of the site as well as providing

What is a World Heritage Site

details of how the site is to be protected and managed. In addition, the State Party must provide a periodic report on the condition of the site. Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List once UNESCO's advisors on cultural sites, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)², and/or advisors on natural sites, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)³, have undertaken a rigorous assessment of the site and submitted an evaluation of the significance of the site to the World Heritage Committee.

At its annual meeting, the World Heritage Committee then makes the final decision on which sites to inscribe on the World Heritage List.

1.1.5

World Heritage Sites in the UK

In 1984, the UK Government ratified the World Heritage Convention. WHSs remain a reserved matter under the Scotland Act 1998 and therefore responsibility in the UK lies with the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). However, management of the historic and natural environment in Scotland is a devolved matter, with responsibility sitting with Scottish Ministers. A concordat between DCMS and Scottish Ministers provides that Scottish Ministers are responsible for the selection of sites in Scotland for nomination and for ensuring the proper management of the Scottish World Heritage Sites. All matters pertaining to the management of the sites are therefore agreed with Historic Scotland and the Rural Directorate of the Scottish Government, where appropriate, in the first instance.

¹ The aims of the Convention are the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value

² Established in 1965 as an international non-governmental organisation

³ Established in 1948 as an international non-governmental organisation

1.2 St Kilda World Heritage Site



1.2.1

Inscription on the World Heritage List

St Kilda was first inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986 for its outstanding natural heritage (criteria vii and x). In 2004, the inscription was extended to include the surrounding marine environment (criterion ix), and in 2005 the archipelago became the UK's first mixed WHS, and one of only 24 worldwide⁴, when the islands' relict cultural landscape was also inscribed on the World Heritage List (criteria iii and v).

1.2.2

Criteria for inscription

Criterion (iii): St Kilda bears exceptional testimony to over two millennia of human occupation in extreme conditions.

Criterion (v): 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. The cultural landscape reflects age-old traditions and land uses, which have become vulnerable to change particularly after the departure of the islanders.

Criterion (vii): The scenery of the St Kilda archipelago is particularly superlative and has resulted from its volcanic origin followed by weathering and glaciation to produce a dramatic island landscape. The precipitous cliffs and sea stacks, as well as its underwater scenery, are concentrated in a compact group that is singularly unique.

Criterion (ix): St Kilda is unique in the very high bird densities that occur in a relatively small area which is conditioned by the complex and different ecological niches existing in the site. There is also a complex ecological dynamic in the three marine zones present in the site that is essential to the maintenance of both marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

Criterion (x): St Kilda is one of the major sites in the North Atlantic and Europe for seabirds, with over 1,000,000 birds using the island. It is particularly important for gannets, puffins and fulmars. The maritime grassland turf and underwater habitats are also significant and an integral element of the total island setting. The feral Soay sheep are also an interesting rare breed of potential genetic resource significance.

⁴ At the time of inscription, and in 2012, one of only 29 worldwide

1.2.3

Description

Isolated in the Atlantic Ocean, St Kilda is one of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the British Isles, lying 160km off the west coast of mainland Scotland. Concentrated in a compact group, the tiny volcanic archipelago comprises four main islands – Hirta, Dun, Soay and Boreray – and numerous sea stacs including Stac an Armin, Stac Lee and Levenish, and covers a land area of 854ha. With the inscription of the surrounding marine environment in 2004, the total area of the World Heritage Site now extends to 24,201.4ha.

St Kilda is a place apart, physically and for its natural and cultural heritage, its modest size belying its outstanding heritage. The superlative natural landscape,



with its habitats for rare and endangered species, the impressive seabird colonies, the relict cultural landscape, and the seas around the archipelago which support a marine life of unparalleled richness and colour, mark St Kilda out. Each element is of outstanding universal value in its own right but, crucially, each element is also inextricably linked; the terrestrial, coastal and marine processes work together to produce a unique environment.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the archipelago was occupied, on and off, for over 4,000 years,⁵ until 1930, when the community of St Kilda petitioned HM Government to assist them to leave the island and to find homes and occupations on the mainland. In the following year the islands' owner, MacLeod of MacLeod, Chief of Clan MacLeod sold the islands to the Earl of Dumfries (later the 5th Marquess of Bute), who recognising the value of the bird populations on the islands, ran them as an unoccupied bird sanctuary.

On the death of the 5th Marquess of Bute, the archipelago was bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland, coming into its ownership in 1957. Also in this year, a military radar tracking station was established on Hirta and the whole archipelago was designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Since the evacuation in 1930, St Kilda has had no permanent inhabitants; although since 1957 there has been a continual presence on Hirta of first military personnel and then later civilian staff - at the MOD base, as well as Trust and SNH staff, volunteers and researchers.

Public access to the archipelago is from the sea, with visitors arriving by private yacht, charter boat and cruise ship. In recent years visitor numbers have been between 3,000–4,000 per annum.

1.2.4

Designations

The St Kilda WHS is covered by a range of national and international statutory and non-statutory designations:

- World Heritage Site (WHS);
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- Special Protection Area (SPA);
- National Nature Reserve (NNR);
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- National Scenic Area (NSA);
- Marine Consultation Area;
- Geological Conservation Review Site (GCRS);
- Scheduled Monument (SM).



⁵ At the time of inscription on the World Heritage List evidence suggested the archipelago had been occupied for over 2,000 years. New evidence now suggests the archipelago has been occupied for over 4,000 years.

1.3 Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and Statement of Significance



1.3.1

Introduction

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Every WHS requires a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) upon which future protection and management will be based.

The draft SOUV for St Kilda was submitted to the World Heritage Centre in February 2011 for review by ICOMOS and IUCN. It will only be finalised once it has been agreed by the World Heritage Committee at its meeting in summer 2012. The various sections of the draft SOUV are included within this plan – the *Criteria for Inscription, Brief Synthesis, Integrity and Authenticity* and each element of *Requirements and Protection* has also been included, but under separate headings. For the full draft SOUV, see [Appendix 1](#).

Statement of Significance

The Statement of Significance is made up of two parts – the *Brief Synthesis* (from the draft SOUV) and *Additional Values*. Both elements evaluate the significance or value of the property in terms of its heritage (eg natural and cultural heritage), the former setting out the key attributes deemed to be of outstanding universal value⁶ and the latter setting out attributes regarded as being of national or local significance.

1.3.2

Brief synthesis

The tiny archipelago of St Kilda is breathtaking. Formed from the rim of an ancient volcano associated with the opening up of the North Atlantic some 65–52million years ago, the intensely dramatic, jagged landscape of towering cliffs – some of the highest sea cliffs in Europe – and sea stacs present stark black precipitous faces plunging from steep grass-green slopes in excess of 430m. Scenically every element appears vertical – except the smooth amphitheatre of Village Bay on Hirta with its relict historic landscape. Exposure to some of the greatest wave heights and strongest wind speeds in Europe plays a major role in shaping the islands' coastal ecology.

With nearly one million seabirds present at the height of the breeding season, St Kilda supports the largest seabird colony in the north-east Atlantic, its size and diversity of global significance, making it a seabird sanctuary without parallel in Europe. The very high bird densities that occur in this relatively small area, conditioned by the complex and different ecological niches existing in the site and the productivity of the surrounding sea, make St Kilda unique. Of particular significance are the populations of northern gannet (*Morus bassanus*), Atlantic puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) and northern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*). The sight and sound of these myriad seabirds adds significantly to the scenic value and to the experience of the archipelago during the breeding season.

The islands' isolation has led to outstanding examples of remote island ecological colonisation and subsequent genetic divergence in the two endemic sub-species: the St Kilda wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*) and St Kilda fieldmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus hirtensis*). The feral Soay sheep, so much a feature of the landscape, represent an ancient breed, descendants of the most primitive domestic sheep found in Europe. They provide a living testament to the longevity of human occupation of St Kilda and, in addition, are a potentially significant genetic resource.

The combination of oceanic influences (proximity of deep ocean currents along the continental slope, extreme exposure to waves and oceanic swell, high water clarity) and local geology around the archipelago has created a marine environment of unparalleled richness and colour. The seabed communities are

outstanding in terms of biodiversity and composition, including 'northern' and 'southern' species at the extremes of their range. The plunging underwater rock faces are festooned with sea life – a kaleidoscope of colour and form kept in constant motion by the Atlantic swell, creating an underwater landscape of breathtaking beauty. The complex ecological dynamic in the marine environment is essential to the maintenance of both the terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

Overlying the spectacular natural landscape, and giving scale to it all, is a rich cultural landscape that bears exceptional testimony to over two millennia⁷ of human occupation. The landscape – including houses, large enclosures and cleits (unique drystone storage structures found in their hundreds across all the islands and stacs within the archipelago) – culminates in the surviving remains of the nineteenth and twentieth-century cultural landscape of Village Bay. The time depth, preservation and completeness of the physical remains provide a tangible and powerful link to the islands' past history, its people and their way of life – a distinctive existence, shaped by the St Kildans' response to the peculiar physical and geographic setting of the islands.

The islands provide an exceptionally well preserved and documented example of how, even in the most extreme conditions of storm-swept isolated island living, people were able to live for thousands of years by exploiting natural resources and farming. They bear physical witness to a cultural tradition that has now disappeared, namely reliance on seabird products as the main source of livelihood and sustenance, alongside subsistence farming. These age-old traditions and land uses that have so shaped the landscape have also unquestionably contributed to its aesthetic appeal.

St Kilda represents subsistence economies everywhere – living off the resources of land and sea and changing them over time, until external pressures led to decline and, in 1930, the evacuation of the islands.

The poignancy of the archipelago's history and the remarkable fossilised landscape, combined with its outstanding and spectacular natural beauty and heritage, as well as its isolation and remoteness leave one in awe of nature and of the people that once lived in this spectacular and remarkable place.

⁶ Based on the evaluations and recommendations made by IUCN for the natural heritage, those made by ICOMOS for the cultural heritage and the nomination documents put forward by the States Party. See Appendix 3.

⁷ Recent research indicates that St Kilda has been occupied on and off for over 4,000 years, not the 2,000 years as believed at the time of inscription

In addition to the key attributes set out in 1.3.2, St Kilda is also significant for the following values. These have not been included in the WHS inscription, but are regarded as being of national or local significance.

Emblematic image of St Kilda

The nineteenth century was perhaps the period of greatest change for the islands. An improving landlord and religious influences combined to reshape Village Bay to the ordered fan of field boundaries and the associated neatness of The Street, which is today the emblematic image of Hirta. It is these surviving remains of the structures built before the evacuation which are regarded by many as the most significant today and are tangible evidence of the islands' history of continuous habitation until 1930.

Documentary sources

St Kilda has been a source of curiosity since medieval times. Many travellers' accounts survive, as well as diaries and other documents written by figures in authority (the landlord or factor, the missionary or the nurse) rather than the native St Kildans. Such a quantity of documentation is rare and perhaps unique for such a remote rural society, certainly in a Scottish and maybe even a European context.

Oral history sources

An extensive oral history collection provides invaluable primary and secondary source material on a range of subjects, from St Kilda's history and folklore to songs of the islands.

Place names

Place names also speak of the islands' past, of Gaelic and Norse influences, and help to improve our understanding of the history and use of the islands.

'Spirit of the place'

In spiritual terms the Village Bay settlement holds the soul of St Kilda. Across the Highlands of Scotland there are many abandoned settlements, but St Kilda has a

unique emotional power – the result of the drama and finality of the evacuation, the impressiveness of what was left behind and the widely known story of 'living on the edge'. Its remoteness is amplified because it is and always has been difficult to access. There is a romantic perception of its position as the archipelago 'at the edge of the world' where the people lived in harmony with nature. The steep cliffs and pounding seas around the archipelago give a sense of the overwhelming power of nature, against which the very visible remains of human habitation can only fill the modern visitor with a sense of awe and respect for past generations. But perceptions of St Kilda remain clouded by those of nineteenth-century travellers who were seeking experiences of the sublime, and whose writing tended to ignore things that contradicted their expectations or those of their sponsors.

Access and recreation

Access to the islands has become somewhat easier in the last few years, with regular (when the weather permits) small charter vessels bringing visitors during the late spring/summer months and cruise ships including a visit to the archipelago as a highlight of their voyage. In 2010, visitor numbers were just short of 4,000, a marked increase since records began in 1986, when 1,000 visitors were recorded. However, the logistics and expense are such that a comparatively small number of people will ever have the opportunity to visit the islands and experience them first hand.

Few visitors to the archipelago remain untouched by the experience of St Kilda and for most it evokes a powerful, even spiritual, response. Many come because of a particular interest in the place, others for the recreational opportunities it affords – it is, for example, one of the premier marine dive locations in Britain. For many it is a lifetime's dream.

Opportunities to stay any length of time in the islands are also limited due to lack of available accommodation, although it is possible as part of the St Kilda Work Parties programme, if undertaking research or if one is prepared to camp. Work Party members carry out conservation and repair work and in the past have assisted with archaeological investigations, whilst the ongoing research programmes, particularly

the long-standing Soay sheep research project, provide opportunities for students and researchers to visit the islands and to study aspects of its outstanding heritage.

Elsewhere many find it difficult to interpret or relate to slight traces of the past in the landscape – but the active conservation of original structures on Hirta ensures that the messages from the past are clear and vibrant, giving visitors a real sense of walking into the past.

Intellectual access

Even from a distance the attraction of St Kilda is powerful and the areas of interest multifarious – desire to access an experience of the place and information about it is therefore strong. Intellectual access to St Kilda and its story is provided in various media, from books and films to the internet. The growing number of books about the islands is testament to the degree of interest in the place, and there continues to be a market for these works. The St Kilda websites (www.kilda.org.uk / www.hiort.org.uk and Wee Kilda Guide) offer the chance for a worldwide audience to find out more about the archipelago, and there is huge potential to interpret the islands in increasingly imaginative ways to the large numbers of people who want to know more about this iconic place but who will never have an opportunity to visit.

Research

St Kilda is an important scientific resource for ecological and evolutionary research, particularly about the seabirds and Soay sheep, as well as research into the cultural heritage of the archipelago. The seabird research contributes to our understanding of population numbers and behaviour as well as a wider understanding of the marine ecosystem. Since 1952, the sheep have been the subject of ongoing research into herbivore ecology and genetics, the islands providing a unique European opportunity to observe a sizeable population of effectively wild, large mammals that are genetically and geographically isolated. Archaeological research is opening windows on the prehistoric settlement of the archipelago, an aspect of the historic environment that is largely buried in the landscape.

Education

The archipelago provides both formal and informal educational opportunities. The diversity of heritage and the ongoing use of the islands as a natural and cultural laboratory offer great potential.

Communities of interest

In the Western Isles, of which St Kilda is a part, many feel a special bond to St Kilda, and there are many other communities of interest all around the world who feel strongly about the place, evidenced by the growing membership of the St Kilda Club and the increasing visitor numbers.

The archipelago is one of Scotland's finest assets, and its mixed WHS status makes it certainly the single most important heritage asset in the care of the National Trust for Scotland. The archipelago's high heritage profile provides an exceptional opportunity to spread many messages about conservation and the work of the Trust through the medium of St Kilda.

Economic value

More tangibly, it is a significant economic resource for the Western Isles, attracting visitors to the islands, some en route to the archipelago on one of the charter boats. It also provides a market for the locally sourced goods and services required for the upkeep of Hirta's infrastructure and its modern day community. St Kilda is also of some economic importance to other west coast mainland ports and businesses that have charter or rental vessels. As part of the Western Isles, St Kilda raises the area's international profile and channels worldwide attention on this part of Scotland.

The seas surrounding St Kilda are also of significance to the local communities and economies of the Western Isles and Scotland as a whole. They support a range of human activities eg fishing, recreational and tourism related activities eg charter boats, sailing and diving etc, the majority of which bring economic benefits to the area.

A more in-depth evaluation of each aspect of the archipelago's significance can be found in [PART FOUR](#).

1.3.4

Integrity

The islands encompass exemplary and well-preserved remains of the distinctive way of life that persisted in this remote area, unaltered after the St Kildans abandoned the islands. They encompass the complete fossilised cultural landscape.

The natural heritage of the archipelago is the result of natural processes coupled with its long history of human occupation and, more recently, external human influences. The marine environment is largely intact.

Ownership and stewardship of the archipelago by the National Trust for Scotland, the statutory designations in place, the archipelago's remote location, the difficulty of accessing it and human activities almost entirely centred upon Hirta have all significantly contributed to retaining the integrity of the archipelago's heritage.



1.3.5

Authenticity

The challenge for conservation of the cultural landscape is to keep a balance between the principle of minimum intervention and active conservation work necessary to minimise decay, whilst keeping records of all the work that is done. With few exceptions this has meant reusing fallen materials, with little introduction of new materials. Where new materials have necessarily been required, these have largely, and as far as possible, been like-for-like replacements. A representative sample of the 1,400 cleits is monitored and actively maintained.

The modern installations (the radar base and related buildings) associated with the MOD operations on Hirta take up a relatively small footprint, although they do still have an impact on the landscape, as do the coastal defences.



1.4 Management framework



1.4.1

Ownership

The Trust owns the archipelago of St Kilda including barony title to the foreshore, i.e. the area between mean high and low water marks. On acquisition of the islands in 1957, the Trust declared the islands inalienable⁸.

The seabed and the mineral rights from the mean low water mark out to 12 nautical miles are the property of the Crown. The sea itself is a commons through which there is free right of passage.

1.4.2

Management

St Kilda is one of Scotland's and the UK's foremost heritage sites. Conservation of the archipelago's outstanding heritage will therefore remain the primary management objective. However, it is not just for its heritage that it is so highly prized. For the Ministry of Defence (MOD) it provides a unique test and evaluation facility; for some members of the nearby communities of the Western Isles it holds a strong emotional attachment, and for others it provides direct and indirect employment. Within the wider community, many are enthralled by its story and that of its people, others see the research potential it has, and yet others see it as a premier recreational resource. Consequently, its management matters not only to the Trust but also to many others including both the UK and Scottish governments, Historic Scotland (HS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the MOD and its agents and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES), as well as people from all over the world. Management of St Kilda is therefore complex. However, it is important to the Trust that key stakeholders are involved in supporting the integrated conservation and management of the property.

Future management of the archipelago will be guided by this Management Plan⁹, which has been produced in

collaboration with key stakeholders – HS, SNH, CnES, the MOD and its agents.

The Trust will take the lead in implementing the Plan drawing on the support of key stakeholders as and when appropriate. The Trust remains committed to this collaborative approach and indeed sees it as critical to achieving sympathetic integrated management of all interests on St Kilda, with a clear priority given to conservation.

The main mechanism for ensuring regular communication and delivery of the joint objectives in the Management Plan will be through Strategic and Operational Management Group meetings. The first, the Strategic Management Group (SMG) will provide strategic direction, consider and advise on new policies and maintain an overview of the Management Plan and its delivery. The second, the Operational Management Group (OMG) will agree operational work plans and co-ordinate actions planned by each member organisation in order to help them deliver on their obligations. (For full Terms of Reference for each Group, see [Appendix 9](#))

⁸ Inalienability provides the maximum protection the Trust can afford a property. Inalienable properties cannot be removed from Trust ownership against the Trust's will except by prescribed parliamentary procedure

⁹ At a meeting of the Trust's Executive Committee on 17 April 1986, it was agreed that all development proposals affecting St Kilda should be submitted to the Executive Committee for discussion. When an issue is considered to be of sufficient importance, it should be referred by the Committee to the Trust's Council for consideration. The Trust's Council also requested that the Trust Management Plans for St Kilda be presented to Council. In light of the changes to the Trust's Governance structure in March 2011, the Management Plan will be presented to the Trust's Board.

1.4.3

Role of the National Trust for Scotland and key stakeholders

The National Trust for Scotland

As owner of the St Kilda archipelago, responsibility for implementation of the Management Plan sits with the Trust and is entrusted to Trust staff, both on St Kilda and in support centres. They will continue to lead in this, liaising with key stakeholders, visitors and members of the wider community. During the course of this Management Plan, the roles and responsibilities of all St Kilda staff will be reviewed and in places reassigned to enhance management and protection of the archipelago's outstanding heritage.

Scottish Natural Heritage

SNH will continue to maintain a regulatory and advisory role, fulfilling its duty to monitor the management of the islands in respect of their natural heritage conservation designations, in particular the NNR and Natura interests. SNH is also a statutory consultee in the planning system where development may impact on Scotland's nature or landscapes.

Historic Scotland

Historic Scotland is an executive agency of the Scottish Government and is charged with safeguarding the nation's historic environment and promoting its understanding and enjoyment on behalf of Scottish Ministers. They are also responsible for providing advice and guidance in relation to World Heritage and for ensuring compliance with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. They coordinate the compilation of any reports or requests for information received from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

HS will continue to maintain its regulatory and advisory role, ensuring that management of St Kilda's historic environment is undertaken as agreed, and fulfilling the requirements of Scheduled Monument legislation, as well as obligations set out under the World Heritage Convention. HS is also a statutory consultee in the planning system where development may impact on the setting of scheduled monuments.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

The archipelago is within the local authority area of CnES, giving them a range of regulatory and planning responsibilities as well as responsibility for the provision of some services.

MOD/Agents

The presence of the Army, and now MOD agents, has given St Kilda a living community since the late 1950s. In 2003 the lease arrangements with the MOD were replaced by one new 25-year lease. The lease agrees the future rental value as well as the approach for payment of exit works should the MOD withdraw entirely from St Kilda. The lease was agreed on the basis of a series of Management Principles to guide activities on St Kilda¹⁰ and retains the condition that obligations/agreements therein will apply equally to the MOD and any of its contractors.

The MOD base on St Kilda greatly facilitates the logistics of conservation of the islands. All services provided to the Trust by the MOD and their contractors are agreed on an annual basis in the Service Level Agreement. The assistance they provide can be divided into four categories.

a) logistics

This is one of the most important services provided. It includes transport of materials, supplies and personnel. However, with the installation of an independent communications system in the Manse in 2010, the Trust no longer relies on the MOD's agents for satellite, telephone or internet facilities.

b) infrastructure

The MOD base provides electricity, supplied by their generating station, to a number of Trust buildings. In addition, the Trust is connected to the MOD's water, sewerage and waste disposal systems.

c) security

The staff on the base 'police' the island of Hirta during the months when Trust staff are not in residence. It is likely that without this activity, or their presence on the island throughout the year, vandalism would take place – as was the case from 1930–57 when Hirta was unoccupied.

d) ancillary services

This covers many areas, from providing medical facilities and other expertise to serviced accommodation for Trust contractors and visiting staff.

1.4.4

The future of the MOD base on Hirta is dependent on the continued operation of the MOD Hebrides Range. In 2009, the MOD and QinetiQ proposed to rationalise operations and domestic support at the MOD Hebrides Range. Within this proposal, the St Kilda facility would have been operated on a fully unattended and remote controlled basis. In addition to the removal of any permanent presence on Hirta, it would have resulted in the removal of equipment, the upgrading of telemetry, the refurbishment of power generation and distribution on Hirta, and significantly fewer helicopter flights into and out of the archipelago as well as fewer supply ship sailings. Crucially for the Trust, it would also have left the islands unattended over the autumn/winter period when no Trust staff are on island. It would also have led to the handing back of redundant MOD buildings to the Trust. Following extensive consultation over the summer of 2009, the Minister for Defence Equipment & Support rejected the proposals and the MOD Hebrides Range remains as before. However, it is acknowledged that advances in technologies and the ongoing Government budget cuts mean that MOD operations on St Kilda may change in the future.

1.4.5

Protection of the archipelago and surrounding seas and their key attributes is provided by a range of UK, Scottish and local policies, plans and legislation. The primary legislation in place is:

The future of the base

Should the MOD operation on Hirta become unmanned or be removed entirely, the loss of the MOD's agents and the ancillary services they provide would make logistics associated with the management of the archipelago for conservation very difficult, requiring significant changes to current working practices and funding. An Impact Assessment was undertaken by the Trust and key stakeholders in 2009 into the consequences of such a change and this work will be developed further as a priority in the new plan (see [Objective 38](#)).



Legislation

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & C.) Regulations 1994, as amended;
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003;
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004;
- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended;
- The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006;
- The Environmental Liability (Scotland) Regulations 2009; and
- The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) sets out the primary policy guidance on the protection and management of the historic environment in Scotland.

¹⁰ See Appendix 6

Scottish Planning Policy

The Scottish Planning Policy provides a statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It sets out the role Planning Authorities have in protecting World Heritage Sites and their settings including important views and other areas which are important to the site and its protection and states that these should be protected from inappropriate development.



Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is preparing the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (OHLDP) which is due for completion and adoption in 2012. This will guide development and manage land use change in the Outer Hebrides over the next 10-20 years. Once adopted, the OHLDP will supersede the current Development Plan (Western Isles Structure Plan 2003 and Western Isles Local Plan 2008).

The focus of the OHLDP is a land use strategy that will support and sustain population levels in the Outer Hebrides and a diverse local economy. Within the plan are a number of policies that will have a bearing on any development proposals affecting the WHS and its outstanding heritage. In particular Policy 30: St Kilda World Heritage Site; Policy 28: Natural Heritage and Policy 34: Archaeology.

Policy 30: St Kilda World Heritage Site¹¹

Development proposals will only be permitted where the developer can demonstrate that the proposal will have no or minimal impact upon all the following:

- a) visual aspects arising from scale, form, materials and detailing;
- b) historically significant boundaries and other elements of importance to the character of the site;
- c) important landscape features of the site;
- d) views into and out of the World Heritage site;
- e) the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

Developers should ensure the proposal accords with the approved St Kilda WHS Management Plan.

Policy 28: Natural Heritage

Any development proposal which is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura site and is not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of that site will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment by the Comhairle. Development which could have a significant effect on a Natura site will only be permitted where:

- an Appropriate Assessment has demonstrated that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, or
- there are no alternative solutions, and
- there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature.

Development that affects a National Scenic Area (NSA), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or National Nature Reserve (NNR) will only be permitted where:

- it will not adversely affect the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been designated, or
- any such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.

All Ramsar wetland sites are also Natura sites and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are included in the statutory requirements noted above.

Where there is good reason to suggest that a protected species is present on site, or may be affected by a proposed development, the Comhairle will require any such presence to be established and, if necessary, a mitigation plan provided to avoid or minimise any adverse impacts on the species, prior to determining the application.

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would be likely to have an adverse effect on a European protected species unless the Comhairle is satisfied that:

- there is no satisfactory alternative, and

- the development is required for preserving public health or public safety or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would be likely to have an adverse effect on a species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 unless the development is required for preserving public health or public safety. For development affecting a species of bird protected under the 1981 Act there must also be no other satisfactory solution.

Applicants should submit supporting evidence for any development meeting these tests, demonstrating both the need for the development and that a full range of possible alternative courses of action have been properly examined and none found to acceptably meet the need identified.

In addition to the conditions listed above, developers are encouraged to assess the impacts of their proposed development on UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species and habitats and Local BAP habitats and species. Developers should refer to the Scottish Biodiversity List* for a full list of animals, plants and habitats considered to be of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland (this list includes all UK priority species).

Policy 34: Archaeology (excerpt)

Proposals that seek to protect, enhance and interpret nationally important monuments and other archaeological sites will generally be supported in line with the policy criteria. Development proposals adversely affecting nationally important remains and their settings will not normally be permitted.

Notification of the various stages of the OHLDP are posted on the Comhairle's web site at www.cne-siar.gov.uk/planningservice/localdevplan. The adopted OHLDP and all relevant policies will be available to view there in due course.

¹¹ The above is taken from the OHLDP Proposed Plan 2011. Reference should be made to the adopted plan on Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's website for confirmation of the final wording of Policies 28, 30 and 34.

PART TWO

2.1 Achievements during the course of the 2003-08 Management Plan



2.1.1

The 2003–08 St Kilda WHS Management Plan set out to deliver 10 Outcomes over the 5 years of the Management Plan. To achieve these Outcomes, 37 Objectives and 124 Prescriptions were set and agreed. In 2008 when the existing Management Plan was due to be reviewed and updated, the Ministry of Defence (MOD), a key stakeholder in the delivery of the Management Plan, announced their intention to review their operations on Hirta. Due to the serious

2.1.2

2003–2010 saw a number of very significant events involving or linked to St Kilda. The archipelago became the UK's first and only mixed World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2005 with inclusion of the islands' cultural landscape on the World Heritage List. This followed extension of the WHS inscription for the natural heritage to include the marine environment, the previous year. The Trust took over responsibility for management of the NNR from SNH in 2003, at which point the Trust appointed a Western Isles Area Manager¹². 2003 also saw unprecedented access legislation introduced by the Scottish Parliament, necessitating changes to the St Kilda bye-laws. 2005 marked the 75th anniversary of the evacuation of the islands, an occasion commemorated by a visit from one of the last remaining St Kildans and his family. Linked to this anniversary were exhibitions held in Edinburgh, Inverness and the Western Isles; an Opera, *Hiort: mac-talla nan eun* (*St Kilda: the echo of birds*), staged in Stornoway and in four further locations across Europe; and an international conference, *The Decline and Fall of St Kilda*, organised by the Islands

¹² This post became Western Isles Manager (WIM) in 2005

Introduction

implications this would have had for management of the archipelago, the National Trust for Scotland (Trust) and key stakeholders agreed that the existing Management Plan would continue to be implemented and no further work should be undertaken on the review until the MOD had made their decision. The following therefore provides an assessment of the extent to which these Outcomes have been achieved by Trust staff and key stakeholders up to the end of 2010.

Summary

Book Trust. 2005 also saw the appointment for the first time of a dedicated Seabird and Marine Ranger, to further research and understanding of the seabird populations of St Kilda. Two severe storms, the first in 2005 and the second in early 2008, caused considerable damage to the infrastructure on Hirta and its heritage and resulted in the running aground of a fishing vessel, the implementation of immediate Biosecurity measures and the subsequent major collaborative project to have the wreck removed. 2009 saw cuts in Trust staffing levels, resulting in significantly fewer support staff in place to assist property staff; the first St Kilda Day organised by Proiseact nan Ealan (Gaelic Arts Agency); and a competition to find the most suitable location in the Western Isles for the siting of a new St Kilda Centre. Dominating that year was the MOD's review of their operations on Hirta and the proposal to retain the tracking capability on Hirta but to run it remotely, therefore removing all Range personnel from the archipelago. 2010 saw a major refurbishment of the Manse and repairs to the pier.

Outcome 1

Extension of World Heritage Site status to include the marine environment, cultural landscape and buffer zones

In 2005, St Kilda became a mixed WHS for its natural and cultural heritage, and in 2011 was one of only 28 worldwide¹³. This designation came in two stages. In 2004 the original designation for the archipelago's natural terrestrial heritage was extended by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee to include the surrounding marine natural environment. A year later the WHS designation was extended to include the island's cultural landscape, thus making it one of only 24 (at that time) that held the dual designation. This followed a comprehensive comparative analysis of St Kilda's cultural heritage with that of other comparable sites such as Tristan da Cunha in the Atlantic, Vega off the coast of Norway, Mingulay at the foot of the Outer Hebrides and Great Blasket and Skellig Michael off the south-west coast of Ireland. This was undertaken by the Trust with support from Historic Scotland and the Scottish Government. The above Outcome has therefore been completed.

In addition to the extension of the WHS, changes have also been made to the Natura 2000 site. The Special Area of Conservation (SAC) boundary around the archipelago has been extended to include all qualifying habitats and the St Kilda seabird Special Protection Area (SPA) has been extended into the marine environment. This takes the boundary out to 4 km offshore and protects some of the feeding and loafing areas of the qualifying birds.

When the WHS was extended to include the marine environment surrounding St Kilda in 2004, UNESCO recommended that the moratorium on oil developments within 70km of St Kilda be continued in order to protect the setting of the archipelago and its important features from damage. In 2010 the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) confirmed that the temporary moratorium has now been lifted and other protective measures such as Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are available should they be needed. DECC have also confirmed that on the basis of current geological

knowledge it is extremely unlikely that oil or gas is present in amounts that would make production economically viable within a 70km radius of St Kilda.

The Management Plan suggested the creation of a Marine Environment High Risk Area (MEHRA) to provide protection against oil spills. MEHRAs have since been created to the north and south of the archipelago but it is not clear that this has resulted in any detectable protection measures.

The question of a buffer zone for the cultural heritage on land was also discussed during the renomination process by the authorities, who concluded not to suggest such a zone. The sea itself serves as a protection area around the islands and therefore an additional buffer zone was not found to be necessary. Risks were identified, e.g. in connection with gas and oil exploration and related tanker traffic. However, since the whole of the archipelago is regulated by a large range of conservation measures under both British and European law, it was concluded that no buffer zone could add to that.



Outcome 2

A framework to involve partner organisations in supporting the integrated conservation management of the property and proposed extended World Heritage Site, the Natura 2000 site and any of its proposed extensions

St Kilda is one of Scotland's and the UK's foremost heritage sites. However it is recognised that there are other important interests in the archipelago such as visitor access and that others have differing primary objectives eg the operational effectiveness of the base. To ensure a more collaborative approach of all key stakeholders in management of the archipelago, a number of changes have been made in recent years. At the end of 2002, the Trust became the Approved Body for management of the St Kilda NNR, taking over management responsibility from SNH in 2003. At this time the Trust appointed a WIAM whose remit included St Kilda. This appointment has enabled greater partnership working and a more integrated approach to management of the islands.

Preparation of the last Management Plan was the first to fully involve key stakeholders and was the first Plan to which all key stakeholders signed up. Following completion of that Plan, annual strategic planning meetings and bi-annual operational meetings between the Trust, SNH, HS, CnES, and the MOD and its agents were established. In late 2006/early 2007 these two groups were combined, meeting bi-annually, with separate meetings convened as and when specific issues needed to be discussed.

The MOD and its agents have continued to work closely with the Trust with regard to St Kilda and the logistical support they have provided to the Trust, through a Service Level Agreement, has been invaluable. This has significantly aided the Trust's day-to-day management of the archipelago, and security of the island when no Trust staff are on island; it has also significantly aided researchers and contractors working on Hirta.

The MOD's proposal in 2009 to run their operations on Hirta remotely therefore raised serious concerns for the Trust and its partners about how future management of the archipelago would be achieved. It also raised questions about what level of management was required.

Two incidents highlight the critical role of the MOD's agents over the winter months: their response to storm damage incurred as a result of the hurricane-force winds that swept across the Western Isles in January 2005; and the running aground of a trawler, Spinningdale, also in a ferocious storm at the start of February 2008. On each occasion, swift action by the staff of the MOD's agents minimised the damage to the islands' heritage, damage that could otherwise have been very much more serious.

A Management Agreement between the Trust and Historic Scotland was agreed in 2002 setting out a programme of conservation and monitoring work of the cultural heritage to standards agreed with HS [see [Outcome 4](#)]. Trust staff work together with SNH to deliver NNR minimum standards; Concordat KPIs and annual work programmes. The Trust also has long-established links with a number of universities and organisations that use the unique opportunities St Kilda offers into researching aspects of its outstanding heritage. These close links have been maintained and extended in the last 5 years – see [Outcome 6](#).

¹³ As of August 2011

Outcome 3

Enhanced staffing and financial resources to meet the operational needs and Vision for the property

St Kilda is the most highly designated property within Trust care and is arguably Scotland's most important heritage site. As mentioned above, it provides exceptional opportunities for research and holds a special place in the affections of many people. The logistics of managing such a property are considerably more complicated than any mainland property owned by the Trust. This is to some extent overcome through the support and co-operation of the MOD and its agents.

It was recognised in the last Management Plan that to fulfil the operational needs and Vision for the property enhanced staffing levels and financial resources would be required. Over the last 5 years significant changes have been made to staffing levels, although these still fall short of required levels.

In 2003, the Trust appointed a Western Isles Area Manager. Initially based in the Western Isles, this post moved to Inverness in 2005¹⁴, closer to specialist support staff. Overall responsibility for management of the islands sits with this post, as does line management responsibility for all Trust staff on island.

The post of St Kilda Archaeologist, first established in 1996 as a short-term appointment to cover the St Kilda Work Parties, was extended to a 6 month contract in 2000 and an 8 month contract in 2002 and 2003. In 2004, for the first time this role was extended to 6 months on island, 6 months off, and today the St Kilda Archaeologist is a 12 month post. Since its creation, this post has been grant aided by HS.

Until 2003, the St Kilda Warden/Ranger's post was largely grant funded by NCC/SNH and the natural heritage work guided by SNH. With the change of management of the NNR in 2003, the work of the Ranger came under direct management of the Trust. The Ranger is the Trust's representative on Hirta and liaises with the MOD's agents on island. The post remains a 6-7 month appointment and continues to receive part-funding from SNH.

Between 2005–2008 the Trust employed a Seabird and Marine Ranger on a seasonal basis. The focus of this post was to enhance our understanding of the seabird colonies, which are so central to the significance of St Kilda.

During this time, the Trust commissioned an independent safety advisor to assess the areas where staff are expected to work and the walks that Work Parties are taken on. Following the report, working practices on island were modified to reduce risks to both staff and volunteers. In 2008 a 'Safe System of Work' was also implemented. This Trust-wide programme is intended to ensure that each Trust property is operated in a compliant and safe manner, and will therefore ensure that all aspects of living and working on St Kilda are as safe as is possible.

Improvements to living and working conditions for Trust staff, researchers and Work Parties have been made in the last 5 years. There have been major upgrades to House 1, in particular the installation of a new kitchen, along with upgrades to the ablutions block and Houses 2, 4 and 6. The Manse was returned to the Trust in 2008 and in 2010 it underwent extensive refurbishment to provide staff accommodation, office and shop space. Also in 2010 a major project to repair and improve the safety of the pier was undertaken. Each of these major projects was delivered by the Trust's in-house Buildings Team. Further improvements are planned over the next few years with the refurbishment of the Factor's House.

The St Kilda Club has continued to provide invaluable support to the Trust, both in kind through the work they do with the Work Parties and the financial contributions the Club makes to projects relating to aspects of the islands' heritage. Contributions from the Club paid for the post of Seabird and Marine Ranger in 2008; for the new interpretive displays in the Museum in 2003; for upgrading the kitchen in House 1; improvements to the ablutions block; and have also funded a number of archaeological reports.

Although improvements have come in terms of direct staffing for the archipelago in the last 7 years – from 1.5 FTE in 2002 to 2.6 FTE in 2010, there are now significantly fewer support staff in place. The Trust is only able to manage on this minimal level of staffing thanks to the logistical support provided to the Trust by the MOD and its agents through the Service Level Agreement. Should this level of service be radically reduced, the Trust would have to rethink its whole operation on the islands.

Outcome 4

Continued conservation of historic and natural features to maintain them in favourable condition

Cultural heritage

Conservation of the cultural heritage of St Kilda has been guided by a series of Management Agreements between HS and the Trust since 1996. These guide the maintenance and repair or simply the monitoring of the archaeology (whether upstanding buildings or ruined structures, or those beneath the soil) on Hirta. The Agreement identifies the different zones where intervention will or will not be carried out and the appropriate procedures for this. In 2007 the Agreement was reviewed and renewed for a further 5 years.

Monitoring and maintenance of both the 'in use' and 'ruinous' structures, within and beyond the areas that are Scheduled, is an ongoing process, in part undertaken by Trust staff, St Kilda Work Parties and contractors. In response to a request from the World Heritage Committee in 2005, the Trust has been working with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) to produce an accurate survey of all the architectural and archaeological features of the archipelago. Using sub-centimetre GPS, the survey has plotted accurately, for the first time, all the cultural heritage features – both known and new sites – and buildings throughout the main island of Hirta, as well as Dun and Boreray. Work planned for Soay in 2011 will complete the survey. Along with the GPS survey, a comprehensive photographic study of each of the features was also undertaken.

A new method statement to guide the repair and maintenance of turf roofs on St Kilda was produced in 2006/07. This followed research undertaken by the WIM whilst on a Churchill Fellowship in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway. Monitoring of the cleits has also been improved in recent years.

The spread of bracken has been surveyed on an ad hoc basis and at present it appears less of a problem than anticipated. This will be kept under review.

Incidences of heavy rainfall have led to localised flooding, causing scouring of the Dry Burn and increased pressure on other structures and areas of least resistance. A programme of drain maintenance and clearing open water courses has been carried out and repair work undertaken on the burn. This remains a serious issue and one where a long-term solution is being sought.

Collections

In relation to the collections and artefacts from St Kilda currently in Trust ownership, hundreds of fragmentary social history objects from St Kilda had previously been loaned to Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries. Following their decision to return the collection to the Trust, (except for less than 20 small items on display in Kelvingrove), the collection has been transported to Museum nan Eilean (Western Isles Museum Service) so that the collection is housed in the Western Isles. Work remains to ensure the collection's conservation and accessibility.

Natural heritage

The Management Plan for St Kilda determines that no active management of the natural heritage will be undertaken. However, to ensure that the natural heritage remains in favourable condition as far as is possible, the Trust has implemented a number of policies to prevent damaging activities taking place in the archipelago. A review of procedures to prevent the introduction of non-native species to St Kilda is ongoing. Guidelines to promote responsible access were introduced in 2005 (for further details see [Outcome 7](#)). Other new Trust-wide policies also apply, some with a specific section covering the unique situation of St Kilda, e.g. the Trust's policy for *Dogs at Trust Properties*. Dogs pose an unacceptable risk to the fragile ecosystem of the islands and visitors are therefore requested not to bring dogs and other pets onto the islands. The SNH/Trust Concordat provides a number of KPIs for Trust management of the natural heritage of St Kilda.

The flocks of sheep on Soay, Hirta and Boreray are not managed, and there is a strict policy of non-intervention, although the sheep in Village Bay continue to be the subject of one of the longest running mammal research programmes in the world (see [Outcome 6](#)).

¹⁴ The post of Western Isles Area Manager became Western Isles Manager (WIM) at this point.

Outcome 5

Action to mitigate urgent threats and perceived threats to key features

The natural and cultural heritage of St Kilda is of outstanding universal value. However it faces a number of very real and potential threats from a variety of sources – most especially invasive non-native species, oil spills, coastal erosion and climate change, and from other seemingly innocuous sources, such the paint colours used on buildings. Over the last 7 years the Trust has worked with its partners to reduce these threats as far as is practicable.

As the Trust has seen on other island properties, for instance Canna, the establishment of non-native species such as rats can have a devastating affect on the indigenous flora and fauna of an island and, particularly in the case of St Kilda, the ground-nesting seabirds. The start of 2008 saw an incident that had the potential to create a serious situation on St Kilda. In a severe storm on 1 February 2008, a fishing trawler, Spinningdale, ran aground in Village Bay. Once the crew had been rescued, the MOD's agents on island initiated emergency response monitoring until Trust staff could be flown to the island two days later. This ensured that if there had been a problem with the release of rodents following the accident then the Trust would have been aware of it sooner, thereby speeding up any emergency response required. Regular monitoring of the situation since the incident has shown there to be no sign of rats. The small fuel spill that occurred as a result of the incident, which could also have had long-term consequences for the environment, was dispersed rapidly in the stormy conditions.

Coastal erosion remains a major issue as it continues to threaten the Store and the eastern end of the head dyke in particular, but also other structures in Village Bay in the longer term. Annual coastal erosion surveys are carried out by the St Kilda Archaeologist, and the recording work of RCAHMS will also help build up a picture of how much of the Village Bay area has suffered from coastal erosion. A long-term decision as to how this will be tackled – if at all – has yet to be made.

Conserving the genetic integrity of the flocks of Soay sheep on Soay and Hirta and the blackface sheep on Boreray has been and remains an important objective. Key to this is maintaining them as unmanaged populations, subject to the pressures of natural selection. In line with the Management Plan, no movement of sheep between islands has taken place and no animals have been imported.

Following the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, a review of the archipelago's bye-laws was undertaken. This resulted in the deliberate lapsing of all bye-laws and, to replace them, the development of access guidelines for the archipelago [see [Appendix 10](#)].

All the landscape prescriptions in the Management Plan required close partnership working between the MOD and its agents, SNH, HS and the Trust and have been very effective eg: painting the MOD buildings green (from grey) has significantly reduced their visual impact in the landscape. Each of these prescriptions will remain necessary to guide any proposed development on island in the future.

The spring/summer of 2008 was exceptionally dry, causing the natural spring to run dry. This provides all the drinking water on Hirta, and the resulting water shortage necessitated all non-essential staff being removed from the island for a short time. A desalination plant is now on Hirta to provide back-up in the event of this scenario happening again.

All actions undertaken by the Trust and/or the MOD take full cognisance of the conditions attached to the statutory designations of the islands.



Outcome 6

Enhanced knowledge about the islands and their cultural and natural features and greater promulgation of research results to share knowledge and understanding

The islands remain an active site for scientific research, both by Trust staff and by staff from academic institutions. The long-running Soay Sheep project, led by Edinburgh University, continues to produce a series of scientific papers, which are summarised in an annual research digest. The Trust's Seabird Ranger has produced regular reports on seabird numbers and breeding success and, in collaboration with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, has undertaken further studies on seabird diet to help to identify long-term changes, possibly associated with climate change. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), whilst co-ordinating the efforts of others in monitoring and reporting seabird numbers, has also undertaken targeted seabird research on St Kilda. Two PhD studentships on seabirds have been conducted during this period: one jointly between Glasgow University and the Trust studied the inter-relationship between great skuas and Leach's storm-petrels; while the other, supported by Plymouth University and JNCC, looked at the genetic affiliations of Leach's storm-petrels. A third PhD studentship has been obtained and has just begun to study the ecology of the St Kilda fieldmouse. Private expeditions and individuals have also contributed to furthering our understanding of the archipelago's heritage.

When the archipelago's cultural landscape was designated in 2005, UNESCO requested that the State Party undertake a systematic archaeological survey to underpin future management of the cultural landscape. This research was carried out jointly between the Trust and the RCAHMS (see [Outcome 4](#)). Since 1991 there has been a programme of excavation around Village Bay, led by Glasgow University. Most recently, this has comprised detailed geophysical survey by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) across four of the land-holdings, which has been followed by small scale excavation with the aim of providing a foundation of knowledge for future research. All of Glasgow's work has now been gathered together and is due for publication in 2011. In the meantime, developing an understanding of the historic environment of Hirta has been a focus of the work of Professor Andrew Fleming of Lampeter University. His publication *St Kilda and the Wider World*, as well as various papers in academic journals, has achieved this objective.

Outcome 7

Continued provision of informed, responsible, virtual and enjoyable access

In the last 7 years great improvements have been made in providing informed, responsible, virtual and enjoyable access to the islands. The Trust has always maintained a policy of unrestricted access to St Kilda, using bye-laws where necessary to guide visitor behaviour. With the introduction of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), the Trust produced an access leaflet specifically for St Kilda to help encourage responsible and safe access. This has been widely distributed to local tourist information centres and boat operators, and is available to download from the National Trust for Scotland and St Kilda websites. The Act also led to the Trust reviewing and allowing the bye-laws pertaining to St Kilda to lapse. In 2003, in collaboration with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, the Trust produced new climbing guidelines to encourage responsible access.

Physical access to the islands has also become easier with the start of a regular day trip boat service from Harris, and more recently from other parts of the Western Isles, during the summer months. This has significantly increased opportunities to visit the islands and visitor numbers rose to nearly 3000 for the first time in 2005 and nearly 4000 in 2009-10. Cruise ships also continue to provide opportunities to visit the islands. However, the frequency of both these methods of transport are strongly tied to weather conditions. With the poor weather in the summer of 2011, visitor numbers fell to 3117.

St Kilda Work Parties during this time also continued to provide a modest number of visitors with the opportunity to live on Hirta for an extended period of time. The Work Parties undertook essential conservation work including assisting with some archaeological monitoring work.

Visitors to Hirta are generally welcomed by the Ranger, but also by the Seabird and Marine Ranger and Archaeologist on occasions, who brief them on what can be seen and on safety. Visitors are then left to see as much or as little of the island as they wish. For

many, Village Bay with the houses, Museum, Church and Schoolroom are as far as they wish to wander. For others, the spectacular view from the top of Conachair, the plummeting sea-cliffs with thousands of seabirds, or the Mistress Stone draw them further afield. In 2003, thanks to funding from the St Kilda Club, a new display was put into the Museum to tell the story of St Kilda's history, its natural wonders and its people. Throughout this time the Rangers and Archaeologist monitored the effects of visitors on the island's heritage and over this time minimal impact was identified.

In the last 7 years improvements to the St Kilda website (www.kilda.org.uk) have been made, including the introduction of the Ranger's Diary – a very popular feature keeping visitors to the site informed about what is going on in the archipelago. The Gaelic language St Kilda website, *Hiort*, (www.hiort.org.uk) was launched in 2003, and this provides most of the same information and images that the English language site provides. The St Kilda website continues to be very popular, with regular entries in the Guestbook from people from all over the world using it to find out more about the islands, to discuss issues, to air their views and to get in touch with people they have met through their time on St Kilda, whether as a member of a Work Party or with the army or one of the other organisations that have worked there over the years. The Trust would like to do more to provide virtual access, particularly through the website. However, lack of resources has hindered further major progress.



In 2006 the Wee Kilda Guide was launched – a website (www.kilda.org.uk/weekildaguide/) specifically designed to engage young people, telling them the story of the islands, its heritage and culture in words, pictures and sounds. Whilst researching the Wee Kilda Guide, the WIM and Trust Education Officer worked with the children of Balivanich School in Benbecula and modelled the website on their answers.

For those adventurous enough to camp, the Trust's campsite on Hirta continued to provide a limited number of spaces.

One of the most ambitious and evocative events to have occurred in the archipelago in the last 7 years was the staging of the opera, *Hiort: mac-talla nan eun* in 2005. Staged simultaneously in five different European countries, the operas, using the same musical composition and libretto, each told the story of St Kilda. Each location interlaced these central components with archival images of St Kilda, footage of the French aerial ballet company *Retournamont* (filmed suspended from sea-cliffs in the Hebrides), live performances re-enacting the tragic stories of St Kilda through traditional Gaelic songs, and live footage from the other performances and from St Kilda itself. In 2009 it was a centre piece of the Edinburgh International Festival.

As ever, St Kilda has been a popular subject for both national and international television and radio features. Coverage of the 75th anniversary of the evacuation, the change in World Heritage status, and the Spinningdale incident all featured prominently across the print media, as well as on television and radio. Other features and TV programmes about wildlife, the islands' history and an Icelandic documentary about infant tetanus were also recorded on island.



Outcome 8

Establishment of education and interpretation programmes that promote a greater understanding both of St Kilda and of sustainable conservation management amongst visitors and non-visitors

In the last 7 years major advances have been made in promoting a greater understanding and appreciation of the islands and the importance of sustainable conservation management. A new exhibition in the Museum on Hirta was launched in 2003 to tell the story of St Kilda, its natural wonders and its people. As well as the stories and illustrations, the displays also include artefacts associated with the people and events of St Kilda's past. More detailed information is now also available to visitors in the Museum. The opening of the refurbished Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow also saw the creation of a permanent exhibition on St Kilda's wildlife and heritage: *St Kilda – On the Edge of the World*.

The 75th anniversary of the evacuation of the islands was marked by a number of events. Two new exhibitions were produced: *Hirta – Islands in the Mind* was staged by Museum nan Eilean in conjunction with the Trust, and was put on display in Benbecula and then Stornoway; and *Changing Lives – an exhibition to commemorate the evacuation of St Kilda in 1930* was put on by the Trust in Edinburgh, Inverness and Lochaline. The exhibition brought together a collection of images and objects to illustrate the huge social changes that affected St Kilda in the 19th century, and which ultimately led to the decline of its community and then abandonment of the islands. The latter exhibition was accompanied by a series of talks. As well as these large events, Trust staff have continued to give talks to groups across the Western Isles and Highlands, all of which were well received and proved extremely popular. As mentioned in [Outcome 7](#), 2005 and 2009 also saw the staging of *Hiort: mac-talla nan eun*.

The changes to the St Kilda website, the launch of the Hiort website and the Wee Kilda Guide have all significantly added to the interpretive and educational material available. The success of the website as the initial point of contact for those wishing to gain more information on the islands was clearly demonstrated following the 2008 BBC series about the archipelago. Hits on the website increased over six fold at that time from an average of 7,100 for the first 5 months of the year to over 44,600 during June 2008.

The Trust launched a dedicated seabirds website in 2005 (www.nts-seabirds.org.uk) on which St Kilda features prominently. Regular reports on seabirds are made available on this website as well as news stories and the highlights of each year's breeding success.

St Kilda was also used as a case study in the very successful international conference on heritage interpretation in 2007, the Vital Spark.

Outcome 9

Regular liaison with the local community (Western Isles) to understand each other's aspirations for St Kilda and develop educational links to deliver [Outcome 8](#) above

A great deal of effort has been put into establishing closer links with the local communities of the Western Isles and in fostering interest in the St Kilda archipelago. This has been made possible in great part by the appointment of the WIM who has established regular contact with CnES. As mentioned in [Outcome 7](#), the WIM and Trust Education Officer worked closely with the pupils of Balivanich Primary School to create the Wee Kilda Guide, taking on board their comments and shaping the website and information provided on it in line with the children's thoughts. The Guide was also subsequently launched at the school. School children from Sir E Scott School in the Isle of Harris represented St Kilda at UNESCO UK's World Heritage Site Youth Summit in 2009 and again in 2010 in New Lanark where they explored what World Heritage meant to the young people of Scotland and how they could help preserve and protect it. Trust staff associated with St Kilda have given talks about the archipelago across the Western Isles and the exhibition *Hirta – Islands in the Mind* was jointly staged by Museum nan Eilean and the Trust.

The Trust entered into discussions with the North Harris Trust about the possibility of establishing a National Park, incorporating St Kilda and parts of mainland Harris. A community consultation showed very strong support for establishing a National Park covering this area.

Switching the Work Party departure point from Oban to Harris has forged new links with members of the communities in the Western Isles. It has also benefited a number of local service providers, particularly on Harris but also further afield, as Work Party members make their way to Leverburgh. Local boat operators, accommodation providers, and food suppliers on Harris are all used to support the St Kilda Work Parties.

Outcome 10

Assessment of options and agreed plan of action for increasing the property financial endowment

The property's endowment did not increase during the course of the last Management Plan. However, in addition to grants from SNH and HS and rent from the MOD, a number of events have helped raise much-needed funds for both capital projects and revenue costs on island. Filming for the BBC, the St Kilda Opera, Gaelic TV programmes and a major Icelandic documentary series have all brought in vital revenue. The Soay Sheep project pays an appreciable rent each year. The St Kilda Club, both in terms of time given and through the proceeds from the shop and membership income, continues to provide invaluable support for work on St Kilda (see [Outcome 3](#)). Donations given on island go into the islands' reserves as does the small revenue raised through camping fees. Cruise ships have become an increasingly important source of income, whilst the St Kilda Work Parties continue to be run on a break-even basis, to ensure they remain as accessible as possible.

SNH and HS continue to provide vital funding for management of aspects of the natural and cultural heritage.



3.1.1

Introduction

The Vision sets out the aspirations of the National Trust for Scotland (Trust) and key stakeholders for the property over the next 30 years. In conjunction with this are the Guiding Principles which provide detail on how particular aspects may be managed, whether the archipelago's heritage, access to it, interpretation, education etc. Together the Vision and Guiding Principles provide the parameters and framework for long-term decision making and a basis for assessing and selecting objectives.

3.1.2

Vision

St Kilda is the most highly designated property in the care of the Trust and is one of only 29¹⁵ mixed¹⁶ World Heritage Sites (WHS) in the world, making it of outstanding heritage significance.

The long term Vision is for St Kilda to continue as a site of outstanding heritage significance for its natural terrestrial and marine heritage and for its relict cultural landscape. This will be achieved through an integrated approach to conservation of all cultural and natural features; through sensitive public access and interpretation.

The archipelago should benefit from the highest conservation standards and from the fullest protection afforded by the designations in order to safeguard its features from potential threats. It will benefit from a collaborative approach by key stakeholders to achieve sympathetic, integrated management of all elements of the archipelago. The experience for both the virtual and actual visitor should be unrivalled, with St Kilda established as a model for conservation, environmental education and informed interpretation.

This Vision will be underpinned by a management structure and resources that will deliver integrated conservation advice and management; support on-site staffing needs; liaison with visitors, stakeholders and the local community and support a collaborative approach between the Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Historic Scotland (HS), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and its agents.

¹⁵ As at August 2012

¹⁶ Inscribed for its cultural and natural heritage

Management of St Kilda will be defined by the Trust's *Conservation Principles*¹⁷; *Access, Enjoyment and Education Principles*¹⁸ and other relevant Trust policies; by UNESCO's *Operational Principles for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*¹⁹ and by the following specific principles. Together they provide the framework for long-term management of St Kilda and a basis for selecting and assessing objectives.

1.

The archipelago's natural and cultural heritage is of equal importance and conservation of this heritage will be the primary management objective

The islands and the surrounding seas will be managed for the conservation of their cultural and natural heritage assets, so as to maintain and enhance the key features of their major conservation designations – particularly the National Nature Reserve (NNR), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Scenic Area (NSA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Scheduled Monument and WHS.

2.

Conservation management will be integrated, with natural and cultural interests considered together

Normally the interests of the natural and cultural heritage do not conflict. However when they are in opposition, decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, in collaboration with key stakeholders, where appropriate. Regard will be given to statutory obligations under NNR, SSSI, Scheduled Monument and EU Directives designations and the need to conserve the World Heritage values of the islands; the Trust's Conservation Principles, taking account of the significance of the features in question and the appropriateness of any proposed mitigating measures.

3.

For natural heritage interests, natural processes will normally be allowed to continue without intervention

Intervention should only be undertaken where it is necessary to protect natural or cultural features of greater significance from deterioration. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and based on sound evidence. Any actions taken should where possible, be reversible and cause minimal disturbance to significant features, species and habitats.

4.

For cultural heritage interests, conservation action will proceed on the basis of the minimum intervention required to retain the significance of the site

A zoning approach to intervention will continue to apply. This allows for a variety of conservation approaches, from recording to consolidation and repair²⁰. This principle takes account of the need to retain intangibles, such as atmosphere and spiritual significance by arresting decay as well as respect for original/authentic fabric. Without the policy of consolidation and active conservation work to the Village Bay structures and a number of other structures across Hirta, much of the impact and spirit of the place would be lost.

5.

No new species of animal or plant will be introduced by humans into the archipelago

Introduced species pose one of the greatest threats to the survival of the native flora and fauna of St Kilda. All visitors, whether for work or recreation, will be encouraged to minimise this risk as far as possible. Procedures to aid this will be put in place and widely promulgated. Where there is reasonable evidence that new species are of recent anthropogenic introduction, these will be removed.

6.

For the marine environment, a comparable level of protection to that on land will be sought, to maintain and protect its significance

This will cover both the natural and cultural marine heritage. The Trust will seek protection of the marine heritage features through powers enabled under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and other legislation, and through working with stakeholders, as appropriate

7.

Any new development (whether changes in procedures or to infrastructure) on the islands will only be permitted if its effect on all aspects of heritage significance have been evaluated and judged to have only minimal detrimental effect upon the heritage features, landscape or wild land qualities. Developments will only be permitted if they are essential and reversible, and if there is no conflict with statutory obligations, e.g. the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999

A zoning approach will be applied, in recognition that some development on Hirta is necessary, whether for operational purposes, to facilitate access or in relation to the agreed terms of lease with the MOD. All developments will be designed and managed to have the minimum possible impact on their environment and will be subject to an assessment of their environmental and heritage impact where appropriate. All land use development proposals will be assessed within the framework of the statutory Development Plan.

¹⁷ See Appendix 4

¹⁸ See Appendix 5

¹⁹ Available from the UNESCO website

²⁰ Reconstruction was an approach taken in the past specifically in relation to the Store and six of the houses in Village Bay, to provide accommodation for staff, researchers and Work Party members. There is no intention of applying this approach again in the future.

8.

Research will be encouraged where it improves the understanding of the heritage features of the property, or assists in guiding management of the outstanding universal values, and requires the unique opportunities that St Kilda offers

A St Kilda Research Committee will be established. The Committee will guide the creation and implementation of a Research Framework. The Framework will identify research gaps and opportunities for the terrestrial and marine natural heritage, historic environment and cultural heritage.

On site research will be permitted if it can be demonstrated that it requires the unique opportunities that St Kilda offers, providing it is in keeping with WHS, NNR and Scheduled Monument status; has minimal impact on the research subject; does not cause unacceptable disruption to the experience of visitors; and fits the proposed St Kilda Research Framework. All research will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

9.

Education and interpretation programmes will aim to inspire, enthuse and educate visitors, instilling a long-lasting appreciation for both the qualities of this unique place and the importance of sustainable conservation management of St Kilda

Information and interpretation about St Kilda will continue to be made accessible through a variety of media including websites, leaflets, exhibitions and staff. This principle allows for the establishment of interpretative facilities on the Western Isles or further afield, and includes virtual access. On-site interpretation should not detract from the unique 'spirit of place' and where appropriate, education and interpretation programmes will be developed in collaboration with others.

10.

Responsible access to the islands will be encouraged

Visitor interests will be managed to provide a high quality and inspiring experience for the visitor whilst safeguarding the archipelago's heritage. All access, including recreational activities, will be in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).

11.

The Trust will consider environmental impacts in all aspects of its activities with regards St Kilda and will encourage others to do likewise

All Trust operations will be assessed for their environmental impact and action taken to mitigate these impacts.

3.1.4

Threats and issues



The heritage of St Kilda as well as the Trust's ability to manage it is faced with a number of threats and issues. The main ones have been identified below.

Aspects of both St Kilda's natural and cultural heritage are threatened to a degree by a range of remote and local environmental and anthropogenic factors such as climate change and unsustainable tourism. Climatic conditions and coastal erosion remain the main threat to the abandoned houses, cleits and other archaeological remains across the archipelago. Large scale off-shore developments could pose a potential threat to the pristine setting of the islands. Accidental introduction of invasive species poses a significant threat to the natural heritage and probably the most severe potential threat to the integrity of the marine environment comes from variations in the marine ecosystem, especially the plankton, caused by climate change. Lack of strong protection of the marine environment, unsustainable fishing methods and oil spills also pose a threat to the marine environment and seabird colonies.

Resource constraints within the Trust and a future without the assistance and presence of the MOD and their agents each pose a significant issue for the Trust's future management of the archipelago and leave the long term security of aspects of the heritage, under threat.

Within the Statement of Intent each of the above and further issues facing the future management and protection of the archipelago's heritage are explored in greater detail.

3.2 Statement of Intent 2012-17



3.2.1

Introduction

The Statement of Intent (Sol) sets out the short term actions that will be taken towards achieving the long term Vision for the islands. It starts with 12 Outcomes that have been set for this Management Plan. These have been based on the long term Vision for the islands; on the threats and issues that have been identified (some new and some existing); and build on the foundations laid by previous Management Plans.

Each Outcome sets out what should be achieved by the end of this Management Plan in 2017.

3.2.2

Outcomes 2012-17

1. Continued conservation of the outstanding historic and natural features of the archipelago through monitoring and appropriate action to maintain them in favourable condition
2. Marine WHS safeguarded appropriately
3. Action to mitigate successfully, urgent and potential threats to key features
4. Enhanced knowledge and understanding of the islands and their cultural and natural features
5. Enhanced provision of informed, responsible and enjoyable access, including virtual access
6. Further development of education and interpretation programmes that promote a greater understanding both of St Kilda and of sustainable conservation management amongst visitors and non-visitors
7. Regular liaison with local communities and stakeholders to understand each other's aspirations for St Kilda and to contribute to best practice of WHSs everywhere
8. A greater awareness of the value of St Kilda internally and externally
9. Greater environmental sustainability in all operations on the archipelago
10. Continued collaborative working to implement the Management Plan
11. Adequate staffing and financial resources in place to meet the operational needs and Vision of the property
12. A contingency plan in place should the MOD and their agents significantly alter their St Kilda operations

3.3 Objectives and Prescriptions

3.3.1

Introduction



The following chapter on Objectives and Prescriptions explores the issues and opportunities facing the archipelago in greater detail, before going on to identify how they will be addressed. As previously identified, resourcing is a serious issue and one that must be addressed in this Management Plan. The following sets out the Objectives and Prescriptions that the Trust believes are necessary to manage the archipelago in the next 5 years. This takes into account the available resources and other known constraints, but also recognises that changes may come about following a review of staffing.

As identified in the 'Management Framework', stakeholders' roles and responsibilities towards the archipelago vary and therefore not all stakeholders are responsible for all the objectives set out below.

3.3.2

Outcome 1

Continued conservation of the outstanding historic and natural features of the archipelago through monitoring and appropriate action to maintain them in favourable condition

Cultural heritage

Since 1996, a five-yearly Management Agreement²¹ has been in place between the Trust and HS ensuring financial support from the Scottish Government towards cultural heritage work on St Kilda. The agreement, underpinned by a conservation philosophy, includes a programme of conservation and monitoring and method statements for specific works. The agreement includes zoning where the structures in some areas will undergo regular maintenance and repair (this includes the core zone of Village Bay – the Zone of Intervention (Zoi) - and a further 138 cleits across Hirta included in the Cleit Conservation Programme (CCP)), and other zones where only monitoring will take place. Prior to the next Management Agreement, the Trust and HS will review all aspects of the agreement including the conservation philosophy, Zoi and CCP to ensure that they remain fit for purpose in the future.

Progress on the Management Agreement will continue to be reviewed annually.

The Trust will maintain links with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), HS, local authority archaeological services and develop links with Universities and others to take advantage of new methods of recording and analysis, thus ensuring the most appropriate approach to management of the historic environment of St Kilda, is being taken.

OBJECTIVE 1

To minimise the degradation of the archaeology of St Kilda

Prescriptions

- 1.1 Review and if necessary amend the conservation philosophy underpinning the approach taken to management of the archaeology (whether upstanding buildings or ruined structures, or those buried beneath the soil) across the archipelago
- 1.2 Agree and implement a new 5-year Management Agreement with HS for the archaeology of Hirta
- 1.3 Incorporate the information gathered from the RCAHMS survey and from the condition surveys, photographs and any other relevant documents into the St Kilda GIS and Canmore, continuing to add new monitoring data within 6 months of collection
- 1.4 Complete the photographic survey of all the archaeological features of St Kilda adding new features as appropriate
- 1.5 Maintain links with the RCAHMS, HS and local authority archaeological services and develop links with Universities and others as appropriate to take advantage of new methods of recording and analysis and to benefit from their knowledge, skills and research interests

²¹ See Appendix 7

Archaeology under active management

Ever since the archipelago was passed to the Trust, volunteers have restored and maintained features (both in use and ruinous) within Village Bay and further afield. Since 2002 a Zol has been specifically delineated and all structures within it are now professionally monitored and maintained. Selected structures outwith this area (138 cleits) are also monitored and maintained as part of the CCP. All other archaeological structures are only monitored.

Within the HS Management Agreement are a range of method statements guiding monitoring and/or management of the archaeological features. These are based upon advice from HS and the years of experience the Trust has of repairing structures in Village Bay. Any works undertaken on the archaeology is fully documented by the St Kilda Archaeologist and the work inspected annually by HS and the Trust.

Condition surveys of all the structures in the Zol are complete and this information will be entered into and made accessible through the Trust GIS. As condition surveys are updated, the Trust will aim to add the new data to the GIS within 6 months of collection (see [Prescription 13](#)).

For a small number of the most important buildings and structures within the Zol, conservation statements will also be produced, setting out how those particular buildings and structures will be managed in the future.

Over the years and particularly since the Trust has managed the islands, the render on houses 1 – 16 has fallen off or been removed and the pointing has been patched. Over this time a variety of pointing methods

have been used, reflecting the conservation approaches of the time. HS and the Trust will review the re-pointing strategy to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As part of this, an assessment of the pointing on each house will be undertaken (historical development, style etc) so that a statement regarding philosophy and future practice can be made available in advance of the development of the next Management Agreement in 2012.

There is a problem with flooding over the fields, and on occasion around and into both the ruinous structures and restored buildings in Village Bay, during and after heavy rain. Water pours across the landscape, affecting structures and revetment dykes (cut into slopes to prevent landslides), as well as scouring the bed of the Dry Burn, putting great pressure on lines of least resistance, including the drains around the houses and the places where the Dry Burn passes under the head dyke and lower dyke. The need for work to alleviate this problem is also noted in the Management Agreement with Historic Scotland. Any works to alleviate the flooding problem will take cognisance of the impact mitigation would have on the value of waterlogged archaeological deposits.

Due to coastal erosion over the winter of 2001/02, the Store now sits perilously close to the cliff edge. For additional information on the future management of the Store, see [Objective 18](#).

Birds nesting within/on top of structures can cause a potential problem with the timing of repairs to these structures. The Trust will explore how best to solve this issue with HS and SNH.



OBJECTIVE 2

To minimise the degradation of certain structures (in use and ruinous) within the Zol and those included in the CCP by undertaking planned monitoring and maintenance

Prescriptions

- 2.1 Review the Zol and CCP to assess their success, adding new structures to the active management programme where it is felt appropriate
- 2.2 Monitor and maintain the structures within the Zol and CCP in accordance with the agreement with HS and with any necessary consents eg Operations Requiring Consent (ORCs), Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), planning permission etc
- 2.3 Produce Conservation Statements (including a vision and management proposals) for the following structures: the Store, the Church and Schoolroom; Factor's House, the houses and blackhouses; Calum Mor's House; and any other structures as necessary as well as the ablutions block
- 2.4 Assess the pointing on each house and review the overall re-pointing strategy in time for the next Management Agreement revision in 2012
- 2.5 Continue to investigate appropriate methodologies for cleit roof repairs, including research into soil micromorphology
- 2.6 Review the need and options for bracken control. Carry out remedial work as appropriate
- 2.7 Understand the extent of the flooding issue in Village Bay and produce a mitigation strategy



All other archaeological features

There are hundreds of structures and features outwith the Zol or CCP that are also of national importance. Every year adverse natural forces, particularly winter storms, cause damage and decay to these drystone structures. Acknowledging that not all these man-made features will be maintained, they will continue to be monitored on a ten-year cycle, so that any future management can be based on a knowledge of rate of decay. The photographic survey carried out by the RCAHMS and Trust between 2007 and 2010 will form the baseline for this work.

Outwith the main Zol or CCP, there are a number of individual structures, in particular the Amazon's House and some of the enclosures that are in need of proactive conservation. The Trust and HS will explore how best to achieve this.

OBJECTIVE 3

To monitor regularly the archaeological structures that are beyond the Zol and outwith the CCP on Hirta and further afield

Prescriptions

- 3.1 Continue monitoring the structures and features outwith the Zol and the CCP on a 10 year cycle
- 3.2 Produce a Conservation Statement for the Amazon's House (including a Vision for the structure and management proposals)

Wreck sites

There are at least three crashed aircraft on land and many tales of lost ships under the seas around the cliffs of St Kilda, but little is known of the survival of wrecks beneath the waves. This is potentially a subject of concern and the Trust will aim to work with others, such as visiting divers, sub aqua associations, the Nautical Archaeological Society, HS and the MOD to develop a knowledge of this aspect of St Kilda's past.

There is potential to discover more about St Kilda's wider maritime links with other islands in the Western Isles and also further afield, and it is anticipated that this will be included in the research framework.

Where research involves any of the military wrecks and/or graves, clearance for the research will be sought from the MOD prior to any research being undertaken.

OBJECTIVE 4

To gain a greater understanding of the wreck sites on and around the archipelago

Prescriptions

- 4.1 Survey and assess the aircraft wreck sites on St Kilda and produce an agreed management approach
- 4.2 Encourage a rapid desk based assessment of the existence and importance of any wreck sites in the seas around the archipelago

Collections and artefacts

The Trust has a collection of hundreds of fragmentary social history items either from or relating to St Kilda eg sherds of pottery; zinc sheeting; knitted items; a spinning wheel etc. Until 2008 Glasgow Museums stored the vast majority of this collection, but it has since been returned and placed with Museum nan Eilean (MnE) whilst its long term future is negotiated. Of those items not with MnE, some items are on display in House 3 on St Kilda; others are held in the Trust's collections store and other items remain on loan to Glasgow Museums.

MnE cannot ensure its conservation without considerable Trust funding or de-accessioning. The Trust will therefore review curatorship and ownership of the collection and make a decision regarding its future care and accessibility.

OBJECTIVE 5

To ensure that the collections and artefacts from St Kilda currently in Trust ownership are cared for appropriately

Prescriptions

- 5.1 Review curatorship and ownership of the Trust's collection, in accordance with the Trust's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2009, making and implementing a decision regarding its future care and accessibility
- 5.2 Establish a network of organisations and other stakeholders who hold collections from or relating to St Kilda to record and disseminate knowledge of St Kilda's material culture and to preserve its integrity



Social history and documentary sources

The Trust holds a collection of both primary and secondary sources relating to St Kilda, mainly in the Trust's central archive in Edinburgh. The archive consists of the Trust's institutional files detailing the acquisition and subsequent management of the property, as well as collections of historical manuscripts, letters, diaries, photographs etc.

The collections are regularly supplemented with new documents, letters, photographs, film and sound recordings, some of which have been generously donated. All items have been listed and packaged appropriately and many of the more valuable items have been photographed to make them more readily accessible and to prevent deterioration of the documents. Enquiries about St Kilda account for a good proportion of research enquiries and researcher visits to the Trust's archives.

In addition to the Trust's archive, there are many other publicly and privately held archives eg the Macleod archive in Dunvegan Castle, relating to St Kilda containing invaluable historical information about the islands and their people. A project to provide a concordance of sources relating to St Kilda, potentially available through the St Kilda website, would be of great benefit to all those undertaking research or with a general interest in the archipelago. The Trust will seek partners to work with eg the Comainn Eachdraidh (the local voluntary historical societies of the Western Isles) and the Islands Book Trust (IBT) etc to enhance access to sources relating to the archipelago's social history.

The Trust has an oral history archive, partially held by the Trust²² but mainly held by the School of Scottish Studies (SSS). The Trust will seek to have the archive digitised to ensure it is backed up and will investigate how access to these recordings can be enhanced.

These numerous archives contain invaluable information about St Kilda's past and the Trust will encourage research that advances our understanding and appreciation of the archipelago.

The Trust also holds many hundreds of images of St Kilda and receives many requests for commercial and non commercial use. The images have been digitised and entered into the Trust's image database.

In addition about 15% of the Trust's images of St Kilda are on Scotland's Images website where images can be licensed for use (see [Objective 37](#)). Researchers and schools and those wishing to access the images for non-commercial purposes are also able to access the images at a reduced cost on the Scotland's Images website.

OBJECTIVE 6

To enhance access to archival sources

Prescriptions

- 6.1 Collate the primary and secondary St Kilda sources already known about and identify gaps in the collections and assess the amount that needs to be added. Seek out potential partnerships to take this forward
- 6.2 Complete the programme to digitise the existing Trust St Kilda archive and ensure any new accessions are digitised
- 6.3 Seek to have the Trust's St Kilda oral history collection digitised
- 6.4 Seek to enhance access to the many sources relating to the archipelago's social history by working in partnership with owners and other interest groups, as appropriate
- 6.5 Investigate and, if appropriate, initiate entering additional images from the Trust's collection of digitised St Kilda images onto the Scotland's Images database
- 6.6 Continue to enhance the Trust's photographic collection of St Kilda



Landscape

The archipelago's landscape is formed from the interplay of the natural and cultural features. Designated a WHS and a National Scenic Area (NSA), St Kilda's landscape is of both international and national significance. The designations require that the outstanding landscape qualities of the archipelago are protected and not damaged by developments. The wild land quality of the more remote areas of the islands is also a key attribute that must be protected.

On Hirta, although there is a presumption against any new structures being built (see [Guiding Principle 7](#)), there is an occasional need for new buildings or structures and/or maintenance and replacement of existing buildings/structures, to assist with the running of the MOD base; to aid navigation and potentially in future to assist in the running of Trust operations including enhancing access. Any new developments or activities that have the potential to impact on the archipelago's heritage will require prior permission from the Trust. Certain ground disturbance²³ is classified by SNH as an ORC within the SSSI, and SMC from HS is also required in scheduled areas. Ground disturbance will be subject to monitoring by an approved archaeologist. Planning permission would also be required for developments and where these are necessary they will be applied for.

The visual impact of the MOD buildings in Village Bay has been reduced in recent years with changing the exterior paint of the buildings from grey to dark green. Minimising the visual impact of all new and existing structures in the landscape will continue to be a priority.

There will be no off road use of vehicles except in designated areas, such as the beach landing area or in the event of an emergency. Should this be required for operational reasons, prior permission from the Western Isles Manager (WIM) will be required.

Mitigating the effects of coastal erosion with the hard defences has impacted significantly on the landscape of Village Bay. See [Objective 18](#) for further discussion about future coastal protection and mitigation of coastal erosion in Village Bay.

Strict landscape conservation will remain the priority on all the other islands in the archipelago with the presumption that they be treated as wild land and therefore no developments will be permitted.

A number of external factors have the potential to threaten the landscape setting of St Kilda and the feeling of isolation when on the islands. In particular intrusive structures associated with large scale energy developments such as off-shore wind turbines, wave energy installations, oil and gas rigs – all transitory in nature, but all which if ill sited could have a serious impact on St Kilda's landscape and the feeling of being on the edge of the world. Disturbance from low flying aircraft may also affect the feeling of isolation. Other than essential operational helicopter flights, there should be no other flights around the archipelago (see [Objective 16](#)).

Although a separate and distinct issue, any development that is likely to impact on the landscape of the islands is also likely to impact on the setting of the scheduled monuments and will thus be subject to scrutiny by HS as a statutory consultee in the planning and SMC process.

OBJECTIVE 7

To maintain and enhance the landscape of St Kilda

Prescriptions

- 7.1 Ensure that there are no new buildings or structures erected on the islands of the archipelago other than Hirta
- 7.2 Continue to seek agreement from the Trust and any necessary statutory or planning consents for the erection of any new buildings and structures or maintenance and replacement of existing structures on Hirta or any new activities that have the potential to impact on the archipelago's natural and/or cultural heritage and landscape setting
- 7.3 Reduce the visual impact of existing structures in the landscape and remove redundant infrastructure in accordance with lease conditions (eg the track down Ruaival)

See also [Prescriptions 16.4](#) and [16.5](#) re aircraft

²² The Trust holds a number of tape recordings of interviews with St Kildans

²³ Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, ditches or other earthworks or the laying, maintenance or removal of pipelines and cables, above or below ground

Landforms and geology

Agreed developments on Hirta have had a negative impact on the islands' geology and geomorphology in the past, for example, the construction of roads, shore defences and the creation of a large quarry. Any future development must have no more than minimal detrimental effect on these features – which means no creation of new quarries, expansion of existing quarries, or significant extraction of sand. In practice, any disturbance of the ground, or removal of geological specimens, is an ORC under the SSSI designation and needs formal approval from SNH and may also require SMC.

Where necessary, imported material should be used for future works, except for small-scale operations where no significant impact will occur (on agreement with the WIM). If material is imported, care should be taken to avoid importation of species not indigenous to St Kilda. Importation of soil must be avoided (see [Objective 19](#)). Consideration may be given to re-cycling redundant building material from Hirta. Guidelines will be developed to aid the decision making process on imported materials. Prior to this, decisions will be made on a case by case basis in discussions with the WIM.

The underwater geology and geomorphology is not covered by the SSSI designation and therefore not covered by ORCs. Aspects that have been identified as key features, such as the mega ripples, are therefore in danger of being damaged by uncontrolled activities such as the use of inappropriate fishing methods etc (see [Objective 13](#)).

OBJECTIVE 8

To gain a greater understanding about the significance of the archipelago's geological and geomorphological features and to ensure that there is no significant damage to these features, both on land and underwater

Prescriptions

- 8.1 Investigate the glacial history of the St Kilda archipelago
- 8.2 Develop and implement guidelines to aid the decision making process on imported materials
- 8.3 Seek to prevent damage to the underwater geology and geomorphology

See also [Prescriptions 13.1](#) and [13.2](#)



Natural Heritage - Terrestrial

Natura plant communities²⁴

Due to its geographical isolation, St Kilda has a relatively low number of vascular plants, and none of national importance. The vegetation communities they form, though, are seen as important in European terms (hence the Natura designation) owing to their combination of montane and hyper-oceanic characteristics.

The grazing situation that was current at the time of the submission of the SAC designation should be maintained – i.e. Hirta, Soay and Boreraay grazed by the feral sheep flocks; and Dun ungrazed. Frequency of monitoring and the methodology used for the qualifying features is agreed between SNH, the Scottish Government and JNCC with approval from Europe.

Guiding Principle 3 notes that “*natural processes will normally be allowed to continue without intervention*”. In practice, although this will be the policy over most of the archipelago, within the head dyke in Village Bay there may be cases where, to conserve cultural and archaeological features, specific vegetation patterns are aimed for.

With the increasing number of visitors coming to St Kilda, visitor impacts on the significant features of the vegetation will continue to be monitored. Climbing on the vegetated sea cliffs could cause damage to this important habitat and the Trust will continue to provide information on the location of the important habitats and species to facilitate responsible access.

Any activity or operation that may damage the vegetation will require consent from SNH as an ORC.

OBJECTIVE 9

To maintain the natura plant communities in favourable condition

Prescriptions

- 9.1 Continue to record the location of important plant communities to inform management decisions
- 9.2 Monitor the condition of the SAC qualifying features as required
- 9.3 Continue monitoring the impact of visitors on the vegetation habitats and work with CnES and SNH to agree any necessary management, taking action (re-routing visitors) to prevent degradation

Bryophytes and lichens

St Kilda contains a rich assemblage of lower plant species (bryophytes and lichens) of national importance. We need to be sure of the main locations of these species, and to monitor the ecological trends.

OBJECTIVE 10

To gain a greater understanding of the important plant communities present on the archipelago, especially the bryophyte and lichen communities

Prescriptions

- 10.1 Identify the main locations of all the bryophyte and lichen communities on the archipelago and compile and maintain a list of these species

Animals and birds (excluding seabirds)

Perhaps the most notable land bird resident on the archipelago is the distinctive subspecies, the St Kilda wren. Surveys of the wren population carried out in 1957, 1990 and 1993, show little apparent change in overall numbers and although their numbers may fluctuate from year to year, due to the vagaries in the weather and food supply, the population of St Kilda wren seems secure. The St Kilda field mouse is also a unique subspecies associated with the archipelago. The biggest threat facing these species comes from introduced species, in particular rats, mink or cats, or the associated control programme [see [Objective 19](#)]. To ensure that any control programme does not put the mice or wrens at risk, more information on the mouse and wren populations, their abundance and distribution is vital. In addition not much is known about the genetic variability of the field mouse. To answer the questions about the field mice, a 3 year research programme was instigated at the end of 2009. Further research into the wren populations will also be encouraged.

St Kilda is an important site for vagrant and migrant birds, some on their regular route to and from more northerly breeding grounds, others having been blown off course. Over the years records of migrant and vagrant birds have been kept and this programme of monitoring terrestrial birds will continue, in agreement with SNH.

Over the years, a fairly balanced scientific programme investigating the various invertebrate groups found on St Kilda has been undertaken. Further research will be encouraged into the invertebrate populations, in particular into the BAP species.

The Trust will encourage all research data to be made widely accessible.

OBJECTIVE 11

To gain a better understanding of the terrestrial animals and birds on the archipelago, especially the indigenous wren and field mouse

Prescriptions

- 11.1 Continue supporting research into the field mice, particularly on the distribution of the mice, on genetic distinctions between islands, and on genetic variability of the populations
- 11.2 Encourage research into the wren populations
- 11.3 Instigate a long-term monitoring programme of the wren and field mouse populations, to agreed standards
- 11.4 Continue the programme of monitoring terrestrial birds, in agreement with SNH
- 11.5 Encourage research into the invertebrates on the archipelago, especially the BAP species
- 11.6 Make biological data accessible through the National Biodiversity Network Gateway (NBN)

²⁴ Natura plant communities are those covered by the Special Area of Conservation designation

Sheep

The Soay and Boreray blackface sheep on the archipelago are an important part of the islands heritage. The persistence of the primitive breed of Soay sheep, free of genetic input from modern breeds on Soay, is one of their most significant and remarkable features. The Boreray blackface sheep are also classed as a critically endangered rare breed. The sheep are also a cultural resource, a key part of the human story of the islands.

Maintenance of these genetic resources is a priority and keeping the genetic distinction of the feral sheep on each of the islands in the archipelago is also important. Therefore there will be no importation of any sheep into the archipelago and there will be a presumption against movement of sheep between the islands, except in exceptional circumstances eg a serious outbreak of disease that was felt to threaten any of the sheep populations. Consideration will be given to creating another flock of Soay and/or Boreray blackface sheep from St Kilda stock, elsewhere, to provide a back-up genetic resource. Full consultation with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and the Soay Sheep research project will take place, prior to any decision being taken.

The UK wide outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 highlighted the necessity of ensuring that these internationally important flocks are not threatened by life-threatening diseases, or by culls implemented to control the diseases. A list of the most likely sources of livestock disease and parasites will be produced to aid those working on Hirta and any new guidelines required will be highlighted. This will be undertaken as part of the Biosecurity Plan (see [Objective 19](#)).

The Soay sheep on Hirta, as one of the few unmanaged populations of large, wild herbivores in the UK, have been the subject of a long running study. Concerns were raised in the past about some 'invasive' research, and in future such research will be restricted to small-scale manipulations, such as the taking of blood for parasite samples. In practice, any research needs to have the agreement of the Trust/SNH. Home Office Licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are subject to ethical review and legal enforcement.

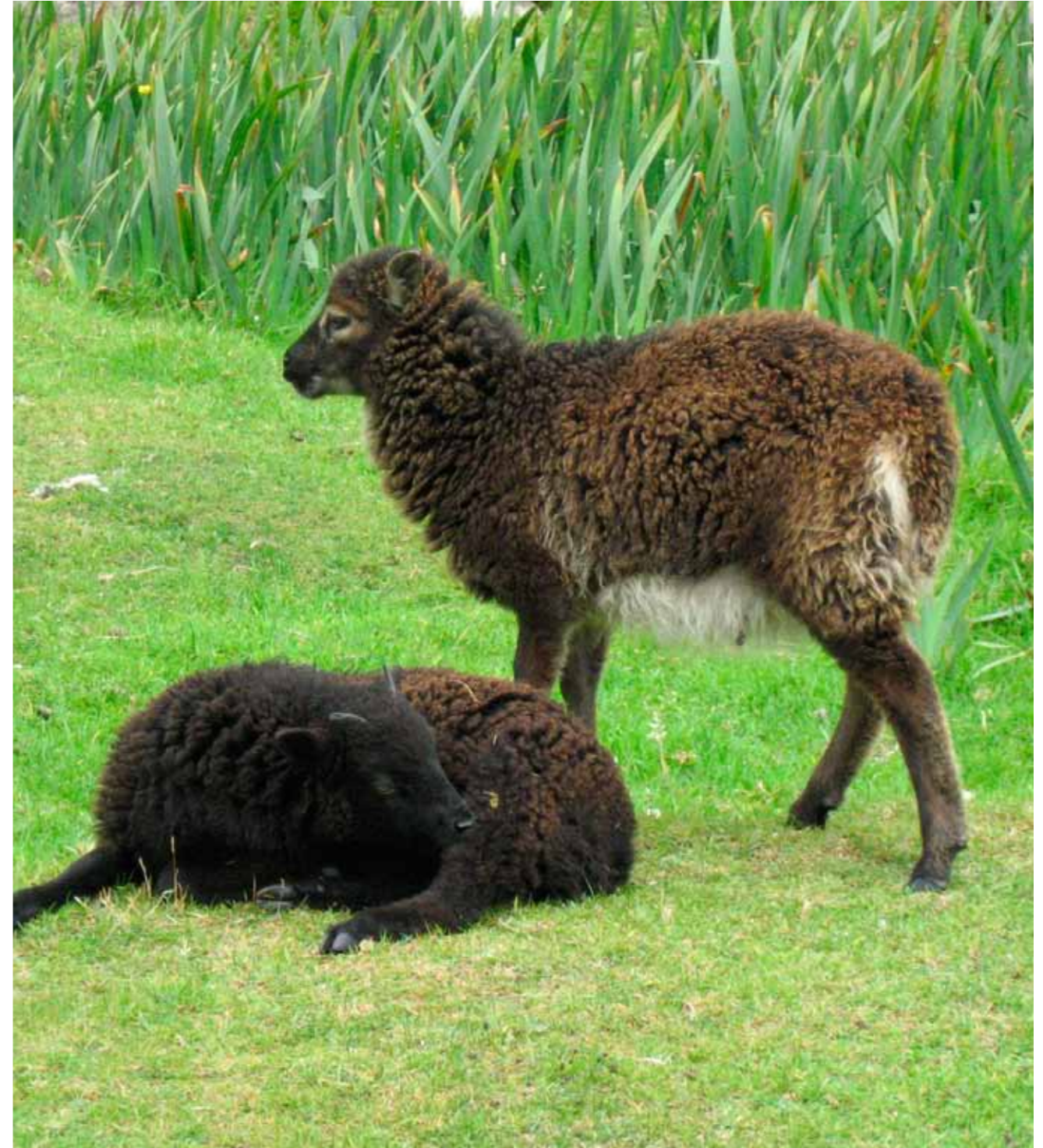
The sheep will continue to be treated as feral animals because the action of natural mortality and therefore natural selection of the population is seen as important in maintaining their genetic adaptation to the harsh environment. For some visitors the sight of dead sheep is distressing – particularly at the time of population crashes. The Trust will work with the Soay Sheep project to produce and implement a policy on how sheep carcasses will be dealt with in the Village Bay area and/or close to water courses. In addition more information about the importance of the sheep and the reasons for not managing them would help visitors to understand both the value of the sheep and the hands-off approach taken in all areas except in the Village and this will be included in the Communications Plan (see [Objective 29](#)).

OBJECTIVE 12

To ensure the genetic conservation of the flocks of Soay sheep on Soay and Hirta, and of the blackface sheep on Boreray

Prescriptions

- 12.1 Ensure there is no importation of sheep into the archipelago
- 12.2 Ensure there is no movement of sheep between the different islands (except that movement from Soay to Hirta may be permitted under exceptional circumstances)
- 12.3 Agree a code of conduct for those in direct contact with the sheep
- 12.4 Produce and implement a policy to deal with sheep carcasses in the Village Bay area and near to water courses
- 12.5 Give consideration to the idea of creating another self-sustaining flock of Soay and/or Boreray blackface sheep elsewhere, to ensure preservation of the gene pool in the event of disease on St Kilda



Marine WHS safeguarded appropriately

Marine environment

The marine environment surrounding the St Kilda archipelago is of outstanding universal value and the health of the seas, critical to the survival of St Kilda's seabird colonies, the habitats and species it supports and also to the communities and economy of the Western Isles.

In addition to being designated a marine WHS, the seas surrounding St Kilda are also designated SAC²⁵ and SPA²⁶ (European Marine Sites (EMS)), which provides protection to the qualifying features.

However, not all features of the marine environment of the WHS are protected by statutory designations, therefore potentially threatening its integrity. The main identified threats to its habitats and species arise from both inside and outwith the WHS, namely from changes in the marine ecosystem (possibly related to climate change); oil and fuel spills; litter; inappropriate discharge of sewage or disposal of food waste; physical damage caused by certain fishing methods, over fishing and marine invasive species.

To establish just how much of a threat these issues are, greater research will be encouraged. In addition the Trust will work with key stakeholders to find a way of ensuring the marine WHS in its entirety is appropriately safeguarded in the years ahead whilst also not precluding sustainable economic activities.

OBJECTIVE 13

To ensure all the features of the marine WHS are safeguarded appropriately

Prescriptions

- 13.1 Investigate whether all features within the marine WHS are safeguarded appropriately, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and take measures to protect them as necessary
- 13.2 Encourage research that will enhance our knowledge and understanding of the marine WHS, the threats to it and attitudes to marine protection
- 13.3 Review the Trust's position on inclusion of St Kilda in the proposed Harris National Park and take any further steps as necessary
- 13.4 Record all cetacean and other notable marine sightings and report to the appropriate bodies

Littoral and benthic habitats

The marine environment around St Kilda, as well as being part of the WHS is an SAC, designated for reefs and underwater caves. It is a requirement of the Habitats Directive that habitats and species typical of these habitats should be maintained at favourable conservation status. Among the threats to the littoral and benthic habitats are mobile demersal fishing methods and industrial activity. A set of agreed management and use guidelines will be developed with the main stakeholders and users to ensure that the marine SAC (mSAC) is appropriately protected. Monitoring of the qualifying features will be carried out and the impact of activities, ongoing and potential, will be assessed. Should the guidelines prove to be insufficient in maintaining the qualifying features in favourable condition, a management plan will be developed in consultation with all stakeholders.

The underwater landscape, the diversity and richness of the seabed communities surrounding St Kilda and the clarity of the water come together to make the waters surrounding the archipelago some of the most spectacular and challenging dive sites in Britain. Diving has the potential to both add to our knowledge of underwater habitats but also cause damage, whether accidental or deliberate. In 2005 a code of conduct for divers diving around St Kilda was drawn up based on current best practice, to help ensure safe and responsible diving; and to encourage sharing of information about the seabed to enhance our knowledge of the habitats and species present.

OBJECTIVE 14

To maintain all important intertidal and underwater habitats in favourable condition

Prescriptions

- 14.1 Monitor the qualifying features of the mSAC, and other features of the WHS
- 14.2 Monitor current fishing levels and methods within the mSAC
- 14.3 Assess the impact of activities (current and potential) on the qualifying features of the mSAC
- 14.4 Prepare a set of agreed management and use guidelines for the mSAC in consultation with the main stakeholders and users
- 14.5 Develop a management plan for the mSAC in consultation with stakeholders, if necessary
- 14.6 Promulgate the code of practice amongst the diving community to ensure diving activities do not damage natural and/or archaeological features
- 14.7 Encourage divers to submit records, to help build a picture of the health of the marine environment

²⁵ The qualifying features of the SAC are the reefs, vegetated sea cliffs and submerged or partially submerged sea caves. For further details of the SAC citation, see Appendix 12

²⁶ The qualifying features of the SPA are a number of the seabird species and also because the archipelago supports in excess of 20,000 seabirds. For further details of the SPA citation, see Appendix 13

Village Bay

Village Bay is the focus of much human activity, whether by Trust and MOD staff or by visitors. Therefore vigilance in all activities that might impact upon the marine environment or seabirds is essential and contingency plans should be in place to deal with any accident. Any shore based activity that discharges into the sea is regulated by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). One of the highest potential risks is the transfer of fuel from landing craft to shore facilities at the MOD base in Village Bay. However, the MOD's agents have rigorous procedures in place for dealing with the fuel transfer, significantly reducing this risk and an Oil Spill Response Plan in place in case of an accident. Shipwrecks of oil tankers, pose a more remote risk of a far greater spill as does 'inherited oil' - the accidental release of bunker oil from ships - wrecked and not. The former is covered by the Western Isles Oil Spill Response Plan and how to deal with the latter requires addressing. Visiting cruise ships, day boats, fishing boats and yachts also pose a risk of small scale spills, particularly within Village Bay and a contingency plan must be established and agreed about how a relatively minor pollution incident would be dealt with - one that is not of sufficient magnitude to trigger action from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), but one which if not dealt with would over time cause damage to the marine environment.



OBJECTIVE 15

To ensure human activities focused around Village Bay do not pose undue threats to the marine environment or seabirds

Prescriptions

- 15.1 Ensure that unlicensed polluting substances from shore based activities (including organic waste and pollutant chemicals) are not discharged into the surrounding seas and that contingency plans are in place to counteract accidental discharge
- 15.2 Review adequacy of the Oil Spill Response/ Contingency Plans (e.g. the plan for the Western Isles, the QinetiQ plan for the re-supply ship and those referred to in 15.3) at regular intervals, amending where necessary
- 15.3 Develop and implement a code of practice and contingency plan to deal with small scale marine contamination from visiting cruise ships, small visitor boats, fishing boats and yachts and from 'inherited oil'

See also [Prescription 17.6](#)

Seabird breeding colonies

Seabird populations fluctuate in response to local events and conditions as well as more widespread factors. Predation by the growing colony of great skuas and disturbance of nest sites have all been identified as threats to the breeding colonies. St Kilda is a triennial JNCC seabird productivity monitoring site. It is important to monitor seabird numbers both in absolute terms and relative to similar populations elsewhere in order to ensure that the colony does not suffer disproportionately to other populations.

Additionally, as a SSSI and SPA, legislation protects both the birds and their habitats. Disturbance could result from aircraft, ships or pedestrian access. Other than essential operational helicopter flights, there should be no other low level flights around the archipelago particularly during the breeding season owing to the disturbance to seabirds, risks of bird strike, and reduction in the 'wild land' perception. Discussions should be held with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on how to achieve this. Existing measures agreed with the MOD's agents to protect St Kilda from Range activities will be maintained. The existing Code of Conduct for cruise ships will be updated to cover all visiting visitor related vessels with advice on how to avoid causing disturbance to the seabird colonies from the sea.

Climbing the formidable cliffs and stacs is becoming more popular and could in some areas pose a threat to the breeding seabirds. To help climbers observe their responsibilities under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and to help protect the nest sites, the Trust in association with the Mountaineering Council of Scotland have produced a map identifying several potential climbing areas that would not affect the seabirds nor the vegetated sea cliffs (see [Objective 23](#)).



OBJECTIVE 16

To maintain the populations of internationally important breeding seabirds in favourable condition, as indicated by total numbers and the proportion of the relevant biogeographical population

Prescriptions

- 16.1 Carry out a programme of monitoring seabird numbers and productivity in agreement with SNH and JNCC
- 16.2 Further research to be carried out, as necessary, to identify causes of any changes observed from the monitoring programmes
- 16.3 Continue to monitor the presence of marine litter and to assess the impact of litter on seabirds, particularly entanglement in nets
- 16.4 Ensure that all authorised helicopter flights to St Kilda follow a direct route into and out of the landing pad, except in exceptional circumstances
- 16.5 Work with the CAA to ensure that the seabird colonies are given the appropriate protection from aircraft activity

See also [Prescriptions 17.6, 23.4 and 23.5](#)



Seabird loafing and feeding areas

The seas immediately around St Kilda are critical to the seabird populations for activities such as preening, loafing, moulting and feeding and this was a key reason for extension of the WHS designation into the marine environment and for the recent extension of the SPA into the marine environment. The boundaries of the Natura designations and WHS run concurrently.

The importance of these areas to the continuing success of the seabird populations should be considered in the EMS management guidelines [see [Objective 14](#)]. It is known that seabirds forage much further afield and over a much wider area of the North Atlantic, although there is little data currently to indicate exactly where. Further research into seabird feeding areas is being carried out by SNH and JNCC and stakeholders will be supportive of any measures which safeguard the bird populations of St Kilda.

The main long-term threat to seabirds is the security of their food supply, and some of the major changes observed in seabird populations have been attributed to a shortage in their prey species. This, in turn, has been related to wider changes in the marine ecosystem, possibly connected with climate change, and to more local fishing pressures. The latter is amenable to local solutions but the former is more difficult to correct. The key measure here will be to carry out adequate research to identify the causes of fluctuations in seabird populations.

Seabirds are also vulnerable to capture in certain fishing gear (fixed nets and long lines); to oil spills and entanglement in litter, in particular. The most likely source of oil is accidental or deliberate discharge from passing vessels, though oil and gas exploration and development activities also pose a risk. The risk assessment from Royal Haskoning undertaken for the Scottish Executive in 2003 recommended that

management action should concentrate on minimising risks from shipping through promotion of good watch-keeping of vessels within 70km of St Kilda and adequate surveillance of vessel movements by the MCA. A further recommendation was that all merchant traffic should have a closest point of approach of a minimum of 30km, which would affect a small number of shipping routes.

The escort and salvage tug (ETV) based in Stornoway is also seen as key to ensuring the safe passage of vessels over 50,00gt and/or carrying hazardous cargo, through the Minches. However if the present proposal from the UK Government to remove the ETV goes ahead it will increase the risk to the marine environment around St Kilda and the seabird populations in particular. The Trust will support CnES in its campaign to retain the ETV. Stakeholders welcomed the MCA's decision to retain the Coastguard Station in Stornoway following proposals to potentially close it in the summer of 2011.

In relation to oil and gas exploration, IUCN recommended a moratorium on oil and gas exploration within a 70km radius of St Kilda. On the basis of current geological knowledge, as confirmed by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)²⁷, it is extremely unlikely that oil or gas is present in amounts that would make production economically viable within a 70km radius of St Kilda. The risk of an oil spill as a result of oil developments in that area is therefore negligible. Nevertheless, oil spills resulting from exploration and production outwith this zone could affect the intertidal area of the WHS. DECC has undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) programme around the UK, which aims to assist in the development of DECC policy, and licensing rounds are only conducted in areas which have been subjected to SEA and confirmed acceptable for licensing. In addition, all activities

associated with the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves are subject to the requirements of the UK's Offshore Petroleum Production and Pipelines (Assessment of Environmental Effects Regulations 1999 (as amended) and the Offshore Petroleum (Conservation of Habitats) Regulations 2001 (as amended) and other legislation which will minimise the probability that such activities would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the WHS.

The effect of large scale offshore wind developments were a concern with regards landscape impact and the effects they might have on seabird feeding and loafing areas. The Scottish Government's recent Draft Plan for Offshore Wind Energy in Scottish Territorial Waters contained detailed locational guidance for development around Scotland in the next 20 years and more. It suggested that no large scale developments will be located close to St Kilda. An assessment agreed with by CnES. Large scale offshore wind farms may not be an issue for this plan or the next, however with such little data currently available on how such developments might impact seabird populations, their feeding and loafing areas, the Trust will encourage research into this area. This will be useful not only to St Kilda in the future but to other areas with significant seabird populations, for developers and planners.

A Code of Conduct for visiting cruise ships exists, however needs updating. This will be replaced by a new Code of Conduct for all visiting vessels and will be promoted as widely as possible to reach as many prospective visiting vessels as possible.

OBJECTIVE 17

To protect the loafing and feeding areas of the internationally important seabird colonies of St Kilda

Prescriptions

- 17.1 Monitor the use and impact of fishing methods particularly fixed nets and long lines on the seabird populations and seek to have control measures introduced, if necessary
- 17.2 Encourage research into the feeding ecology of seabirds to identify main feeding areas and factors that would impact their survival
- 17.3 Identify threats to the food supply of the seabirds and seek to ensure these are counteracted, where possible
- 17.4 Encourage research into the effects of large scale renewables on the seabird populations
- 17.5 Support any additional measures that will safeguard the seabird populations as identified and recommended by the research undertaken by JNCC and in consultation with key stakeholders
- 17.6 Update the Code of Conduct to cover all visiting vessels and promote it as widely as possible
- 17.7 Work with the MCA to ascertain levels of use and observance of the DWR and MEHRAs and investigate methods of increasing their effectiveness
- 17.8 Continue to support the presence of the Coastguard service in Stornoway and the escort and salvage tug (ETV)

²⁷ The Department of Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) Oil and Gas Energy Development Unit Offshore Environment and Decommissioning branch is responsible for the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation relating to UK oil and gas activity, so that it can proceed in an environmentally sound manner in the context of sustainability.



Action to mitigate successfully, urgent and potential threats to key features

Coastal erosion

Since the turn of the 20th century, a series of modifications to the coastal configuration have been carried out in Village Bay. The pier and slipway were constructed to help the original community. The pier was subsequently extended and another slipway constructed to aid the MOD in their operations on Hirta and a tiered gabion-basket wall was erected to protect their buildings and installations. Over the years erosion of the shoreline at either end of the gabion wall and in other parts of the Bay have brought into question the effectiveness and appropriateness of the present coastal defences, particularly as the erosion is threatening aspects of the archaeological remains – in particular the Store and head dyke. In addition the gabion baskets have a considerable negative impact on the landscape of the Bay. Trust, SNH, HS, MOD and CnES will work together to identify, and then implement, the best long-term strategy for dealing with coastal erosion in Village Bay, taking into account the assessments of coastal erosion undertaken in 2003.



OBJECTIVE 18

To identify and implement a long-term strategy for dealing with coastal erosion in Village Bay

Prescriptions

- 18.1 Undertake a Standing Building Survey, Conservation Plan and Heritage Impact Assessment on the Store and implement an agreed course of action for its future
- 18.2 Agree and implement a long term approach to dealing with the coastal erosion and coastal protection in Village Bay
- 18.3 Record and assess the archaeological deposits under threat from coastal erosion in Village Bay, particularly those affected by the presence of the gabion baskets at the seaward front of the MOD complex and implement an agreed course of action for any considered under particular threat, eg the head dyke
- 18.4 Continue to monitor the coastal erosion in Village Bay

Introduced species

St Kilda has a relatively small indigenous terrestrial flora and fauna, indicating both that ecological conditions are harsh and that the rate of natural colonisation of the archipelago is low. However, this isolated, fragile ecosystem is extremely vulnerable to the introduction of new species. Humans have introduced species accidentally and intentionally in the past, some of which have become accepted as part of the St Kilda scene (e.g. Soay sheep and mice). However, introduced species are generally the main threat to the biodiversity of remote islands, and every effort must be made to ensure that they do not arrive. If a new non-indigenous plant or animal is observed, then it should be removed before it has a chance to spread – unless the balance of probability is that it arrived on the archipelago outwith the hand of man.

Of most concern would be the introduction of rodents, mustelids, cats and dogs which could have a devastating effect on the seabird, wren and mouse populations, in particular. In addition, the contingency plan to deal with a suspected rat or mink invasion requires to be formalised and a quarantine plan produced. Any control programme must take into account its impact on the important wren and field mouse populations, to ensure these species are not adversely affected.

It is important that all those that visit the archipelago, whether for work or recreation are aware of how important it is to prevent new species being introduced to the islands. This is partially covered in the Trust's access leaflet which highlights the issue and discourages visitors from bringing cats or dogs to the archipelago, because of the disturbance they could cause to the wild animals as well as the threat they pose of bringing new parasites to the islands. Biosecurity procedures have been produced for boats/ships/helicopters that are bringing goods or people to St Kilda setting out what measures must be taken to minimise the risks of introducing invasive species etc.

The fragile ecosystem is vulnerable to non-indigenous plants also and the Trust will work with the MOD and boat operators to encourage more rigorous procedures for all visitors prior to embarkation for the archipelago eg ensuring footwear and camping equipment is clean and soil free etc. Running alongside this will be an awareness raising campaign, specifically highlighting these issues to visitors and those working on the islands, so that everyone understands the importance of such rigorous measures.

This ties in with the *Outer Hebrides Biosecurity Plan* and *Our Nature A Framework for Biodiversity in the Western Isles* which includes an action to 'Raise awareness of the problems associated with species non-native to the Western Isles and encourage the removal of non-native species causing damage to native flora and fauna'²⁸.

The Trust has a *Dogs at Trust Properties*²⁹ policy which discourages the landing of dogs on any part of the archipelago in compliance with the SOAC.

OBJECTIVE 19

To keep the islands free of introduced species in particular rodents, mustelids, cats and dogs

Prescriptions

- 19.1 Review, agree and implement the Biosecurity Plan and procedures for St Kilda, drawing on existing procedures and protocols and keeping it under review
- 19.2 Raise awareness of the Biosecurity Plan and the accompanying relevant procedures, amongst all who visit St Kilda, whether for work or recreation

²⁸ Our Nature A Framework for Biodiversity Action in the Western Isles p14

²⁹ See Appendix 10

Enhanced knowledge and understanding of the islands and their cultural and natural features

Research

St Kilda presents some outstanding opportunities for research into its natural and cultural heritage, in its widest context – both physical and non-physical assets. However research opportunities that require fieldwork to be undertaken on Hirta are limited by the accommodation and facilities available and the logistics of carrying out research in such a remote place. It is therefore vital that a Research Framework is established that will drive forward a research agenda, setting priorities and identifying where research is most needed. A new St Kilda Research Committee will also be established made up of both Trust and external experts. It will take a holistic view including all specialisms and replace the existing St Kilda Archaeological Research Committee. With the Research Framework in place, the new Research Committee will be able to select which of the many research proposals that are put forward, should and could be supported.

All research programmes should continue to contribute to our understanding and appreciation of the islands and give a positive answer to the question *“Does this research have to be carried out on St Kilda?”* [See also [Guiding Principle 8](#)]. A review of all current research programmes will be undertaken to ensure they fit comfortably with the new Research Framework. Until the new Research Framework is in place, priority will be given to research that takes forward an objective or prescription in the Management Plan.

Outcome 4

The St Kilda Research Committee will advise on ethical research standards and all research undertaken will be in accordance with the site being an NNR, SM and WHS and will comply with statutory obligations and Trust Principles. Written permission will be required from the Trust, in addition to necessary consents, Home Office Project and Personal Licences, ORC and SMC etc.

It may be that there are opportunities to make St Kilda an international centre of research excellence and a feasibility study will be undertaken to look into the merits, logistics and cost implications of this.

OBJECTIVE 20

To gain a greater understanding of the key aspects of the archipelago's natural and cultural heritage

Prescriptions

- 20.1 Establish a St Kilda Research Committee made up of Trust and external experts
- 20.2 Produce and begin implementation of a St Kilda Research Framework
- 20.3 Undertake a Feasibility Study into establishing St Kilda as an international research facility

Collaborative research

In extending inscription of the WHS into the marine environment, the World Heritage Committee recommended that initiatives for collaborative marine research and conservation management for off shore islands should be developed. It recommended marine area workshops with colleagues in New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America and others in the North Atlantic involved in site based design and marine conservation, as well as national based strategic planning for off shore areas.

Much collaborative research has been undertaken and more is already underway with research institutions in the UK – over 20 in the last 10 years – and the Trust will continue to support appropriate research that fits the Research Framework and furthers our understanding of and the management objectives for the WHS.

The Trust will encourage research partners to disseminate the results of research programmes widely in general interest publications and on websites (see [Objective 29](#)).

OBJECTIVE 21

To enhance management and understanding of the WHS by drawing on the experience of others

Prescriptions

- 21.1 Develop initiatives for collaborative marine research and conservation management for off-shore islands to aid management of St Kilda
- 21.2 Continue working with research institutions that can help deliver the St Kilda Research Framework, advancing our knowledge, understanding and management of the WHS

Data collection

With the considerable amount of biological, ecological, geological and cultural information generated by research and survey work on St Kilda, agreed protocols need to be in place to ensure that it is consistently collected, organised, written-up and made easily available. This will improve our ability to synthesise and understand the information, and to share it with others.

OBJECTIVE 22

To ensure that information gathered on or about St Kilda is collected, collated and managed to agreed standards and the results of any research made widely available

Prescriptions

- 22.1 Agree protocols on the collection, collation and storage of any research data gained from the archipelago and make the results available as appropriate

Enhanced provision of informed, responsible and enjoyable access, including virtual access

Access and enjoyment

Visiting St Kilda is a long held dream for many and it is Trust policy to allow unrestricted access to the archipelago – in line with the Trust's *Order Confirmation Act 1938; Access, Enjoyment and Education Principles 2005* and the *Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003*. However with access comes responsibility for the visitor, as set out in the Trust's access guide – *St Kilda: a guide to access and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code*³⁰ (SOAC).

The archipelago's remoteness and the difficulty and expense of getting there, provides something of a natural limit to visitor numbers. However, with the increase in cruise ships and day boats from the Western Isles in recent years, visitor numbers quadrupled from just under 1000 in 1989 to just under 4000 in 2010.

Due to the length of stay of most visitors, the majority remain within Village Bay and this is where visitor impacts are mainly focused. The impacts on the cultural and natural heritage are monitored by the St Kilda Ranger and Archaeologist and at present, the impacts on the heritage, on those that live and work on the archipelago and also on the experience of other visitors, is felt to be within acceptable levels. Where this increase in visitor numbers has had a significant impact, is on the amount of staff time dedicated to visitor management (see [Objective 32](#)). With this trend in visitor numbers increasing, the additional pressure placed on resources and to ensure that the Trust can continue to enable sustainable access and enjoyment of the archipelago in the future, a Visitor Management Plan (VMP) will be produced. Visitor impacts and numbers will continue to be monitored to inform the VMP. In addition to impacts on the heritage, capacity of the islands infrastructure eg the septic tank, will also be taken into consideration. Development of the VMP will involve stakeholders, such as the boat operators, as appropriate. In the meantime the Trust will continue to work with all commercial boat operators to enhance the experience offered to their visitors.

A small percentage of visitors to St Kilda visit to participate in activities which may have a negative

impact on its designated features eg climbers and divers. However as long as all such activities are carried out in accordance with the SOAC then the Trust welcomes all visitors. To aid climbers, several areas of non-vegetated sea cliffs on Hirta, Dun, Soay and some of the stacs, where there are currently no nesting seabirds, have been identified. The maps are intended to indicate areas where climbing could take place without causing disturbance to important natural features. The maps need to be completed and the information made available. In addition the information given to climbers and to members of staff on the areas where seabirds are nesting will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure it remains accurate. The St Kilda Ranger will continue to monitor numbers of climbers and impacts and will work with SNH and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland to address any issues that arise. In addition codes of conduct have been produced for divers and radio operators.

Village Bay on Hirta will remain the only place with visitor facilities, including the pier, museum, shop and toilets. The newly refurbished Manse, situated at the head of the pier will provide the focal point for visitor facilities and visitor management. The Ranger's office has been relocated to the Manse as have the shop and toilets, making them more accessible than at present.

The Trust will continue to provide limited camping facilities on Hirta that can be booked in advance. Wild camping can be undertaken under SOAC, however due to the sensitivities of the archipelago, the Trust will encourage campers to use the campsite. Camping (with pegs) outwith the designated campsite, but within the scheduled area, will require Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) from Historic Scotland.

St Kilda is a source of inspiration for many and the Trust receives a number of requests from artists, in particular, to visit and stay on the archipelago. The Trust is keen to explore how such requests might be accommodated, where they are in keeping with the WHS and its outstanding values and will therefore seek out partners with whom it can develop appropriate art initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 23

To enable responsible access to St Kilda

Prescriptions

- 23.1 Produce a Visitor Management Plan to enable sustainable access and enjoyment of the archipelago
- 23.2 Continue monitoring visitor numbers, activity and potential impacts on the natural and cultural heritage, working with CnES and SNH, agreeing any necessary access management
- 23.3 Make visitor information widely available and accessible eg through websites, TICs etc (see also [Objective 24](#))
- 23.4 Review and update the guidelines for climbers, divers, radio operators and other activity groups that may require them in the future, as appropriate and disseminate widely
- 23.5 Annually review the bird nesting information given to staff and the general public and update where necessary
- 23.6 Encourage visitors to inform the Trust of plans to overnight on the archipelago and make campers aware of potential SMC requirements prior to their visit, if intending to wild camp
- 23.7 Trust to renew SMC for the campsite on five yearly basis
- 23.8 Develop appropriate art initiatives that can use the unique opportunities the archipelago offers, with partners as appropriate

See also [Prescription 17.6](#)

St Kilda/Hiort/Wee Kilda websites

Those who do not have the opportunity to visit St Kilda in person, now have an opportunity to access it via the internet. First launched in its current form in 2001, the St Kilda website (www.kilda.org.uk) has proved extremely popular. To widen access further, a Gaelic language St Kilda website (www.hiort.org.uk) was launched in 2003 and the Wee Kilda Guide (www.kilda.org.uk/weekildaguide/) – aimed at young people – was launched in 2006. As the main location for public information about the archipelago, the websites have become a key resource for visitors and those interested in St Kilda. To ensure they remain so in future, a programme to update and refresh the websites is just beginning. The website will continue to provide information about the natural and cultural history of the archipelago; how to travel there and will provide regular updates on conservation work that is on going on the islands and links to other relevant sites. They will be enhanced to include a virtual tour of the archipelago and it is intended to produce specialist educational material that can be downloaded etc. The Trust sees these improvements as key to ensuring the websites fulfil their potential, not just as a key visitor management and informational tool, but also as a key resource for education, learning and appreciation of the archipelago. Securing the necessary investment and skills will be key to implementing these plans.

All remote access will be subject to data protection and be mindful of the privacy of individuals and MOD commercial and security sensitivities.

OBJECTIVE 24

To make the St Kilda websites first-class resources for anyone with an interest in St Kilda

Prescriptions

- 24.1 Re-develop the existing St Kilda/Hiort websites
- 24.2 Continue to maintain and update the websites on a regular basis

³⁰ St Kilda – a guide to access and the Scottish Outdoor Access Guide are available on the Trust and SNH websites respectively. See Appendix 10.

Further development of education and interpretation programmes that promote a greater understanding both of St Kilda and of sustainable conservation management amongst visitors and non-visitors

Education

St Kilda has the potential to link into a wide range of subjects for formal education, aimed at all age ranges, built on the readily available information from research programmes on the islands and the islands' outstanding heritage. Such links would bring benefits both to students and to St Kilda – offering an opportunity to fulfil the Vision for St Kilda as a model for environmental education.

Education initiatives will be developed with schools and universities and in conjunction with existing non-Trust services – including the services offered by CnES, UHI Millennium Institute and by voluntary organisations, where possible. A project to produce educational materials linking the islands with the educational curriculum will be instigated. In addition materials will be developed for teachers which will be downloadable from the Trust websites. These initiatives will make St Kilda more accessible to schools and young people across the country.

In addition the Trust would like to build on the work it has done in the past with schools in the Western Isles and it will investigate how this can best be achieved. It will work with other organisations in the Western Isles, eg local education authorities, IBT, as appropriate. Securing the necessary funding will be important to carrying this forward.

OBJECTIVE 25

To foster closer links between the islands and schools and links with the educational curriculum

Prescriptions

- 25.1 Instigate a project linking the islands to the educational curriculum, including developing materials for teachers and pupils which can be downloaded from the Trust's website. Investigate integrating this with the web based virtual tour of St Kilda
- 25.2 Investigate how the Trust can deliver a stronger educational programme in the Western Isles using its own staff and working in partnership

Interpretation

For such a remote location, the interpretive provision on St Kilda is already extremely good. The main focus is in the Museum where a new exhibition was launched in 2003. The series of panels, vibrant photographs and interpretation bring to life the various topics that shaped St Kilda's past and which continue to shape its present. Areas covered range from the archipelago's geology and botany to its history; the community; visitors to the islands; finally bringing it right up to the present day. Display cases containing sherds of pottery, textiles, agricultural implements, dress and personal items – all associated with the community and visitors to the islands, add to the authenticity of the exhibition. In addition to the exhibition in the Museum, are the restored Church and Schoolroom, showing the interiors as they might have been in the 1920s (based on a photograph by Atkinson in 1936).

An audit of the interpretive provision on Hirta was undertaken in 2009. Building on this and with the opening of the Manse in 2011, the Trust will look to increase the interpretation available to visitors. To ensure an holistic approach is taken, an Interpretive Plan will be produced. It will identify any gaps and identify where new initiatives would result in visitors gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of the islands, and the importance of sustainable conservation management. It will also ensure any interpretive initiatives do not adversely impact upon the cultural and natural heritage or the emotional atmosphere of the islands.

The new St Kilda Visitor Centre proposed for the Western Isles provides an excellent opportunity to reach people that might not have the opportunity to visit St Kilda in person. The Trust would like to work closely with the new visitor centre, in particular on the interpretation to be provided.

There is a wealth of knowledge about St Kilda in the Western Isles and further afield and the Trust will investigate links with other organisations and individuals to enhance our knowledge and the interpretation on offer to visitors.

OBJECTIVE 26

To promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the islands and the importance of sustainable conservation management through the interpretation provided both on and off Hirta

Prescriptions

- 26.1 Produce and begin implementation of an Interpretive Plan for St Kilda
- 26.2 Investigate linking with other interpretation professionals and groups in the Western Isles e.g. the local authority Museums Service, the Comainn Eachdraidh and IBT
- 26.3 Establish close links with the proposed new St Kilda Visitor Centre in the Western Isles and seek close input into the interpretation to be provided in the new centre

Regular liaison with local communities and stakeholders to understand each other's aspirations for St Kilda and to contribute to best practice of WHSs everywhere

Communities

St Kilda is held dear in the hearts of many people throughout Scotland and further afield, and the Trust and other stakeholders must be aware of how their interests can be embraced. The St Kilda Club provides an ongoing link with hundreds of people who have visited the islands, many of them Work Party volunteers who have between them given invaluable support in terms of volunteer hours as well as financial support. (See also [Objectives 28](#) and [33](#))

The Trust recognises the particular value of St Kilda to many in the Western Isles, whether in terms of its history and heritage or as an economic asset for the region. It also recognises the wealth of knowledge, experience and passion that many individuals have for St Kilda and will seek to develop closer ties with local communities and organisations such as Lews Castle College UHI and IBT, for mutual benefit. The WIM will provide the direct link between the Trust and the people of this area.

In addition it is important that the Trust is an active member of the World Heritage community attending meetings, engaging in policy discussions and sharing best practice at a national and international level.



OBJECTIVE 27

To foster stronger links with communities in the Western Isles, with supporters further afield and within the WHS community

Prescriptions

- 27.1 Continue to work with existing contacts and establish new links with stakeholders and communities in the Western Isles eg the boat operators, IBT and Lews Castle College UHI to understand each other's aspirations for St Kilda and how these can be brought together to benefit conservation of and access to the archipelago
- 27.2 Continue to hold regular events regarding St Kilda in the Western Isles to facilitate effective community liaison
- 27.3 Regularly update the St Kilda websites as a means of reaching out to stakeholders much further afield
- 27.4 Continue to work with others in the World Heritage community to share best practice and to advance management of WHSs everywhere

See also [Prescriptions 21.1](#) and [31.3](#)

St Kilda Club

The St Kilda Club was established to advance education, for the public benefit, about the islands of St Kilda and to liaise with the Trust to conserve and protect the islands and environs. Its membership is drawn on the most part from Work Party members and currently stands at around 1200. The St Kilda Club produces an annual magazine *The St Kilda Mail*, and organises the St Kilda Club Annual General Meeting and Reunion. They also currently run the shop on St Kilda, ordering and arranging for the delivery of stock and handling all associated finances. The St Kilda Club donates all proceeds from the shop to the Trust and in addition makes large donations to fund specific projects on the archipelago eg funding the Seabird and Marine Ranger's post for an additional year; funding the improvements made to the kitchen in House 1 and furnishing the Manse. The St Kilda Club is in essence the islands' members centre. The St Kilda Club also promotes St Kilda and the work of the Trust.

OBJECTIVE 28

To continue working closely with the St Kilda Club for the benefit of St Kilda

Prescriptions

- 28.1 Maintain a close working relationship with the St Kilda Club
- 28.2 Investigate opportunities to increase returns from the St Kilda shop



3.3.9

Outcome 8

A greater awareness of the value of St Kilda internally and externally

Raising awareness

The Trust and key stakeholders in the St Kilda Management Group (SNH, HS, MOD and its agents and CnES) work together to ensure the ongoing conservation of St Kilda and its outstanding heritage. It is crucial that the importance of the work that each of these organisations does in helping to safeguard St Kilda's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is recognised within their own organisations and also by the general public.

In addition a wide range of research is undertaken into St Kilda's heritage, enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the archipelago.

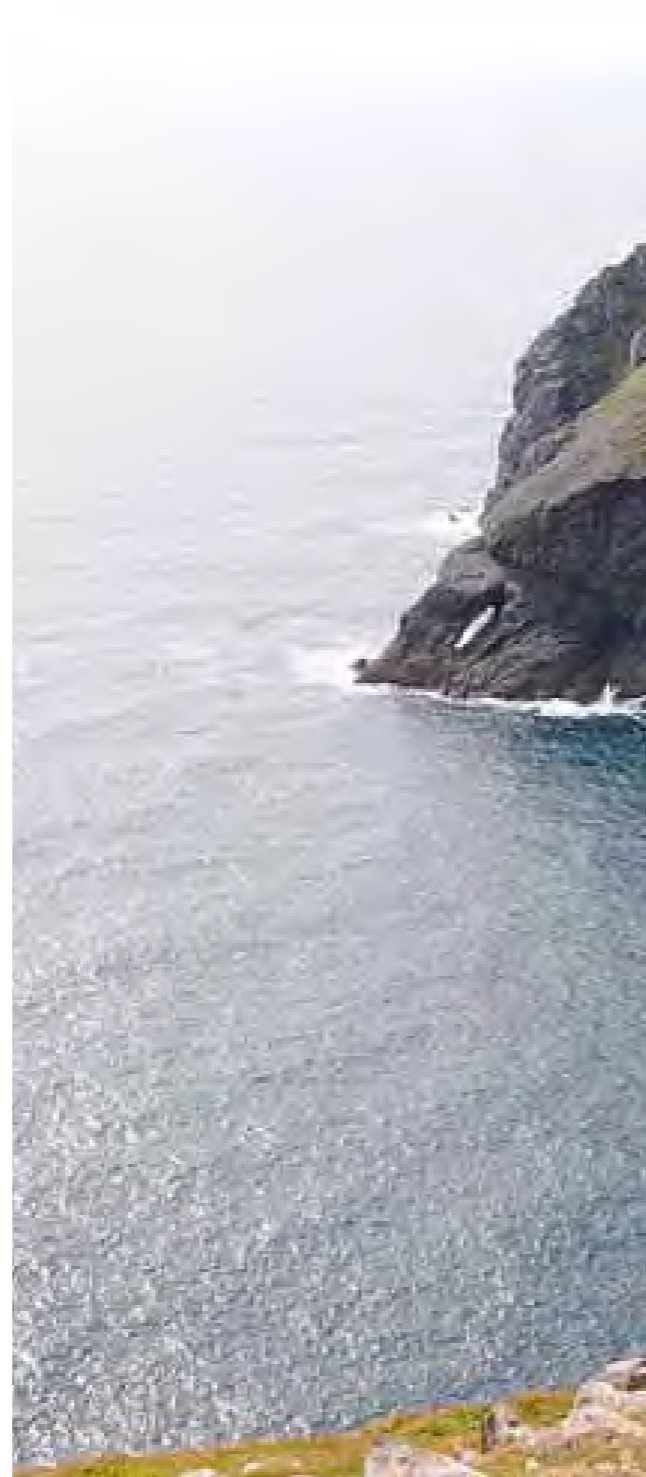
A Communications Plan will be drawn up by the Trust and in collaboration with key stakeholders to promote the work stakeholders do in safeguarding the archipelago's OUV and to ensure the knowledge gained from years of research into its key attributes is widely disseminated and understood.

OBJECTIVE 29

To promote greater awareness of the value of St Kilda

Prescriptions

29.1 Produce and implement a Communications Plan for St Kilda



3.3.10

Outcome 9

Greater environmental sustainability in all operations on the archipelago

Environmental sustainability

The environment of St Kilda is recognised as being of international importance. It is therefore vital that all operations carried out on island or those that will impact upon the WHS are carried out in as an environmentally sustainable way as possible. The Trust will work with key stakeholders to ensure that operational activities do nothing to diminish/degrade the conservation values and significance of the archipelago and where possible enhance it.

OBJECTIVE 30

To make all working practices on Hirta and all supporting operations as sustainable as possible

Prescriptions

- 30.1 Review all Trust operations on Hirta and those that might impact upon the WHS and make these operations as environmentally sustainable as possible
- 30.2 Work with key stakeholders to enhance environmental sustainability in all operations on/or supporting operations on Hirta





Continued collaborative working to implement the Management Plan

Working together

The Trust would find managing and conserving the St Kilda WHS considerably more difficult without the support and involvement of the key stakeholders. It remains essential that there is regular communication between all parties involved at the strategic level and also in the day-to-day management of St Kilda. The Trust will continue to maintain an overview of the islands but will also work with stakeholders, as appropriate, to deliver the joint objectives in this Management Plan. The management arrangements for this collaborative approach are described in detail in the Management Framework section.

Indirectly there are a number of important partnerships with stakeholders such as the boat operators, local businesses and communities, the St Kilda Club and IBT, that the Trust would like to strengthen and develop in future, to facilitate greater co-operation and collaborative working (see also [Objectives 27](#) and [28](#)).

OBJECTIVE 31

To continue working with stakeholders to implement the Management Plan

Prescriptions

- 31.1 Undertake annual Strategic Management Group meetings and regular Operational Management Group meetings with key stakeholders
- 31.2 Review progress on the Management Plan on an annual basis with key stakeholders
- 31.3 Continue to strengthen and develop relationships with all stakeholders and investigate how stakeholders can take a more active role in helping to deliver elements of the Management Plan (see also [Objective 27](#))

See also [Prescription 27.1](#)



Adequate staffing and financial resources in place to meet the operational needs and Vision of the property

Staff

On island and support staff are crucial to the ongoing conservation management of the archipelago's outstanding heritage as well as to enabling safe and enjoyable access for visitors. To ensure that the archipelago is managed to a standard that meets the obligations of its national and international designations, it is essential that adequate resources are in place. Critical to this is the WIM, a new post created in 2003 when the Trust assumed direct management of all aspects of the archipelago. Supporting this post on island is the St Kilda Ranger, a seasonal post and the St Kilda Archaeologist, a 12 month rolling contract. In 2010, volunteer rangers were employed for the first time at the height of the visitor season to assist with visitor management.

The WIM and island staff are supported by other Trust specialists, however with internal changes in the Trust over recent years, fewer resources are available to support on island staff, just at a time when demands on these staff are increasing.

Between 2005 and 2008, a Western Isles Seabird and Marine Ranger was employed. As St Kilda is the premier seabird breeding site in Europe, it is proposed that this post is re-instated.

A review of all staffing requirements will be undertaken to ensure that the Trust is fulfilling its obligations as owner and manager of a dual WHS. This will include looking at the remit of existing posts, in addition to identifying any essential new posts. Staff retention and ensuring continuity are currently issues and these will also be tackled.

In the longer term the Trust would like to have a staff structure in place that enables it to run St Kilda as a model of best practice in conservation and visitor management. It is recognised that this is unlikely to happen in the next five years, however, identifying the model in the short term will enable the Trust to take the first steps to achieving it in the longer term. The Trust will work with key funding partners to address this critical issue.

OBJECTIVE 32

To ensure that the operational needs of the archipelago are supported by adequate staffing levels

Prescriptions

- 32.1 Review staffing requirements, identifying where additional resources are required or where existing resources can be re-assigned
- 32.2 Identify and facilitate volunteering opportunities

St Kilda Work Parties

Since the Trust acquired the archipelago in 1957, St Kilda Work Parties have proved an important management tool in looking after the archipelago. Work Parties have undertaken essential work within the cultural landscape and have assisted with research and monitoring programmes. But their importance is wider than just the role they play in conserving the archipelago's heritage. Work Parties also provide the only opportunity for non-staff/researchers to live for an extended period of time on Hirta. Many members of Work Parties go on to join the St Kilda Club and in turn continue to support management of the archipelago (see Objective 28).

With inscription of the cultural landscape on the World Heritage list, questions have been raised about whether it remains appropriate for volunteers to be maintaining the cultural remains on Hirta. A review of the role and effectiveness of St Kilda Work Parties will be undertaken and whether there are opportunities to vary or broaden their role. This will take into account the access, enjoyment and resourcing implications that might arise with changes to the way Work Parties are run and will tie in with the Visitor Management Plan and also the Business Plan.

OBJECTIVE 33

To review the role of St Kilda Work Parties

Prescriptions

- 33.1 Review the role and effectiveness of Work Parties in undertaking conservation work in the WHS and consider whether the remit of Work Parties can be broadened in the future to include other disciplines of work/research
- 33.2 Mitigate any impacts associated with the changes identified in 33.1 eg maintaining opportunities for staying on Hirta etc



Health and safety

St Kilda is a challenging environment whether you are visiting or working there. The Trust wishes to ensure the safety of all visitors, staff, volunteers and contractors whilst on St Kilda and to make all aware of the constraints on working practices needed to ensure their safety and conservation of the archipelago's natural and cultural heritage. To do this, a *Safe System of Work* has been put in place. The *Safe System of Work* sets out working practices and protocols that must be adhered to whilst working on St Kilda, whether as a member of Trust staff or as a contractor, researcher, volunteer etc. It includes safe operating procedures, risk assessments, accident report forms, staff training and induction etc.

There are relatively few incidents on St Kilda, however there may be occasions when a joint approach with the MOD's agents on Hirta would ensure a more effective resolution to an incident eg when dealing with missing persons. Procedures will be agreed between organisations where this is possible.

With a policy of non intervention in natural processes, all carcasses of dead animals, whether terrestrial or marine will be left, allowing natural processes to take their course. This will include bird carcasses unless the Environmental Directorate of the Scottish Government instruct otherwise eg in the event of avian flu. The one exception to this will be the safe disposal of sheep carcasses in the village and around water courses – see [Objective 12](#). All cetacean sightings and strandings will be recorded and reported to the appropriate authority. In the case of dead cetaceans this will be the Scottish Agricultural College (Inverness Office).

OBJECTIVE 34

To manage the risks of living, working and visiting St Kilda and to comply with all statutory legislation on health and safety issues

Prescriptions

- 34.1 Maintain the *Safe System of Work* keeping it up to date at all times
- 34.2 Identify incidents where a joint approach would ensure the most effective resolution of an incident and agree procedures eg missing persons procedures

Induction and training

It is essential that new Trust staff, volunteers, Work Party leaders and contractors are given full and adequate induction (including into the significance of the archipelago and how the designations impact on their roles and responsibilities) and adequate training. This should be provided before or soon after they arrive on island and be reviewed and renewed on a regular basis.

The Trust will also work with the MOD and their agents on Hirta to ensure that they too have the relevant information.

OBJECTIVE 35

To ensure that all those working on St Kilda have the necessary induction and training

Prescriptions

- 35.1 Review and update the current induction programme for all new Trust staff, volunteers, researchers and contractors working on St Kilda, on an annual basis
- 35.2 Work with the MOD and their agents on Hirta to ensure relevant information is available to all new staff and contractors re the importance of St Kilda's heritage

Logistics

To enable management and research to be undertaken on St Kilda, adequate logistical support must be in place. Currently a Service Level Agreement (SLA), sets out the services that the MOD will supply to the Trust. The services contained within the SLA have been crucial to the Trust in enabling it to manage the archipelago and the SLA will be reviewed and renewed annually. In addition a less formal agreement with the maintenance contractor for the MOD base on Hirta ensures that maintenance is undertaken. Until now this has been undertaken on an ad hoc basis. The agreement will be formalised and renewed on an annual basis.

Lack of adequate accommodation has delayed or prevented a number of necessary management actions from being carried out. It has also limited the research opportunities available. The improvements to the Manse, whilst not only gaining the Trust additional accommodation will also improve the facilities that staff rely on in their every day roles. It also gives the Trust an opportunity to take stock of what accommodation is needed now and will be needed in the future. An accommodation audit will therefore be undertaken. Running alongside this will be an audit of present and future communications and facilities requirements for staff and researchers. The Visitor Management Plan may also highlight additional facilities required for visitors. Following this a plan will be put in place to deliver on the recommendations in the audit. This will take cognisance of a potential future without MOD personnel stationed on Hirta (see [Objective 38](#)).

OBJECTIVE 36

To ensure adequate logistical support for those involved in the conservation management of the archipelago

Prescriptions

- 36.1 Undertake an audit of present and future accommodation, communications and facilities requirements for the Trust, including for researchers, contractors and visitors and put in place a plan to deliver on the recommendations
- 36.2 Continue regular negotiations with the MOD to ensure that a SLA remains in place to help support the Trust's management of the archipelago, whilst the MOD have an interest in the islands
- 36.3 Formalise the maintenance agreement with the current maintenance contractor for the MOD base on Hirta, reviewing and agreeing it on an annual basis

Finance

St Kilda is the United Kingdom's only mixed WHS and one of only 29 worldwide. The support provided by SNH through the Trust/SNH Concordat and the support provided by HS through the St Kilda Management Agreement are both critical to future management of the archipelago. The rent from the MOD leased area is also a significant part of the income of the islands and the assistance provided by the MOD and its agents through the SLA, has been critical.

Currently the Trust endowment for the property is not adequate to finance management of the archipelago to the standard it deserves. This issue will become even more acute if any of the aforementioned key stakeholders reduce or cease their funding. It is therefore imperative that the endowment is built up to a level that can adequately finance all Trust operations in future. Additional funding streams will be investigated, from a high profile international appeal to greater support from the Government to maximising income from the St Kilda shop and guided walks.



OBJECTIVE 37

To ensure there are adequate financial resources available to manage St Kilda to World Heritage standards

Prescriptions

- 37.1 Produce and implement a Business Plan for management of the archipelago, including a long term strategy to bring the property's endowment to a level that will fund management of the archipelago at an adequate level
- 37.2 Continue regular negotiations with SNH and HS to ensure their ongoing financial support for management of the archipelago's heritage, exploring ways this could be increased in future
- 37.3 Identify appropriate and feasible commercial opportunities to maximise the archipelago's income eg the St Kilda shop, licensing images of St Kilda, charging for use of the pier, guided walks etc

3.3.13

Outcome 12

A contingency plan in place should the MOD and their agents significantly alter their St Kilda operations

Post-MOD occupancy

Although the presence of the MOD base on St Kilda appears assured at present, the Trust must be prepared for this situation to change in future. In 2009 when it looked very likely that the MOD would radically change their operations on Hirta and move to an unmanned operation, the Trust and partners undertook an Impact Assessment (IA) to identify all the various impacts that this situation would have on the archipelago's heritage and the Trust's ability to manage it. Critical issues identified in the IA were the cost of future upkeep/removal or maintenance and serviceability of the MOD occupied buildings when they revert to Trust ownership; no additional heat and power for these buildings; and the additional transport and staffing costs. Equally critical were loss of maintenance of the island estate and services; loss of on island medical cover; of security and policing; of the deterrent the MOD provide by their presence as well as access to MOD serviced accommodation and recreational facilities.

The findings in the IA must be taken forward as a matter of priority and a contingency plan prepared to address these issues. This will need to include the buildings required for future management of the islands (see [Objective 36](#)); the replication of services currently provided by the MOD and their agents; and the logistics of removing redundant structures and restoring the landscape. A detailed cost analysis will be produced.

One of the most critical issues is how to establish and support a permanent year-round presence on Hirta eg staffing levels, staff safety, costs. A full assessment of the significance of the MOD buildings as part of the islands' military history and also the options for re-use by the Trust will be undertaken. This will involve recording and assessing the heritage significance of the MOD buildings followed by a Conservation Statement. Any assessment will be mindful of any MOD commercial,

operational and security restrictions. This is crucial prior to decisions about use or removal of the buildings. The audit of Trust accommodation, communications and facilities outlined in [Objective 36](#) will feed into this assessment.

OBJECTIVE 38

To ensure the Trust has a plan in place in the event of the MOD and their agents leaving St Kilda entirely, scaling down their operations or withdrawing their personnel

Prescriptions

- 38.1 Record the MOD buildings, assess their heritage significance and produce a Conservation Statement
- 38.2 Assess which MOD occupied buildings might be needed for the on-going management of the archipelago by the Trust, when they are no longer required by the MOD (to tie into [Prescription 36.1](#))
- 38.3 Develop a contingency plan for managing the archipelago in the event of the MOD significantly changing their operations on Hirta and implement as necessary



4.1.1

Introduction

PART FOUR provides greater detail on the history of the archipelago; the significance of its natural and cultural features; and more detail on the designations that have been accorded to aspects of St Kilda's heritage.

4.1.2

History of St Kilda
prior to acquisition
by the National Trust
for Scotland

A detailed account of the history of St Kilda can be found in the many publications about the islands (see [Bibliography](#)³¹). A brief outline of the history is provided below, to provide context for discussion about the management of the islands.

The origins of the name St Kilda are uncertain, as there has never been a saint called Kilda. *Skildar* is the Old Icelandic word for 'shield' which would describe the shape of the islands as they appear to rest on the surface of the water (Quine 1995). *Skildar* was marked on many of the Dutch and French maps of the Outer Hebrides in the sixteenth century, such as that produced by Nicholas de Nicolay in 1583. It is thought that when this was later copied by Lucas J Wagheneer, the S and the K were separated and a full stop put between them. Thus, the form *S.Kildar* appeared in his book of charts in 1592 and probably led to the later adoption of the name St Kilda. An alternative was suggested by Martin Martin, a visitor to the islands in 1697, who thought that the islands may have been named after a well (Tobar Childa) sited near the village on Hirta:

'There is a large well near the town called St Kilder's well, from which the island is supposed to derive its name' (Martin 1698)

Archaeological evidence suggests that Hirta has been occupied, perhaps almost continuously, for well over 4,000 years. It is certain that the Vikings visited and they may have settled in the islands. The place names on the islands reflect both Norse and Gaelic influences.

The first comprehensive account of life on St Kilda was provided by Martin Martin, tutor to the MacLeod clan chief, who visited the islands in 1697. At this time, St Kilda was owned by the MacLeods of Harris and Dunvegan³², and would remain with a branch of the family until the time of evacuation in 1930. At the time of Martin's visit there were approximately 180 people on Hirta, living in a main settlement in Village Bay. They kept sheep and cattle and grew crops – but the most important component of their diet came from seabirds and their eggs. They harvested the gannets that were so abundant on Boreray and the Stacs as well as fulmars and puffins which nested on the cliffs and in the grassy slopes of Hirta and Dun. The St Kildans were consummate and fearless climbers and caught the birds by either scaling the cliffs from the bottom, or by lowering themselves down to the cliff ledges where the birds nested. The bird life also provided them with oil and feathers, which they collected and used as payment in kind for their rent.

³¹ See Appendix 20

³² When and how the MacLeods gained possession of the islands is lost in time.

Ropes and fowling rods were usually the property of all the islanders, as were the areas of pasture and other items such as boats. Whether the numerous cleits (drying chambers), which can still be found dotted around the islands, were all used communally is unclear. Ropes could, however, also be owned by individuals, and at some stage in the history of the islands they often formed part of a dowry. The cliff areas used for the harvest of sea birds were allocated between the families on the island and were rotated annually. At the time of Martin's visit, the people of St Kilda as elsewhere led a simple life, guided by basic Christian principles, with their lifestyle in tune with nature and adapted to the pressures of survival in such a difficult environment. In later times their lifestyle became strongly influenced by the Church and the work of the various clergy who spent time on the islands.

In 1822, the Rev John MacDonald, a renowned evangelical preacher known as the 'Apostle of the North' visited St Kilda. MacDonald set about constructing the foundations of a highly organised religion on St Kilda. These were built upon by the Rev Neil MacKenzie, who arrived in the islands as resident minister in 1830. He also decided to try to improve the standard of living of the St Kildans and under his guidance the traditional 'run-rig' system of agriculture was replaced by a permanent allocation of land to each family. The old village in Village Bay was demolished and replaced during the 1830s by a curving line of blackhouses. From 1861, MacLeod paid for a new set of cottages for the St Kildans, which were built by his masons from Dunvegan. These were erected alongside the blackhouses, many of which were retained as byres.

In 1865 the Rev John Mackay was sent to St Kilda and set about imposing a particularly unyielding rule over the islanders. He held three services on Sundays, one on every day from Tuesday to Friday, and advocated a strict observation of the Sabbath. Rather than rebel against this, the St Kildans embraced and devoutly followed Mackay's bidding. By this time, much of the tradition of music and poetry which had existed on the island had begun to be forgotten and now it was

replaced by the requirements of this strict faith.

Another significant factor in the history of the St Kildans was the influence of disease on the islanders. The islands were devastated by a smallpox epidemic in 1727, from which only four adults and 26 children are said to have survived. (A further three men and eight boys escaped exposure to the disease as a result of being stranded for several months on Stac an Armin while on a fowling expedition.) Although new families were introduced from Harris and Skye, the population never again exceeded 110. Infant tetanus exacted a toll of two of every three live births until it was finally eradicated in 1891 and ensured the population naturally never exceeded the ability of the people to produce their own food.

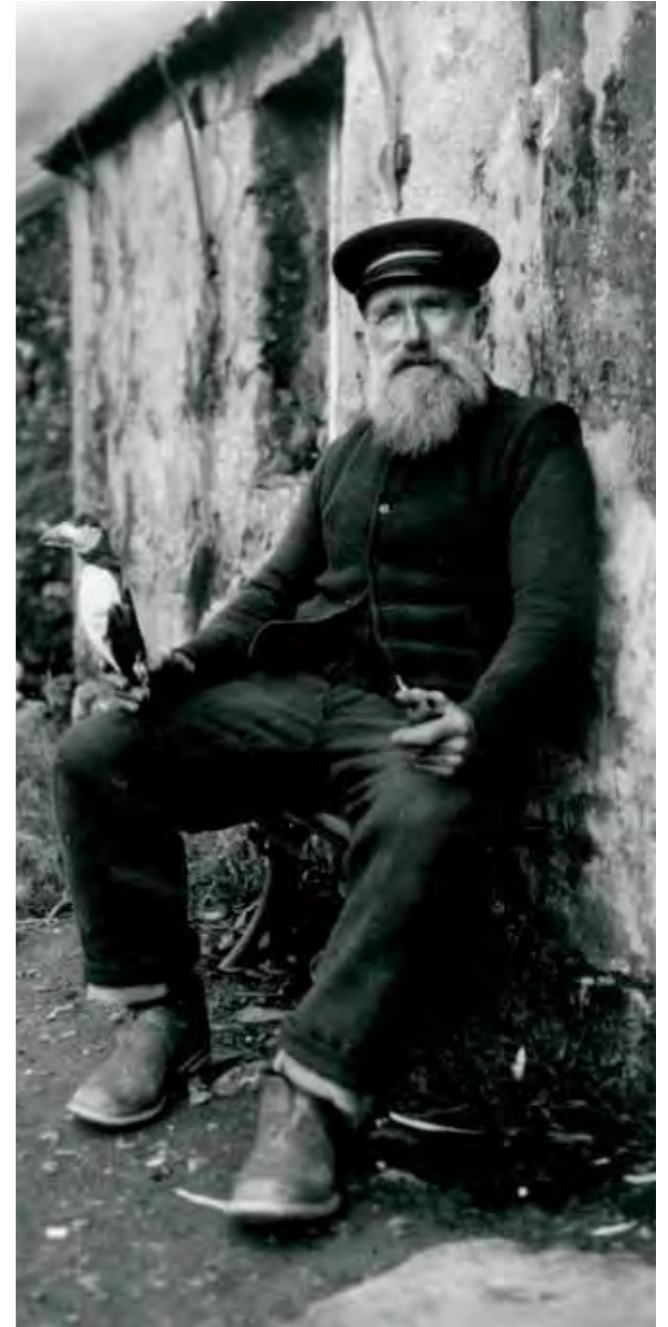
Visits to the Western Isles and further afield were not unheard of and such travels impacted upon the population of St Kilda. For example, the emigration of 36 islanders to Australia in 1852 reduced the population to approximately 70, from which it never recovered.

The islanders' traditional economy also began to falter, with the oil and feathers they exported losing value on the mainland – though still accepted by the Factor as part of the rent. From the 1870s, however, steamers were calling regularly at Village Bay, full of well-meaning, curious visitors. They came ashore to see the inhabitants, whom they regarded as a curiosity, and to buy souvenirs made by them. Money was introduced for the first time and the St Kildans came to rely on these tourists to provide them with a source of income. But by the beginning of the twentieth century this fickle and uncertain source of income began to decline as St Kilda went out of vogue. What followed were years of hardship when illness, bad weather, poor harvests and lack of food seriously affected the quality of life and the expectations of the St Kildans. They had few sources of income, although the sale of tweed on the mainland became an income when Ferguson established his shop in Glasgow. Communication with the mainland was also difficult. A post office was opened in 1899, however their mail was often affected by weather conditions as it was dependent on the arrival or departure of a ship, at most once a week in the summer and much less

frequently during the rest of the year.

During the First World War, the islanders experienced the wider world on a daily basis when a naval unit stationed on the island brought them a measure of prosperity as well as radio communication, regular mail, employment and supplies. The naval gun emplacement and ammunition store were added in 1918 in response to a German U-boat attack which destroyed the communications mast in front of the Factor's House, left the Store in ruins and damaged various other buildings to a greater or lesser extent. However, in 1919 the Navy pulled out and the islanders' situation was once again difficult. By 1928 the population had fallen to 37 and in 1930 the remaining islanders, guided by Nurse Williamina Barclay, decided that they had no future on St Kilda. They signed a petition requesting evacuation, which was sent to the Secretary of State for Scotland in May 1930. Eventually, their request was granted and on 29 August 1930 the 36 remaining St Kildans left the islands. They were taken by HMS *Harebell* to the mainland where initially the majority were to settle in Morvern, Argyll, where the men worked for the Forestry Commission.

The islands were sold by the MacLeods in 1931 to the Earl of Dumfries, later to become the 5th Marquess of Bute. He retained the islands, unoccupied and managed as a bird sanctuary, until his death in 1956.



4.1.3

In his will, the 5th Marquess of Bute bequeathed St Kilda to the National Trust for Scotland. This bequest came before the Executive Committee of the Trust in October 1956, but no decision was reached at this meeting as to whether the bequest should be accepted. A reason for the indecision within the Executive Committee was that several other parties were also showing an interest in the future of St Kilda at this time, which promised a complex management arrangement. In 1955 the Secretary of State for War had decided to establish an Inter-services Guided Weapons Range in the Hebrides and by 1956 a Services Land Requirements application to establish a radar station on Hirta to monitor the range had been submitted to the Department of Health for Scotland. The Nature Conservancy (NC) was also interested in St Kilda and was proposing to designate the islands as a National Nature Reserve.

Given the range of factors to consider, the Executive Committee felt that more information was needed before a decision could be made as to whether the bequest should be accepted. Two reports outlining the importance of St Kilda from natural heritage and archaeological points of view were then produced by the Nature Conservancy and the Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments respectively (Trust archives 1956). These were followed by a sequence of further arguments from the then Secretary of the Trust, Jamie Stormonth Darling. The primary argument he used was that under Section 4 (i) of the Trust's 1935 Order Confirmation Act, one of the general purposes of the Trust was to:

'promote the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands ... of natural interest or natural beauty ... and as regards lands for the preservation of their natural aspect and features and animal and plant life.'

The Trust had accepted Fair Isle in 1954 because of its natural beauty, wildlife and historical associations, and on these grounds St Kilda seemed to qualify even more favourably.

Stormonth Darling went on to point out that the Trust could only turn down the bequest on the grounds of (a) the remoteness of the island, (b) the Trust's complete

Acquisition by the National Trust for Scotland

and absolute confidence in the Nature Conservancy to manage the island for all its values, or (c) the consequent financial liabilities (Trust Memorandum 7.11.56). The potential benefits of the Trust owning the islands, rather than the Nature Conservancy, were also outlined:

'Assuming that it is considered important that there are features on St Kilda worthy of protection and preservation, the Trust is better fixed to negotiate with a view to standing up against Government Departments, than are other Government Departments themselves. The Trust therefore has an important part to play both now in the negotiation stage and later in the consideration of development stage, and it will no doubt achieve more than will the State in the shape of the Nature Conservancy and the Ministry of Works on their own.'

These arguments formed the basis of the Executive Committee's discussion at its December meeting in 1956, at which it was decided that the Trust should accept St Kilda, subject to a fund of £5,000 being raised to cover administration costs and capital expenditure. In January 1957, the Trust's Council duly endorsed the Executive Committee's recommendations and the National Trust for Scotland became owners of St Kilda.

Superiority

There is no reference to the identity of the feudal superior of St Kilda in the disposition by the Marquess of Bute to the Trust, nor does the Trust pay feu duty to anyone. The last reference to a feudal superior of the islands was made in the *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* Vol. VI (1885), where the Isles of St Kilda are referred to as being part of the Lands of Ardnamurchan of Lewis and of the barony of Dunvegan. Lord Dunmore, proprietor of South Harris, was referred to as 'the feudal superior of the island and is entitled to receive an annual feu duty of 1 shilling' (Trust Archives, 1968). However, it has been mentioned to the Trust (Mary Harman, personal communication) that a sum of 6/- feu duty was paid in 1931, at the time of the sale of the islands to the Earl of Dumfries. It is not known to whom this sum was paid.

4.1.4

At the time the Trust acquired St Kilda, several important decisions were taken which have shaped its subsequent management. In particular, the radar station proposed in 1956 was established on Hirta, resulting in a human presence once again on the islands with related infrastructure and technical equipment. This work was initiated by the Air Ministry and was taken over by the Army in later stages. For a long time under the administration of the Royal Artillery Range Hebrides (RARH), it is now managed from South Uist by QinetiQ, a contractor to the MOD.

The archipelago of St Kilda was designated a National Nature Reserve in 1957 and the Nature Conservancy was given the responsibility for managing the islands by the Trust for this purpose. Thus, what evolved was a management relationship between the three parties: the Trust; the Nature Conservancy³³; and the Air Ministry³⁴.

Management framework

As anticipated, the relationship between the three parties created a complicated management structure for the islands. It was essential that the responsibilities of each of the bodies be defined and clearly understood by the other parties. What evolved was a management framework whereby the NC leased the islands from the Trust and the Air Ministry sub-leased small areas of Hirta from the NC.

Lease from the Trust to the NC (NCC from 1973)

After the announcement that a radar installation was to be built on Hirta, the NC decided that the archipelago should be designated as a NNR. To ensure the correct management and protection of a proposed NNR, its usual practice was to enter into a Nature Reserve Agreement (NRA) with the owners. However, the NC perceived a problem with St Kilda in that the Trust, as owners, would not have any personnel on the property to oversee its administration. It also felt that a NRA would create a time-consuming, three-cornered legal, financial and administrative relationship between the Trust, the NC and the Air Ministry. For this reason the NC, in agreement with the Trust, suggested drawing up a lease setting out the arrangement.

Management of St Kilda since acquisition

The initial documentation took the form of a 'Minute of Agreement', with an annexed 'Agreed Management Policy'. This was drafted in 1957, stating the terms agreed between the parties and binding them to draw up a formal lease. This was superseded by a memorandum between the two parties (28 July 1960) instead of a formal lease, which by this time the two parties had decided was unnecessary and expensive.

Within the Minute of Agreement, it was agreed that the NC would manage St Kilda as a Nature Reserve in consultation with the Trust, to preserve the character of the islands. The NC would be responsible for placing a warden on the islands and for managing and controlling the activities of the Air Ministry, who were to build and man the St Kilda radar post. The lease was to run for 21 years and the rent payable by the NC was set at £1 per annum, with an agreement that any money paid by the Air Ministry as compensation in respect of disturbance would revert to the Trust. A 'Joint Standing Committee' to advise on the general administration of the islands was also set up, comprising three members from the Trust and three from the NC.

In 1977 it was noted that a formal lease had never been drawn up between the Trust and the NC (later NCC). It was suggested that this should be rectified, consequently a 25-year lease was drawn up with the NCC due to the expiry of the previous Minute of Agreement. The rent was increased and backdated to 1976 and the lease was finally completed in 1981. This revised lease dissolved the Joint Standing Committee, and inserted in its place the requirement that the NCC produce a Management Plan for the St Kilda NNR, to be revised every five years. Following two one-year extensions, this lease came to an end on 28 February 2003, and was replaced by a new lease between the Trust and the MOD.

Throughout this time, the Trust continued to manage the cultural remains on the islands.

³³ The Nature Conservancy became the Nature Conservancy Council in 1973 and Scottish Natural Heritage in 1991

³⁴ Now Ministry of Defence

Sub-lease between the NC and the Ministry of War

Work on the radar sites on Hirta was started by the Air Ministry in 1957, but by August of 1958 this responsibility had been transferred to the Army. As mentioned above, as lessees of St Kilda the NC had originally been given the responsibility of overseeing the activities of the Air Ministry. Given the change in the Service involved, this arrangement was formally agreed in a sub-lease between the Nature Conservancy (NC) and the Ministry of War which was completed in 1960. The result was a 'linear' chain of responsibility for St Kilda: the Trust as owners leasing the islands to the NC, who in turn sub-leased small areas of Hirta to the Ministry of War. This administrative structure was designed to try to avoid a complex three-way discussion process for day-to-day matters, and to ensure that there was an accepted route for any correspondence.

Five small areas on Hirta were included in this arrangement: two areas in Village Bay near the pier – for accommodation, stores and a helicopter landing pad; an area on Mullach Mor for the main technical site; and two areas on Mullach Sgar. The period of the sub-lease was 21 years and the rent was set at £1 per year, plus £100 per year to be paid to the NC as compensation for any disturbance caused by Army operations.

Within the sub-lease, the Army was given permission to construct permanent buildings at the technical sites at Mullach Mor and Mullach Sgar, and both temporary buildings and permanent buildings in the Village Bay area. Permission was also given to build new roads and to improve the pier and access road. The location and specifications of roads and buildings had been agreed in advance by both the Trust and the NC.

To safeguard the interests of both the NC and the Trust, a set of 'Standing Orders' was annexed to the sub-lease outlining what army personnel and their contractors were not allowed to do on St Kilda. Also annexed was a set of conditions drawn up by the Department of Health which required the Ministry of War to consult on its developments and to ensure that existing buildings and structures on the island were not damaged during construction.

History of MOD developments on St Kilda

The presence of the military on St Kilda since 1957 has resulted in the construction of radar and associated buildings on two sites (Mullach Mor and Mullach Sgar) and of buildings, roads, a quarry and other infrastructure necessary to accommodate army personnel and to provide the services required to run the radar. Most of this other development has been located in the Village Bay area.

The Air Ministry started the development work in 1957, with the construction of the camp in the Village Bay area and the road to the radar sites. The technical radar equipment was completed by 1959, when the first missiles were fired from South Uist on the range. Development, mostly in the form of upgrading of technical sites, has continued to keep pace with technical and operational requirements.

Management since 2003

With the newly formed integrated team of conservation professionals in the Trust's Highlands and Islands Region by 2003, the Trust was in a position for the first time to take on direct management of the islands' natural heritage. In line with this, SNH declared the Trust the Approved Body for management of the NNR.

Also at this time, the Trust and the MOD negotiated a new 25-year lease. The lease was agreed on the basis of a series of Management Principles³⁵ to guide activities on St Kilda, and applies equally to the MOD and its contractors. It sets out the approach for payment of exit works should the MOD withdraw from St Kilda before the lease expires, as well as future rental value.

With these agreements in place, the Trust assumed full management control of all aspects of the islands, including management of the NNR and of the MOD's activities on the islands, on 1 March 2003. Since then the Trust has continued to work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that sympathetic integrated management of all interests on St Kilda is achieved, with a clear priority given to conservation.



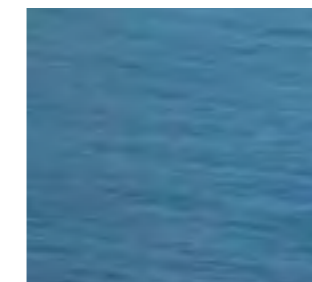
³⁵ See Appendix 6

4.2 Description of key features



4.2.1

Physical features



Location and area

The archipelago of St Kilda (National Grid Reference NA 095 995) is situated in the parish of Harris, in the Western Isles, 64km WNW of Griminish Point, North Uist.

There are four main islands – Hirta, Soay, Boreray and Dun; three sea stacs – Stac an Armin, Stac Lee and Levenish; and a great number of smaller stacs and skerries. The total area of the archipelago is 854ha (2,107 acres). Table 1 shows the areas and maximum heights of the different islands which make up St Kilda (Small and Boyd 1979).

| St Kilda – Major Islands | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| | Area (ha) | Maximum Altitude (m) |
| Hirta | 628.5 | 430 |
| Soay | 96.8 | 378 |
| Boreray | 86.5 | 384 |
| Dun | 32.0 | 178 |
| Stac an Armin | 5.8 | 196 |
| Stac Lee | 2.3 | 172 |
| Levenish | 1.3 | 62 |
| Soay Stacs | 1.4 | n/k |

Table 1. Area and maximum altitude of the islands and stacs of St Kilda

Map coverage

The first official survey of St Kilda was published by the Ordnance Survey in 1928. Current Ordnance Survey maps of the islands which are available are:

- 1: 50 000 Landranger Sheet 18 (Sound of Harris/ Caolas na Hearadh)
- 1: 25 000 Explorer Sheet 460 (North Lewis/ Ceann a Tuath Leòdhais)

Topography

All the islands of the St Kilda archipelago rise abruptly from the ocean floor. The major rock formations have eroded to give quite different topography. Conachair and Oiseval are smooth whilst the hills of Dun, Mullach Bi, the Cambir, Soay, Boreray and the major stacks, are castellated.

Hirta, the largest island of St Kilda, has a smooth inland landscape dominated by the rounded tops of Mullach Sgar, Mullach Mor, Conachair and Oiseval which, together with the horseshoe shape of Village Bay, have given rise to a grassy 'amphitheatre' open to the sea at the south-east. Village Bay is exposed only to the south-east wind and its beach provides the main point of access to Hirta. On the opposite, north-west, side of the island, Gleann Mor provides another, narrower, grassy bay. The remainder of this island is cliff bound.

The summit of Conachair is the highest point of St Kilda (430m) and the seaward faces of Hirta are characterised by their extensive grassy slopes, often inclined at 80°, which drop to sheer cliff faces. Hirta has two main stream systems, Abhainn Mhor (Big River) and Abhainn Ghlinne Mhor (River of the Big Glen), which drain into Village Bay and Gleann Mor respectively. Many streams are dry between periods of rain, while others run throughout the year from perennial fresh-water springs.

Dun is separated from Hirta by a 20m channel and forms a breakwater against the Atlantic storms on the south-west of Village Bay. It is a precipitous ridge, approximately 1.5km (1 mile) long and varies in width between 100 and 200 metres. Its south-western coast is dominated by cliffs which have been deeply eroded by the sea, whereas the Village Bay side of the island is composed of steep slopes covered with a lush green vegetation.

Soay, lying just to the north-west of Hirta, is separated from the main island by a stac-filled strait. It is the second largest land mass in the archipelago and entirely cliff-girt, though vegetated across its plateau-like top and south-east upper slopes. Its seaward faces are characterised by sheer rock faces, immense boulders, unstable screes and long, very steep slopes.

Boreray, Stac Lee and Stac an Armin lie some 7.5km

(4 miles) north-east of Hirta. Boreray is an island of precipices which rise up almost vertically from the sea to a height of 384m (1,259ft). Its coastline consists of high sheer black cliffs around its west and north sides. The southern turf covered face slopes at 40°; and while the east side is also vegetated its slope is extraordinarily steep. Stac Lee (the stac of colours), to its west, rises vertically to a height of 172m (564ft). From the south it appears as a massive, flat wall with a few sloping white ledges; from the west its sides are vertical, with a summit ridge sliced off at a 45° angle. The most impressive view is from the south-east, where it rises out of the water like a huge fang. Stac an Armin (the warrior's stac) is the highest sea stac in Britain, rising from the sea to a height of 196m (644ft) and looking like a massive rock wedge, with an overhang towards Hirta. Its sloping southern side is made up of a series of giant rock steps with boulder screes between.

Climate

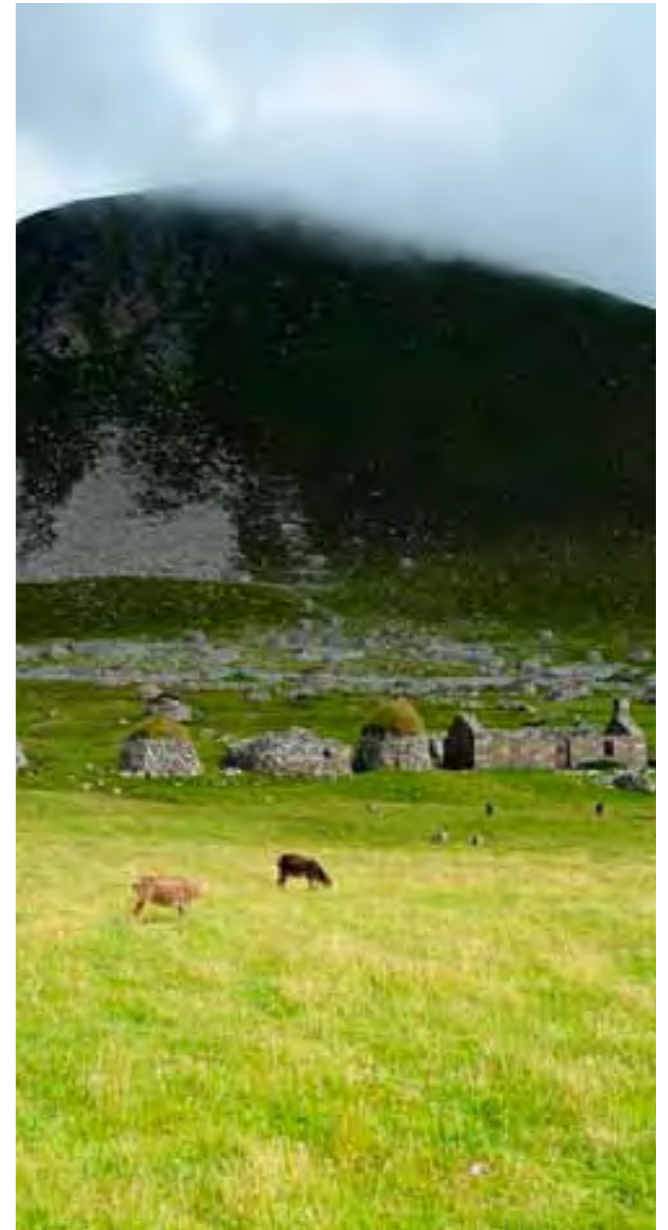
St Kilda has an oceanic (Atlantic) climate, modified by the physical effect of the island itself rising sharply from the sea. This often makes it cloudier than the surrounding sea area and increases rainfall and the local gustiness of the winds.

The strong oceanic influences and presence of the North Atlantic Drift result in higher winter temperatures than would be expected for the latitude. Conversely, the summers are cool. The mean daily temperature in January is approximately 5.6°C, while the July mean is approximately 11.8°C.

The islands lie in the path of depressions approaching from the Atlantic and as a result have a high annual rainfall of approximately 1,400mm (Small 1979). This rainfall is well distributed throughout the year with a maximum in December and January, and the driest period, associated with anti-cyclones approaching from the Atlantic, falling between mid-April and mid-June.

The prevailing winds on St Kilda are from the south-west, although approximately 20% of the winds come from the south-east, to which the village is fully exposed. Data is intermittent, but the wind speed recorded on St Kilda is normally Force 3 or above (13km per hour, 7 knots) for approximately 85% of the time and Force 5 or above (over 24km per hour, 13 knots) for more than 30% of the time. Gale force winds (63km per hour, at least 34 knots) are present for under 2% of the total time in any one year. However, within these gales, very strong gusts of over 185km per hour (100 knots) are common on the high tops (Small 1979).

The configuration of St Kilda, the nature of its physical landscape and its exposure to the full force of the North Atlantic amplify the effects of the weather. Sea spray has a dramatic effect on the vegetation and the weather has often prevented access to the islands.



Geology

The geology of St Kilda was extensively surveyed by the British Geological Survey (BGS) in 1979–80 and is included in the British Tertiary Volcanic Province prepared for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in 1984. Also in 1984, the BGS published a geological map of St Kilda at 1:25,000. The following summary is taken mainly from the description provided by the BGS.

The islands of St Kilda are of relatively recent geological age. They comprise a range of intrusive igneous rocks which were formed in the core of a tertiary volcano about 55 million years ago. The rim of the volcano is defined by Soay, south and west Hirta, Dun, Levenish and a submarine peak east-north-east of it continuing round towards Boreray. The igneous rocks of the islands are composed of gabbros invaded by thick sheets of dolerite and basalt and, on Hirta, later masses of granophyre. Hirta's smooth topography is a characteristic weathering feature of its granophyre masses, whereas the jagged cliffs of Dun and the stacs are erosion products of the coarsely crystalline gabbros.

The oldest rock is the Western Gabbro which forms most of the west coast of Hirta and Dun. It is a coarse-grained plutonic rock composed of feldspar, olivine and pyroxene. On Dun, Ruaival and in Gleann Mor, this gabbro is in contact with the younger rocks of the predominantly basic Mullach Sgar Complex which covers the central section of Hirta. Sixty million years ago, finer grained and darker sheets of basalt and dolerite were injected into the gabbro and can be seen in outcrops on Mullach Bi (British Geological Survey 1979–80).

Fifty-six million years ago the intrusion of granophyre occurred and three large areas of this rock can be seen on Hirta. These are a distinctive lighter colour – a light grey, cream or pink – and are present along the cliffs on the south-west of Hirta and extending into Dun. Thirty-five million years ago a suite of basalt and dolerite sheets and dykes was injected into the geology of the islands. These are black, fine-grained sheets up to 2m thick, which can be seen in the high sea cliffs north of Conachair and contrast markedly with the pale granophyre. St Kilda is the best example in Scotland of the results of at least four phases of igneous activity in quick succession. All igneous activity came to an end about 35 million years ago.

Although in the past it was thought that the Hebridean Ice Sheet did not reach St Kilda, some recent research indicates that the ice sheet did indeed reach the archipelago. At the height of the last Ice Age small, thin glaciers developed on Hirta in several places. During the Devensian glaciation maximum, a small valley glacier occupied Village Bay from An Lag to the morainic ridges on the lower slopes of Mullach Sgar. Locally derived till deposits associated with this glaciation consist of boulders in a gravel and sand mixture and are well displayed in the low cliffs above the beach and in the lower reaches of the Abhainn Mhor (British Geological Survey 1984).

The spectacular cliffs and stacs for which St Kilda is famous are a result of post-glacial marine erosion. Between Hirta and Boreray, the presence of an extensive submarine platform at a depth of 60m (approximately 200ft) indicates that marine erosion was formerly at a lower level. Many of the stacs and cliffs descend steeply below the present water level and form submarine cliffs, occasionally containing submerged caves. The islands we see today are therefore part of a drowned landscape (British Geological Survey 1984).

Recent bathymetric surveys around St Kilda have traced the spectacular remnants of the original volcanic crater on the seabed. The whole structure has collapsed inwards – in a process known as 'cauldron subsidence' – leaving an inner platform 60m below the present sea surface. The perimeter forms an almost completely circular rock wall linking Dun, Hirta and Soay to Boreray and the stacs, all of which protrude above the surface to form the archipelago we know today. Outwith this mighty structure the seabed is some 140m deep.

The importance of the Tertiary, Igneous and Quaternary geology of St Kilda was recognised in its inclusion as a Geological Conservation Review Site by the NCC in 1984.

Geomorphology

The present landforms and landscapes of St Kilda owe a great deal to the modifications that occurred during the Ice Age. The modifications include the effects of glaciations, frost weathering on the rocks and slopes and changes in sea level.

Coastal geomorphology

The NCC highlighted the aspects of interest of the geomorphology of St Kilda in its Geological Conservation Review (1984). The archipelago's rock coast geomorphology is important because of its unique location in relation to submarine topography and available energy, its relatively uniform geology, the variations in coastal aspect, and in the case of Hirta, for its spectacular and rugged coastline. The Geological Conservation Review describes the geomorphology as follows:

'The islands have a coastline developed almost entirely in cliffs. These are of particular interest for submergent, high-energy exposed forms which rise to considerable heights in an area which has been relatively little affected by isostatic depression or ice sheet glaciation. The entire coastline is subject to great extremes of wave and wind energy with only the frequency varying between coasts of different aspect. To the south west of Soay, Hirta and Dun the sea bed slopes rapidly down, allowing high energy Atlantic waves unimpeded access to exposed coastlines. At several locations the coastline at sea-level displays a range of stacks, caves, arches and blowholes. Overall the combination of marine and sub-aerial erosional processes and mass movement processes provides an excellent diversity of landforms in close proximity.'

Quaternary geomorphology

According to the NCC, Gleann Mor on Hirta is important in providing palaeo-ecological and palaeo-environmental data for a remote and relatively inaccessible part of the British Isles (NCC 1990).

'The pollen record, which is of national and international importance, provides valuable data on the history of the vegetation of St Kilda during the Loch Lomond stadial of the Late Devensian period. In particular, in contrast with other areas of the British Isles and North-west Europe, human influence on the vegetation of the islands appears to have been minimal so that the pollen sequence provides a rare proxy record of climatic changes in the North Atlantic spanning the last 6,000 years.'

The result of recent pollen core work published by Davidson *et al.* in 2009 has shown that there has been human influence on St Kilda for over 4,000 years.

Soils

In the cool, wet climate of St Kilda biological activity is low, leaching is intense and the rate of chemical weathering is slow. As a result, acid, peaty soils and peats predominate (Gwyne *et al.* 1974). On Hirta, blanket peat is found in two main areas, between Mullach Mor and Conachair and on the west side of Gleann Mor. These soils are associated with *Eriophorum* bog vegetation and would cover larger areas of Hirta if it were not for the island's steep slopes.

On a small number of gently sloping sites which receive large amounts of sea spray, a different type of peat is found (Gwyne *et al.* 1974). This is associated with a *Plantago* sward, is very dense and has a dry, friable consistency. It is moderately acidic and has a high base saturation, due to the high content of exchangeable magnesium and sodium from sea spray.

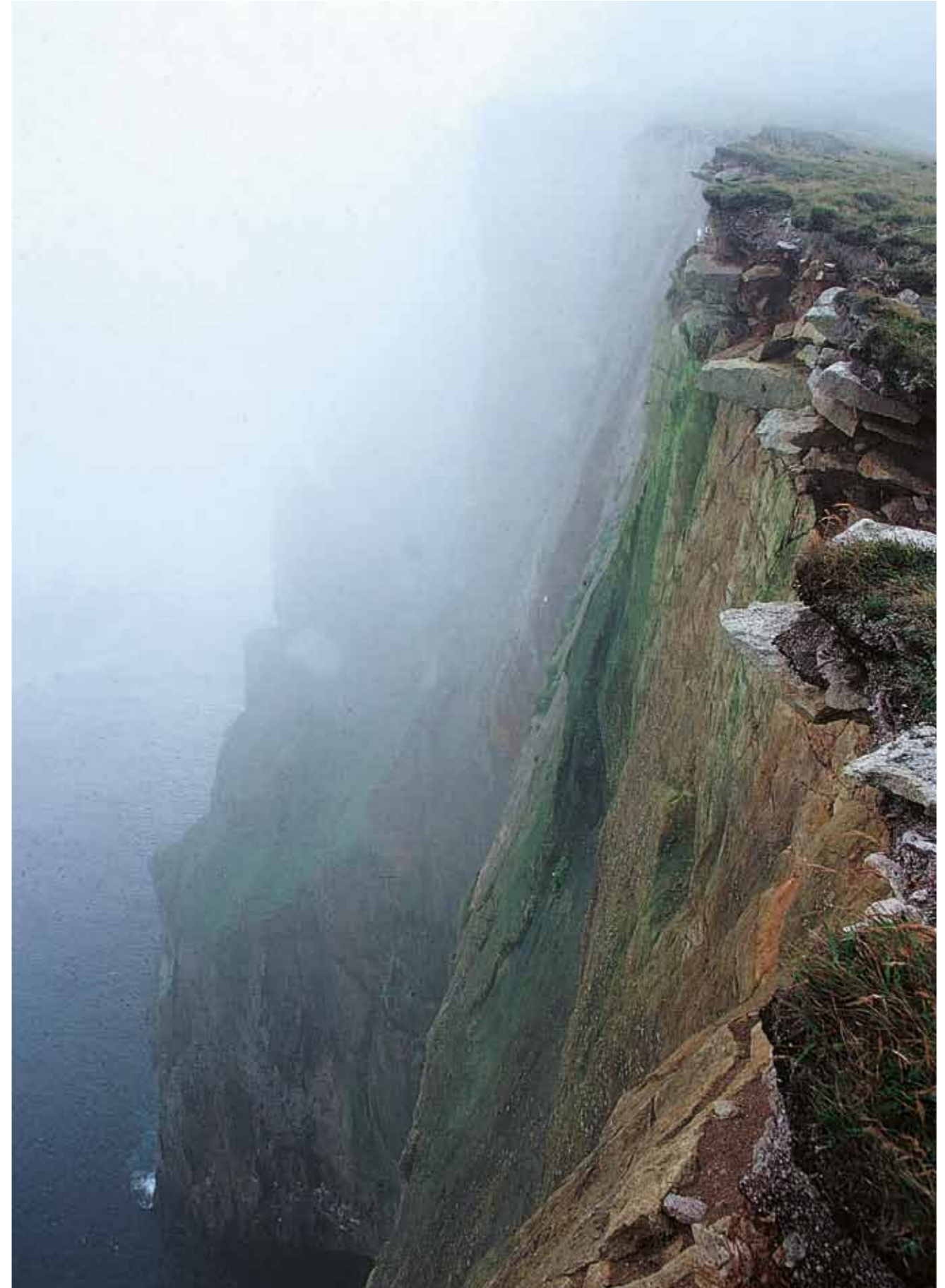
The other soils found on Hirta belong to three broad Associations which are related to the parent geology: a) Conachair granophyre; b) the geologically varied but predominantly Basic central area; and c) the Ultra-Basic rock of the Mullach Bi ridge (Gwyne *et al.* 1974). The Granophyre Association covers the southern and eastern slopes of Conachair, the basin of An Lag, the western facing slopes of Oiseval and the eastern parts of the village. The Mixed Basic Association covers the central section of Hirta and is a mixture of Basic and intermediate rocks with more Basic types predominating. The Ultra-Basic Association on Mullach Bi and western parts of the Cambir and Ruaival is moderately acidic, but contains a high content of exchangeable cations due to the high contents of magnesium and sodium from sea spray. The range of soils found within each of these Associations is outlined in *Table 2*.

The soils in the village area are underlain by a mixture of acid and Basic parent materials and have a long history of cultivation, which has involved the removal of boulders, vertical mixing (from digging) and surface addition of manure, turfs, ashes and seabird carcasses. These 'plaggen soils' (Gwyne *et al.* 1974) have a very deep A horizon and are neutral to weakly acid with a good structure for cultivation.

| Soil Association | Soil types included |
|-------------------------|---|
| Granophyre Association | Humus Iron Podzols; Peaty Gleys; Anthropic Gleys; Peaty Rankers; Cliff Complex |
| Mixed Basic Association | Podzolic soils with thin iron pan; Peaty-gleyed Podzols; Peaty Gleys; Peaty Rankers; Brown Earths; Cliff complex |
| Ultra-Basic Association | Podzolic soils; Peaty Rankers; Cliff complex |

Table 2. Soil Associations and types found on Hirta (Gwyne et al. 1974)

Since 2000, researchers at Aberdeen University's Department of Plant and Soil Science have been studying the soils of St Kilda. Having established that there is a significant build-up of levels of lead, zinc and other toxic elements in most of Hirta's agricultural soils, they were awarded a grant from the Leverhulme Trust to investigate further (Meharg *et al.* 2006). The toxic components, such as arsenic and cadmium, came from the composted waste, including seabird carcasses, which had been spread on the arable ground as fertiliser. The main elements of interest, however, were the sources of such high levels of lead and zinc. This was traced to the addition of significant amounts of peat and turf ash to the arable ground enclosed by the head dyke. Although the lead and zinc contaminants do not seem to have been taken up into the edible parts of crops, the degree to which they and their associated dioxins affected agricultural production or the lifespan of Hirta's pre-industrial inhabitants is still a tantalising question (Meharg and Killham 2003). The Leverhulme grant also enabled up-to-date pollen analyses from soil profiles below the Street and analysis of a peat core from Conachair (Donaldson *et al.* 2009).



4.3 Flora and fauna



4.3.1

Flora

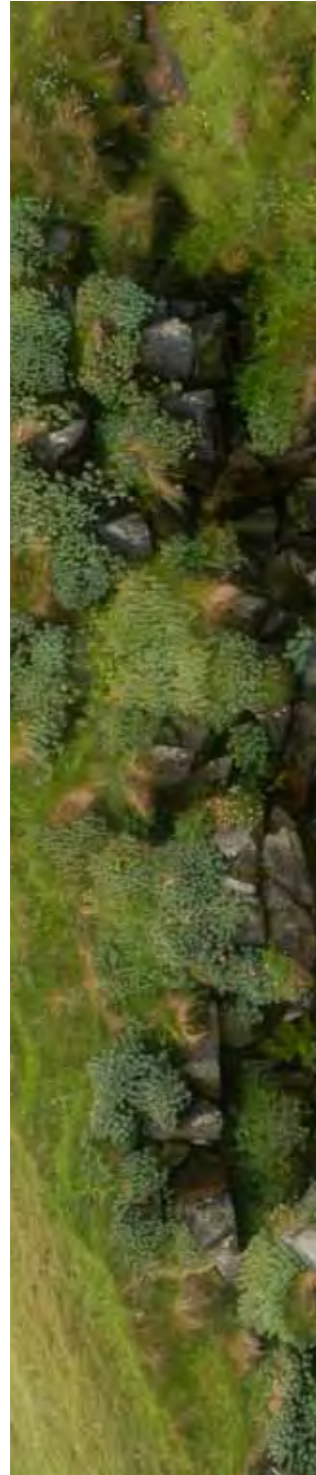


In general, the vegetation of Hirta is grassland, with wind-blasted heather communities on steep slopes in Village Bay. The grassland is influenced in many places by heavy levels of grazing and by sea spray and the droppings of sheep and seabirds. Within the village area, grassland has developed on arable land abandoned when the St Kildans were evacuated in 1930. There are no trees or shrubs apart from dwarf willow. There are no rare vascular plants but there are some notable species of bryophytes and lichens. Hirta and Soay are grazed by Soay sheep, those on Hirta having been introduced from Soay by the Earl of Dumfries (later the 5th Marquess of Bute) after the evacuation of the islands. Boreray is also grazed, but by feral sheep of a blackface type left by the St Kildans. There have been no sheep on Dun since 1930, making it one of the few completely ungrazed, and thus largely undisturbed, islands in Britain.

The following description of the flora of St Kilda is taken from 'A Nature Conservation Review' (NCR) (Ratcliffe 1977).

'Botanically, the most striking environmental features of the St Kilda group are, first, the prevailing high humidity, which is reflected in the generally peaty nature of the soils, and in the wide distribution of hygrophilous oceanic plants, such as Frullania germana; and secondly, the evidence that salt spray strongly affects the whole of these islands. On Hirta opposite Dun and on the Cambir, the occurrence of halophytic Plantago swards on cliff tops hundreds of metres above the sea is an indication of the spray drenching which these sites receive during storms. Halophytes such as Asplenium marinum and Grimmia maritima occur in places farthest from the sea and much of the prevailing grassland has a sub-maritime character. Vast numbers of seabirds have a very marked fertilising effect on the pastures, and the enriching influence of the sea spray also helps to give swards of sufficient productivity to support a good stock of Soay sheep on Hirta and Soay, and Blackface on Boreray. These flocks have been the subject of intensive research.'

'Away from the cliffs, Soay and Boreray are covered largely with the Holcus lanatus, Agrostis stolonifera, A. tenuis, Anthoxanthum odoratum, Festuca rubra type of sub-maritime grassland, and only Hirta has areas sufficiently free from the influence of salt water and heavy manuring by sheep and birds to carry paramaritime communities. These are mainly a range of acidic, species-poor grasslands and heaths of a submontane character, found widely on lower hills along the western Highland seaboard. A mixed Nardus-Calluna-Rhacomitrium lanuginosum heath is quite extensive, and the summit of Conachair has a Luzula sylvatica dominated grassland. There is an interesting flush community with much Schoenus nigricans in one place.'



'St Kilda is an example of an extreme oceanic island group, although the climate in this northern district is of the cool Atlantic type. This is marked by the occurrence of montane species such as *Silene acaulis* and *Saxifraga oppositifolia* on sea cliffs. Yet the climate is still equable enough to allow the presence of some southern species, and the Mediterranean-Atlantic liverwort *Fossombronia angulosa* occurs here far beyond its next northern most locality, in Donegal, Ireland.'

A revised edition of the SSSI citation for St Kilda notes the importance of the archipelago for its maritime cliff vegetation. Additionally, the vegetated sea cliffs are seen as internationally important, having been recognised as a qualifying feature of the SAC.

A colour vegetation map of Hirta at 1:10,000 was published by the Nature Conservancy in 1971, identifying the different grassland, heathland and maritime communities, based on the classification by Gwynne and Milner (1971). However, this has been superseded by a National Vegetation Survey of Hirta and Dun, commissioned by SNH and carried out by Central Environment Surveys in 1996. This identified five broad plant community types, classified as follows (with the number of National Vegetation Classification (NVC) communities or sub-communities in each type given in brackets): maritime cliff (7), mesotrophic grassland (1), upland grasslands (4), heathland (1) and mires (3).

There are about 140 species of vascular plants on Hirta, but no nationally rare or scarce species apart from two species of eyebright. A full list is given in *The Flora of St Kilda* by M J Crawley (1993).

The flora includes extremely interesting examples of 'niche expansion', where one species has occupied the niches filled by several other species in the Outer Hebrides. Good examples are *Ranunculus acris* (doing the jobs of *R. repens* and *R. bulbosus*) and *Leontodon autumnalis* (doing the jobs of *Hypochaeris radicata* and *Crepis capillaris*). These plants may well be represented by a range of different (perhaps unique) genotypes, and would repay further investigation.

There has been limited botanical work undertaken on the other islands in the archipelago. Boreray and Soay are both significantly smaller than Hirta, with a more restricted flora. For Boreray, J Roper Lindsay has produced a vegetation map and listed 45 vascular plants and 34 lichens (*The Boreray 1980 Expedition Report*). For Soay, the Brathay Exploration Group has produced a simple vegetation map and listed 50 vascular plants (*Field Studies on St Kilda, 1971*).

Hirta has been recognised as being of national importance for its bryophytes and lichens, with 160 species of moss and liverwort and 194 species of lichen recorded. Additionally, 162 species of fungi have been recorded to date.

4.3.2

Fauna



Four distinct features of the St Kilda fauna are of outstanding interest: the seabirds; the endemic sub-species of wren and mouse; the Soay sheep; and the marine life. For all its isolation, St Kilda has had a fairly balanced scientific programme investigating its various invertebrate groups, making them one of the best-known fauna groups of the Western Isles. Of note are the weevil *Ceutorhynchus insularis*, a Red Data Book species, only recorded on Dun and the Westmann Islands of Iceland, and the subject of a Biodiversity Species Action Plan; and one rare invertebrate, a fly, *Calliphora uralensis*. An impressive 10 parasitic ichneumons have also been recorded, which are unique to St Kilda amongst the Western Isles.

Seabirds³⁶

On the strength of its breeding seabird populations St Kilda has been designated a WHS, NNR, SSSI and a SPA. These islands are jewels set in a near-pristine marine environment and function as a seabird sanctuary without equal in the eastern Atlantic.

St Kilda's exposed cliffs have long hosted seabird communities of historical fascination as well as exceptional biological importance. Until 1878 it was the only known British breeding site of the northern fulmar. It is also renowned as one of the best-known haunts of the extinct great auk (*Pinguinus impennis*), being one of only three sites in the eastern Atlantic where this species is known certainly to have bred. That the ornithological history of the islands has been so well documented testifies to their importance in a global context.

For the most part deserted in the winter months, 17 species of seabird come ashore in spring and summer to breed on St Kilda, making the archipelago the largest seabird colony in the British Isles. Their populations were censused most recently in 1999–2001 by the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), when the national and international importance of St Kilda's seabird aggregations was reaffirmed. The internationally accepted threshold for such status is that at least 1% of the relevant population – whether regional, national, international or biogeographical – is represented in the aggregation.

³⁶ All seabird numbers taken from the *Revised Nomination of St Kilda for inclusion in the World Heritage Site List 2003*



Today, St Kilda hosts nearly one million seabirds, including 700,000 breeding seabirds, and is the largest seabird colony in north-west Europe. More than half of the seabird species breeding on St Kilda occur in nationally (in the UK context) important numbers. In the wider global context, however, the St Kilda seabirds assume exceptional biological significance. Populations of seven species of seabird breeding on the archipelago qualify as biogeographically important, in the context of the north-east Atlantic Ocean and the associated coastal fringe. Of these, three are important on a worldwide scale. This includes the largest gannet colony in the world (60,428 breeding pairs), the largest northern fulmar colony in Britain and Ireland (66,942 apparently occupied nest sites) and the largest Atlantic puffin colony in the British Isles (135,752 apparently occupied burrows).

There are also noteworthy populations of all three species of nocturnal petrels that breed in the north-east Atlantic, including the largest colony in the EU of Leach's storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). In addition, more than 1.5% and 1% respectively of the British Isles and north-east Atlantic populations of the common guillemot (*Uria aalge*) breed on St Kilda, and more than 1% of the British Isles population and almost 1% of the north-east Atlantic population of razorbills (*Alca torda*) nest on the high cliffs of the archipelago. St Kilda also contributes more than 1% of the north-east Atlantic population of Manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) and is thus of national and international importance for the species.

More than 1% of the world population of great skua (*Catharacta skua*) breeds on St Kilda. Predation by great skuas on the archipelago's petrel populations was reported as being very heavy in 2004 and this relationship was the subject of a PhD study between 2007 and 2009. This predator remains a key species in the seabird assemblage of St Kilda.

The population of breeding northern gannet (*Morus bassanus*) increased markedly in the twentieth century and represents more than 24% and 23% of the British Isles and north-east Atlantic populations respectively, and almost 20% of the world population, making it the largest northern gannet colony in the world.

St Kilda hosts the largest northern fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) colony in Britain and Ireland, which represents more than 13% of the population breeding in the British Isles and more than 3% of the north-east Atlantic population. Although numbers have remained fairly stable, productivity has been low for the last 10 years, which may at some point be reflected in a decline in numbers.

The Atlantic puffin (*Fratercula arctica*) population is largely stable, with more than 30% of the total numbers of puffins breeding in Great Britain and Ireland, and more than 4% of those breeding in the north-east Atlantic (more than 2% of the world population) doing so on St Kilda.

Seabirds breeding on St Kilda forage over a wide area of the north Atlantic. Species such as the auks (e.g. puffins, guillemots, razorbills) might fly more than 30km daily towards the west coast of the Outer Hebrides to forage, while storm-petrels and Manx shearwater may roam over much larger distances off the continental shelf to search for food. The larger gull species probably fly only short distances to forage (and possibly also to scavenge), and species such as the European shag and the black guillemot have an inshore distribution at all times and exploit small fish only short distances from the St Kilda coast. However, for the most part, the foraging areas of St Kilda seabirds are extremely large and disjunct, defying accurate identification.

Although most species do feed in them, the waters immediately around St Kilda are used by all birds, perhaps on a daily basis, for purposes other than feeding. Such inshore areas are used primarily for display, courtship, bathing and preening. They are also used by non-breeding birds for maintenance activities such as washing and preening. These areas are more discrete and more readily identifiable.

There is little data to indicate exactly where seabirds occur in those parts of the sea immediately adjacent to their colonies but analysis of the available data around St Kilda, informed by similar analyses of data at other important colonies, does suggest a core area of use for the various species. The importance of the seas around St Kilda has been recognised in the seaward extension to the SPA, now extending approximately 4km into the

marine environment and including the seabed, water column and surface. More research is required into the feeding areas of seabirds and it may be in future that one or more offshore SPAs are created to protect seabird feeding areas.

Colonisation of the islands by rats would represent a very serious potential threat to the colony. Measures to prevent this occurring and to ensure an adequate and appropriate response in the event of this happening are discussed in the prescriptions in this Management Plan.

The biggest potential threat to the seabird colony lies in changes to the feeding ecology brought about by climate change, which is already affecting numbers on St Kilda and other colonies around the British Isles.

Migrant birds

St Kilda has an important function as a vital stopover for many migrant and non-resident species, and each year the list grows. Some are on their regular route to and from more northerly breeding grounds, whilst others are blown off course; all find the archipelago a welcome stopover in adverse weather. Over a hundred species may turn up in any year and since the first complete checklist of birds was compiled in 1978, 49 new species were added to the list between 1978 and 2000 – about two a year on average.

Indigenous sub-species

St Kilda wren

The St Kilda wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*) is a sub-species of the mainland wren: slightly larger, paler in colour and with differences in its song and breeding behaviour. After publication of its description in the nineteenth century, the very existence of the bird was said to be threatened by collectors and this led in 1904 to a special Act of Parliament, the Wild Birds Protection (St Kilda) Amendment Bill. The Bill also conferred protection on Leach's fork-tailed petrel (Leach's storm-petrel). The St Kilda wren is included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list.

The wren is present on all of the islands and, with the exception of the pairs which breed in Village Bay, all are found on the sea cliffs. The highest densities are to be found on Dun and Carn Mor on Hirta and are mostly associated with seabirds and sheep, whose refuse and droppings no doubt sustain an abundant insect life utilised by the wrens (Boyd 1979). Williamson (1958) provides a detailed description of the wren, its population and breeding environment. More recent studies suggest a total of around 230 pairs, with over 100 on Hirta, about 50 each on Boreray and Soay, another 25 or so on Dun, and even two or three pairs near the summit of Stac an Armin.



St Kilda mouse

The St Kilda fieldmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus hirtensis*), like the wren, is indigenous to St Kilda, though its status as a full sub-species is sometimes questioned. About 17cm long and over 70 grams in weight when fully grown, it is much larger than the mainland fieldmouse and has a deeper, more russet coat with a paler belly. These mice, like the wren, are so different from mainland species that they may have survived the last Ice Age on St Kilda, when all other mice in northern Britain were eradicated. An alternative suggestion is that the mouse was introduced at a later date by the Vikings. The fieldmouse, like the wren, is dependent upon the seabirds, sheep and possibly people for enrichment of their habitat with organic materials (Boyd 1956; 1979).

According to the NCR criteria, this race of mouse is regarded as being of national importance (Ratcliffe 1977), but its questionable status as a distinct sub-species means that it is not on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan list.

Research into the numbers and distribution of the St Kilda fieldmouse commenced in 2009.

Before the evacuation in 1930, a second type of St Kilda mouse existed – the St Kilda house mouse (*Mus musculus muralis*). A sub-species of the common house mouse, this did not survive the evacuation of people and became extinct within a few years of that date.



Soay and Boreray sheep

Soay sheep

Soay sheep (*Ovis aries L.*) are the most primitive sheep in Europe, closely resembling both the original wild species and the domesticated sheep first brought to Britain in Neolithic times around 5,000 BC (Clutton-Brock 1981). They may have been introduced to St Kilda in the 2nd millennium BC, but by historical times they were restricted to the uninhabited island of Soay and are unlikely ever to have experienced much interference from the St Kildans. In 1930, at the time of evacuation, the blackface sheep kept by the St Kildans on Hirta were rounded up and sold on the mainland. The blackface flock on Boreray was left there to fend for itself. Two years later the new owner, the Earl of Dumfries, had 107 Soay sheep of mixed age and sex, some of which may have been castrated, transferred to Hirta from Soay. Numbers on Hirta increased rapidly and in 1952 the first organised census produced a figure of 1,114 sheep. Although the sheep are distributed throughout Hirta, a large proportion of the total (30%) use the Village Bay area (Clutton-Brock *et al.* 1992). The Soay sheep have been the subject of close scientific observation since 1952. These studies have shown that since then, the population of Soays on Hirta has fluctuated irregularly between 600 to more than 2,000. According to Jewell *et al.* (1974), the ecological factors governing these oscillations in numbers are:

- a) Consistently high fecundity (fertility) of the sheep, coupled with
- b) a super-abundance of food in summer.

These factors allow the population to pass through the winter at a level close to carrying capacity, to increase by as much as 50% during the subsequent summer, and thus to enter the next winter at a level substantially higher than the island can support. Under these conditions, this natural regulation causes the sheep populations to 'crash' dramatically in late winter and early spring (Clutton-Brock *et al.* 1992). More recent research has further refined the circumstances under which the population crashes: high density must coincide with poor winter weather and a population containing a high proportion of vulnerable individuals

(young, old and male) (Coulson *et al.* 2001). In the years when such a crash occurs, a number of sheep carcasses may be apparent. This is a natural result of the deliberate policy of non-management of the flock, which is treated as a wild population mirroring their original conditions on Soay. The high mortality, driven by natural selection, is believed to be important in maintaining the near-natural characteristics of the sheep. This deliberate non-management is permissible by law because the sheep a) have no owner, b) are not on agricultural land, and, c) are not considered to be either a domestic or captive population. The sheep on Soay and Boreray live under the same conditions.

Boreray sheep

In addition to the Soay sheep on Hirta and Soay, a flock of blackface sheep exists on Boreray. These are descendants of those left behind when the St Kildan people were evacuated and they represent a cross between an early type of Scottish blackface with a Hebridean type of Scottish shortwool. The sheep on Boreray fluctuate in number from approx 350 to 700 (Ranger Reports). The Boreray sheep fluctuate in synchrony with the Soays on Hirta (Grenfell *et al.* 1998).

The management of both types of sheep on St Kilda was discussed by Boyd and Jewell (1974), who concluded that it would be unwise to interfere with the natural regulation of sheep on these islands. According to Boyd (1981), the presence of the sheep on the islands can be considered a 'human artefact' and he argued that they have become part of the cultural history of the islands, providing a biological link with the past native human community. The sheep on Hirta have been the subject of a long-term research project and represent one of the best-studied populations of large mammals in the world.

4.3.3

Marine life

The St Kilda archipelago and adjacent seabed supports a variety of remarkable marine communities, reflecting the geomorphological history of the area over the last 50-60 million years and the highly unusual conditions that prevail. The intertidal and shallow subtidal areas are subject to extreme wave exposure dictating the composition of the seabed communities, whilst the influence of the oceanic swell is still felt at exceptional depths of 60-70m and this is reflected in the composition of the animal communities present. Despite the relatively small spring tide range (3m), the extent of the upper intertidal communities is greatly extended as a result of wave splash, with some species extending up to 100m above sea level. The remarkable clarity of these oceanic waters also has a significant bearing on the extent and distribution of the various communities of animals and plants. One of the remarkable features of St Kilda's marine environment is the depth to which the kelp forest extends – over 30m, with large kelp plants occurring down to depths of 45m and coralline red algae to in excess of 60m, greatly extending the sublittoral photic zone.

The rugged rocky underwater topography is as spectacular as that above. It is a further legacy of St Kilda's Tertiary period volcanic origins and more recent sea level changes and climate changes that

have occurred over the last 22,000 years. It is unusual for such extensive areas of relatively shallow bedrock to occur in such oceanic conditions. The exceptional clarity of the water enables the true splendour of this underwater landscape to be better appreciated than it might be in more typical coastal waters where underwater visibility is much reduced. The plunging vertical underwater rock caves, tunnels and gullies are festooned with marine life – a kaleidoscope of colour and form kept in constant motion by the Atlantic swell. A number of notable species have been recorded in recent surveys: the jewel anemone is recorded in super abundance; the rarely recorded snail, *Simnia patula*; and other species at the extreme of their range including the sponges, *Tethyspira spinosa* and *Plocamilla coriacea*, and the sea anemone, *Parazoanthus anguicomus*.

St Kilda is affected by the warmer water of the North Atlantic Drift and, particularly in winter, water temperatures remain much warmer than those in the enclosed North Sea. This has resulted in a number of southern species reaching the northern extreme of their range and vice versa. This not only enhances the overall marine biodiversity of the archipelago, but also represents an opportunity for future monitoring of the status of these species as an indicator of the impact of climate change on the marine environment.



Atlantic grey seals breed in small numbers in sheltered caves and coves, and 300-400 are present throughout the year. Cetacean sightings have increased in recent years, probably because of more interest, better data collection and more observers experienced in identification. Most sightings are made during the summer months of May to August but some killer whales, porpoises and Risso's dolphins have been seen between November and March. Ten species have been sighted from St Kilda so far, of which all but one are known to occur regularly off the Scottish west coast in summer. The exception was a Sowerby's beaked whale that was washed up in Village Bay on 29 September 1994. Minke whale is the most commonly sighted species, mostly in ones or twos but occasionally in greater numbers. Killer whales are the next most commonly seen species, although typically no more than two reports a year, usually between May and August. However, on occasions many more have been sighted, with an estimated 40-50 animals seen in July 1984.

There have been two recent surveys that have comprehensively covered both the intertidal and subtidal habitats around St Kilda. The first was conducted by SNH in 1997 and involved a complete mapping of the intertidal biotopes for all the islands

and the main stacs, together with broadscale mapping of the seabed in the areas adjacent to the islands using a RoxAnn acoustic ground discrimination system with ground truthing provided by scuba diver observations, underwater video and grab samples. A second survey was carried out in 2000 jointly by SNH and the Fisheries Research Services laboratory, Aberdeen, that mapped the extensive areas of seabed between the islands and a substantial area to the north-west of Soay. This survey employed a range of acoustic survey techniques such as RoxAnn, multibeam swathe bathymetry and side-scan sonar, together with towed video and a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and extensive grab sampling in the areas of soft sedimentary seabed.

The marine environment around St Kilda is in near-pristine condition with very little impact from local human activities. Each year anchoring is limited to a small number of yachts and particularly in winter storms, fishing boats and is concentrated in Village Bay where the soft seabed provides good holding ground and results in minimal damage. There is only a small amount of creel fishing in the area for lobsters or crabs. It is not known whether the catch levels are sustainable. The use of mobile gear within the WHS is occasionally reported, with a scallop trawler being sighted in 2007.



4.3.4

Research and studies

When the Nature Conservancy (NC) established its first nature reserves, it was with the declared intention that in addition to protecting and preserving interesting and important habitats, these places should become 'open air laboratories'. As a result, permission has been granted over the years by the NC, its successors and the Trust for research work to be carried out on the flora and fauna of St Kilda. Inventories of flora and fauna have been exhaustively compiled by a succession of biologists in pre- and post-war decades, with particular attention paid to seabirds and Soay sheep.

Bird studies

Systematic counts of the bird life of St Kilda started shortly after the evacuation in 1930. Harrison and Lack counted the gannets and resident land birds in 1931, and there have been several counts since, summarised by Harris and Murray (1978), Tasker *et al.* (1988), and updated in 2002 in *Birds of St Kilda* by Stuart Murray. The last full count of most species was in 1999–2000. Data from Seabird 2000 is provided in *Seabird Populations of Britain and Ireland* by Mitchell *et al.* (2004). In addition to counts, studies have been made into the diet of the birds (Furness and Todd 1984), the feeding areas used by them (Leaper *et al.* 1988), and on the genetics of Leach's petrel (Bicknell, in prep.) and on their interaction with great skua (Miles, in prep.). The St Kilda Ranger runs a series of seabird monitoring plots and the breeding success of fulmar and kittiwake is monitored every year. The Seabird and Marine Ranger carried out a range of surveys on the seabirds, looking at population, productivity and diet of a number of species.

Soay sheep studies

Most of the research carried out on St Kilda has been descriptive and observational in nature. This is mostly true for the sheep studies, although at times there has been some manipulation, including the creation of some very small grazing exclosures and manipulation of Soay sheep breeding and parasite load.

Research on the sheep started in earnest shortly after the declaration of the NNR. The first serious attempt to assess the numbers of the sheep was made by Dr John Morton Boyd in 1952 (Boyd 1956), when he established an effective method for their census. This was repeated from 1955 to 1958, and with modifications in subsequent years. Throughout the 1960s, the Soay Sheep Research Team censused the sheep population on Hirta and noted the 'boom and bust' cycle which has continued ever since. At the same time, a team of vets studying the health, pathology and parasitology of the sheep related the population dynamics to the mineral and metabolic stresses to which the sheep were subject in their closed island habitat.

Behavioural and botanical research continued into the early 1970s and culminated in the publication of *Island Survivors: the Ecology of the Soay Sheep of St Kilda* (Jewell *et al.* 1974).

In the 1970s, scientists looked at the question of differential mortality between males and females and it was decided to castrate a cohort of male lambs. In 1978, 14 lambs were castrated, followed by 8 more in 1979. In 1980, a definite cohort of 50 castrates was created. Through this experiment it was proven that the castrates outlived the rams and that their survival was also better than that of the females. While the castration experiment is perhaps the best demonstration yet of the effect of reproductive investment on lifespan in a free-living population, the project would not contemplate such a large-scale manipulation affecting reproduction again.



In 1985, Dr Tim Clutton-Brock, who had been carrying out work on the deer population on Rum, wanted to test his hypotheses on survival, fitness and individual reproductive success on other species. The Village Bay population of Soays was suggested and a new phase of research was initiated. This was carried out by Clutton-Brock and the Large Animal Research Group (LARG), which continued to monitor the size and condition of the population on Hirta. During this research, the entire village population was caught and tagged.

A further aim of the LARG project was to investigate the factors maintaining the genetic and phenotypic diversity of the sheep. The sheep on Hirta also suffer from parasitic worms. This is thought to affect their survival and in 1988, 52 animals were treated with albendazole, an anthelmintic drug which aimed to treat the parasitic infection. The results of this experiment reinforced Jewell's earlier conclusion (Jewell *et al.* 1974) that many of the sheep deaths during the 'crash' periods were caused by starvation exacerbated by parasite infestation. Manipulation with albendazole has been carried out on five separate occasions, including the 1988 experiment. In 1988 and 1991 the purpose was to investigate survival rates; in 1995 to study the process of re-infection; in 2001 to investigate whether grazing behaviour was associated with parasite burden; and in 2003 to determine the effect of parasites on female reproductive success. On three occasions researchers have also temporarily prevented (using hormone treatments) small groups of animals from breeding, to investigate energy turnover due to sexual activity in the rut and to investigate whether attempting to breed affects winter survival.

In these and in other small-scale manipulative experiments, and as a general philosophy, the research has manipulated a small proportion of the Village Bay population (which is only one-third of the total island

population) with a temporary treatment that is likely to have improved the lot of treated individuals compared with controls. In addition, these manipulations have been conducted in the run-up to expected crashes, when many individuals (treated and controls) have died and no lasting effects on the population demography are likely.

Research on the ecology and evolution of Soay sheep from 1985 to 2003 was brought together in the publication of *Soay Sheep: Dynamics and Selection in an Island Population* (eds Clutton-Brock and Pemberton 2004)

The Soay sheep research continues to investigate the population dynamics, plant-herbivore interactions and evolutionary genetics of the population. Of particular note are the recent discoveries that the Soay population on Hirta is gradually increasing (despite its fluctuations), while the physical size of individual sheep is slowly decreasing (Wilson *et al.* 2006; Ozgul *et al.* 2009), both of which are likely to be long-term responses to environmental change. The research is now carried out by groups from seven UK universities and research institutes, co-ordinated through the Institute of Evolutionary Biology, University of Edinburgh. The seven centres are the universities of Edinburgh, Cambridge, Sheffield, Lancaster, Kent (at Canterbury) and Imperial College London, and the Macaulay Institute, Aberdeen. An annual report is prepared by the project and shared with the Trust, SNH and others.

4.4 Cultural heritage



4.4.1

Introduction

The cultural heritage of St Kilda includes not only the tangible artefacts and monuments of past and current societies on St Kilda, but also the intangible which include language, music and traditions. Naturally the latter are more difficult to define and conserve.

4.4.2

Documentary evidence

From the writings of visitors to St Kilda, such as Dean Monro in 1549 and Martin Martin in 1697, the way of life on St Kilda has been remarkably well documented. Other key works include MacAulay's *History of St Kilda* (1764) and the writings of the Rev Neil Mackenzie from 1829 to 1843. Illustrative material by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland (1812) and Sharbau's plans of 1858 and 1860 are immensely useful in clarifying the texts, and Captain Thomas's sketch of Blackhouse K in the 1860s is also revealing. To these records must be added the remarkable photographic archive for St Kilda, which documents the life and times of the St Kildans from

1860 to the evacuation in 1930 and beyond. These documents, illustrations and photographs – as well as oral records – have allowed the flesh to be put on the bones of the archaeological evidence, and have been drawn upon extensively to support the interpretations in the following descriptions.

Included in the documentary evidence are important documents, illustrations and photographs relating to the natural heritage. The history of the natural heritage has recently been published in *A Natural History of St Kilda* by John Love (2009).

4.4.3

Collections

The majority of the Trust's St Kilda collection is made up of hundreds of social history items from the archipelago (largely consisting of broken or fragmentary Victorian or later items). Until recently these were loaned to Glasgow Museums Service. With their decision to return the majority of the collection to the Trust, a new temporary loan agreement was concluded with Museum nan Eilean (Western Isles Museum Service) in advance of a more permanent solution being negotiated. Items already on display at Kelvingrove continue to be loaned to Glasgow Museums; other complete items are held by the Trust, some in store and others on display in the exhibition in House 3 on St Kilda.

While the loan to Museum nan Eilean will ensure appropriate storage for the material, it cannot ensure its conservation without considerable Trust funding or de-accessioning. The Trust will review curatorship and ownership of the collection, thereby making a decision regarding the future care and accessibility of the material.

The inventory of items owned by the Trust is kept by the Trust's curatorial department in the Trust's central office in Edinburgh.



Trust archive

A large quantity of information on St Kilda exists within the Trust archive, with several discrete collections of primary and secondary source material held at the Trust's central office in Edinburgh and in the office of the Western Isles Manager (WIM) in Inverness.

Within the Trust's general archive are 25 boxes of correspondence, reports and other documentary evidence going back to the Trust's acquisition of the islands in 1957, covering the initial acquisition and the subsequent management of St Kilda, including information on Work Parties and other projects associated with the islands. A further 10 boxes are held in the Inverness office.

Bute Box

The Bute Box is an invaluable collection of books, periodicals, letters, diaries, journals and other material, the majority of which were donated to the Trust by the Bute family following acquisition of the islands in 1957. It provides a very useful source of research material as it contains such archival treasures as the diaries of Alice Maclachlan, the wife of the missionary to St Kilda between 1906 and 1909, the 1889 journal of the then schoolmaster, John Ross, and letters from the 1930s and 1940s relating to such issues as visits to St Kilda and bird life on the islands.

There are also scientific, nature conservation and archaeological reports and surveys, transcripts of diaries, photographs, and many other items. Over the years the collection has been augmented by a number of donations and deposits of archives including photograph albums from the early twentieth century, St Kilda stamps, postcards, newspaper articles and oral history tape recordings.

Within the Trust's reference library are a number of books, guidebooks and leaflets relating to St Kilda.

The majority of the St Kilda archive held by the Trust is preserved in acid-free archival materials to aid their long-term preservation. Lists of all the collections available for consultation can be accessed from the Trust Archivist.

Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (RHASS) archive held by the Trust

The RHASS has a fascinating collection of letters and other valuable documents from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that are on long-term loan to the Trust. The letters relate to the administration by the RHASS of the Kelsall Bequest, set up in the nineteenth century to aid the inhabitants of St Kilda and those of other western isles of Scotland.

As part of a small project between the Trust and the RHASS, the letters in the RHASS collection have been summarised and listed and repackaged in acid-free archival materials. The list is also available for consultation.

Other archives

Although not part of the Trust's legal locus, there are many other collections of objects and papers relating to St Kilda cared for by other museum services, archives and individuals, such as the National Archives of Scotland and the National Library of Scotland. All of these form part of the cultural resource associated with St Kilda and are fundamental to continuing research. The Trust will be investigating the possibility of encouraging greater access to these resources.

Photograph and film archive

The Trust has a large collection of historic and contemporary photographs (many of which have recently been digitised), which have been catalogued and are accessible to members of the public by contacting the Trust's Photo Librarian.

The Scottish Screen Archive, run by the National Library of Scotland, holds copies of films relating to St Kilda.

Oral history archive

The School of Scottish Studies (SSS) holds an extensive oral history collection of both primary and secondary sources, in Gaelic and English. It includes an extensive collection of interviews with St Kildans discussing the folklore of St Kilda, the archipelago's history, its natural and cultural heritage, and songs, amongst other subjects.

All the fieldwork tapes have been digitised as part of the Tobar an Dulchais project. Other collections that have been donated to the SSS are yet to be digitised. Some of the Gaelic interviews are yet to be translated and transcribed.

The Trust also holds a collection of audio tapes relating to St Kilda, the majority of which are yet to be translated and digitised.

4.4.5

Music and language

The cultural heritage of St Kilda includes a rich tradition of music and language, including stories and myths. Although almost all the placenames of the archipelago have a Norse derivation, for at least 400 years Gaelic was the language of Hirta with a number of words unique to the St Kildan vocabulary: Ion – a climbing rope made of strips of plaited rawhide and regarded as a precious heirloom etc. Many words pertain to sea-fowling, peculiar to St Kilda with its seabird economy.

4.4.6

Cultural landscape

In 2005 St Kilda was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a cultural landscape: as an outstanding example of land use resulting from a type of subsistence economy based on the products of birds, cultivating land and keeping sheep. The cultural landscape reflects age-old traditions and land uses, which have become vulnerable to change particularly after the departure of the islanders, but bears exceptional testimony to well over two millennia of human occupation in extreme conditions. Research by Davidson *et al.* (2009), since inscription of the cultural landscape, indicates that St Kilda has in fact been occupied on and off for over four millennia.

For the most part the archaeological record relies on the remains still visible on the ground, although a few relatively small-scale excavations and remote sensing surveys have also taken place.

As well as including the ruined remains of structures and their underlying deposits, for the purposes of this Management Plan 'archaeology' is taken to encompass all evidence of the impact of people on the St Kildan environment from the earliest times to the present day.

The following description of the archaeological resource is merely a summary of the most pertinent features, and is thus far from exhaustive. A more detailed introduction to the built heritage of St Kilda can be found in the RCAHMS volume *Buildings of St Kilda* by Geoffrey Stell and Mary Harman (1988), which arose out of several years of intensive field survey and observations coupled with documentary research. Further research resulted in the most detailed publication to date: *An Isle called Hirta – A History and Culture of St Kilda to 1930* (Harman 1997), while Andrew Fleming's *St Kilda and the Wider World* (2005) provides a more theoretical approach based on recent fieldwork.

Further information on the archaeological remains will be available in the new St Kilda monograph and also from the work of the RCAHMS, which will be published in due course.

4.4.7

Archaeological remains

Early prehistoric

There is archaeological evidence for human activity on St Kilda from the later Neolithic and Bronze Age periods – roughly 3,000 BC to 700 BC – through anecdotal historic references, and antiquarian and modern archaeological fieldwork. Although evidence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers has recently been discovered in the Western Isles, there is no evidence of this nomadic hunter-gatherer-fisher community on St Kilda. While further investigation might produce such evidence, sea level rises in the intervening period mean that evidence may now only exist below the current sea level.

MacAulay (1764, 53) reported the existence of a large stone circle on Boreray, with a flat-topped standing stone at its centre. In 1876 Sands (1878, 76), could find no trace of the stone circle which, if it did indeed exist, could indicate human occupation dating to the later Neolithic period of c2,000 BC. The Rev MacKenzie wrote of grassy mounds, the 'abode of fairies', which overlay stone cists sometimes containing bones and mostly containing coarse pots (MacKenzie 1911, 6-7). These burial mounds, which were cleared away in the nineteenth century, might be of Early Bronze Age date, one survival of which may be the underground cell in the lower meadow of Village Bay (NF 1012 9922). The stone settings examined by Cottam (1973) and more recently (1994) at An Lag above Village Bay were thought to be either prehistoric or later Norse burial sites. Whilst their date is still unknown, the consensus is moving towards a reinterpretation that they are peat stack stances or perhaps even the remains of 'proto-cleits'.

Work by Andrew Fleming and Mark Edmonds (1999) suggests that early prehistoric activity may have been more extensive on St Kilda than previously thought. Finds of a few Neolithic 'Hebridean Ware' potsherds, combined with possible evidence for quarrying and stone tool manufacture, as well as extensive field systems, were used to tentatively suggest a well-developed quarrying industry and agricultural system in the Neolithic or Bronze Age. Recent analysis of pollen cores from Hirta (Meharg *et al.* 2006) indicate that cereals were indeed being grown here around 3,000 BC – the heart of the Neolithic period. It is now clear that people lived on St Kilda, either permanently or intermittently, from Neolithic times onwards.



Iron Age

The Iron Age in the Hebrides could be argued to extend from around 700 BC into the eighteenth century, but for this Management Plan will be considered to stop in the wake of early Christian influence in the fifth/sixth century.

The presence of two, or perhaps three, souterrains (underground structures) are indicative of Iron Age activity. The only currently visible example, known as Tigh an t-Sithiche (House of the Fairies), in Village Bay has been excavated in both antiquarian and modern times, with some success in terms of producing dating evidence. Over 30cm of peat ash and soot covered a paved floor with a drain beneath, and finds included: coarse pottery, some of Iron Age type; hammer stones; stone loom weights or net sinkers; querns; stone lamps; shells; and animal bones. Stone tools have also been found recently at An Lag and elsewhere, but they are not diagnostic in terms of dating and it is thought that they could also have been produced either earlier in the prehistoric period or later in the early medieval. Pottery excavated in the late 1980s has been dated (by thermoluminescence) to AD 90–360, confirming activity on the islands around this time.



Between 1998 and 2003 a series of excavations by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) and Trust volunteers on the screes below Mullach Sgar located various features along with Iron Age pottery and stone tools. One of these structures, previously entirely hidden in the scree, survives to almost 1.5m in places and has been securely dated to the Iron Age.

Some of the structures in Gleann Mor, including the Amazon's House (seen by Martin Martin in 1697), have affinities with the building tradition of the Iron Age in the Western Isles. They could therefore represent the earliest upstanding domestic buildings on St Kilda, although they continued to be developed and used for millennia into the historic period. The core of the horned enclosures (paired arcs of walling) and associated cells on some of the Gleann Mor structures may date to the Iron Age, but have been modified in subsequent periods.

There are also various features at Geo Chrubraidh, overlooking Glen Bay which could be of this Iron Age period and the probable man-made platform at Claigeann an Tigh Faire (NF 0836 9927) may also date from this period.



Early medieval/Norse

In the early medieval period (AD 500–1200) people/communities in the Western Isles were influenced by the arrival of missionary Christians from Ireland and the west of Scotland and by Norse travellers. Both had a clear impact on the material culture and building traditions of the area, although neither are represented by clear settlement evidence on St Kilda. Three early Christian cross-incised stones have been discovered on Hirta; two are built into House 16 and Cleit 74, whilst a further cross-marked stone was discovered in 2008, reused as a drain cover. The latter has strong parallels in the west of Ireland and may be indicative of early Christian (seventh/eighth century) settlement on the island. Three chapels are said by Martin Martin to have existed on Hirta: Christ's Church, probably near where the current burial ground stands; St Brianan's at Ruaival; and St Columba's at the western fringe of the village area. There is no reason to suspect that St Brianan's is anything other than an early Christian chapel associated with the monks who criss-crossed the seas at this time. The other two chapel sites may have similarly early origins. A 'teampull' is said to have once stood on Boreray (Kennedy and Thomas 1875, 705) but by 1862 was represented only by a single inscribed stone (Mathieson 1928, 130). The oval graveyard, which was used into the twentieth century, is probably of medieval origin and associated with Christ's Church, but the scatter of small headstones leaves few clues as to who was buried there and when.

The presence of various Scandinavian place names and a few artefacts recovered by antiquarians (including two Norse brooches of the ninth or tenth centuries, the Viking spearhead found in the souterrain, and a Viking sword) is an indication of Norse activity on the islands. Recently excavated finds of steatite were probably brought from Norse Shetland, while pottery has been dated by thermoluminescence to AD 1135–70. The 'boat-shaped' appearance of the twenty or so stone settings at An Lag were once thought to be of Norse origin or earlier, but a reconsideration of the form, location and context of these stone settings no longer supports such an interpretation. Their date is actually unknown and consensus is moving towards a reinterpretation that they are peat stack stances or perhaps even the remains of 'proto-cleits'.



Medieval

The period between Norse activity (attested mainly by place name evidence) and the improvement activity of the nineteenth century is perhaps the most enigmatic. Martin Martin's detailed account, published in 1698, gives a vivid insight into seventeenth-century and earlier ways of life, although today there is only a little upstanding archaeology to support this. The core of a nucleated settlement on Hirta is likely to have moved over time, given that there may be thousands of years of periodic occupation. The medieval settlement site may have been centred on an area at and just above the present head dyke, and is featured on a sketch of 1812 by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland. Martin records that the well named Tobar Childa was near the village. MacAulay (1764, 42) describes the layout of the settlement in the later eighteenth century, after the smallpox epidemic in 1727 which killed the majority of the population. Recent research by Andrew Fleming has identified the likely site for this settlement to be above and below The Street by the graveyard. The 'tolerable causeway' between the houses may still be relict within the grassy terraces in this area, while the patchwork of small, irregular enclosures may have been contemporary with one or other of the settlements.

Of the 'medieval' or later houses, only one – Calum Mor's house, a 'beehive'-type structure but with external turf insulation giving a mound-like appearance – is thought to have survived, the others being largely removed when the village was rebuilt in the 1830s. A few remnants of other medieval houses may have been incorporated within the later cleits, as indicated by their size, profile and the existence of additional cells. The poor survival of medieval structures is no doubt due to the reuse of stones for dyke and cleit building, but also, as MacKenzie (1911, 20-21) records, when new houses were built, old ones were usually removed. Outlying areas of cultivation and enclosure of this period can be found at Ruaival, while some structures at Gleann Mor may have been reused and new ones built as shielings.

Martin describes seasonal shelters or bothies used during the seafoal harvesting on Stac Lee following his visit in 1697. However, the most common type of small structure is the cleit, of which more than 1,300 have been recorded on Hirta, and more than 170 others on the outlying islands and stacs. Cleits are, in essence, stone storage sheds – drystone structures of sub-rectangular form, with drystone walls and a roof of slabs covered with earth and turf. Within this basic plan are variations in door position, size, location, quality of build, and presumably function, as well as those examples (which may have been converted from earlier dwellings) that even include integral adjoining cells. Their generally open wall construction was designed to allow a through-flow of air. Cleits were used to store birds, eggs and feathers, and harvested crops and hay, as well as peat and turf, which were both used as fuel. It is important to recognise that within the hundreds of cleits there is likely to be a great variation in age and function; some may be stores for fish built in the 1860s, some certainly date to the seventeenth century, while others are presumed to be much older.

Early modern buildings and blackhouses

The end of the eighteenth century and first part of the nineteenth century saw a tremendous change from the original style of building of the St Kildan structures. The first of these new style of buildings were the Storehouse (Store) in c1780, and the Church and Manse (built 1827–8). The Store is a two-storey gabled structure which was used to store commodities gathered as payment in kind for rent, as well as to provide temporary accommodation for visitors. The Manse was originally a single-storey four-roomed building adjoining the Church. The Church is a relatively plain two-bay oblong structure. These early nineteenth-century buildings represent not only a change in market economy and external influence, but also a sea-change in architecture on the island. Before then, buildings had been locally designed and built, using local labour and materials. These were designed and built by outsiders, with some imported materials, for those in authority on the island.

Immediately thereafter there was a transformation in the pattern of settlement on St Kilda, changing from a nucleated settlement to a string of blackhouses laid out along a street. These changes were instigated by the Rev Neil MacKenzie in an effort to provide more up-to-date accommodation. These structures, 22 of which survive, were mainly built in the 1830s, from about 1834, but one example (Blackhouse E) possibly dates from as late as the 1870s. The blackhouses are of Hebridean plan – small, rectangular, thick-walled and with rounded external corners. The roofs were thatched with barley straw, and if they had windows they were glazed. There was a single entrance, used by both animals and people, with the lower end of the building being used as a byre, the upper as a dwelling. A plan published by Thomas in 1870 shows how the living quarters were laid out; some examples include a crùb or wall-bed – a feature carried on from the medieval building tradition. Several variations in the general plan can be seen, including the conjoined Blackhouses M and N. As a group, these blackhouses are very interesting, since they are essentially vernacular buildings yet they have 'modern' improvement features, such as a window in the east wall and an internal drain. They were built under the instigation of an improving minister with a little support from an independently wealthy and distant benefactor.

At the same time as the building of the blackhouses, the fertile area of Village Bay was encompassed by a head dyke and divided into around 24 long narrow parcels of land, each associated, for the first time, with one of the new blackhouses with a larger area at the east end of the glebe. These land units are still evident in the linear dykes that bound them. The head dyke, into which pre-existing cleits and other structures were incorporated, was built in the 1830s, as was the dyke along the lower edge of the cultivated land, by the sea. Behind the blackhouses are enclosures that define small gardens, and Mackenzie refers to adjacent midden pits, which are still visible. Small, circular, gateless enclosures within the head dyke form 'planticrues', used to shelter growing crops of kale or cabbages from stock. The An Lag enclosures are now thought to be of similar date, and are presumed to have been enclosures where vegetables would have grown in this relatively sheltered location without being eaten by the livestock.

The blackhouses and associated land, enclosures and planticrues signify a revolutionary change in the organisation of settlement and agriculture on St Kilda, markedly different from what existed before. It is a stark example of one approach to agricultural improvement in Scotland. Many of the features are remarkably similar in size, but it is important to note that there was variation in status and wealth throughout the twenty or so families, even if it was not necessarily reflected in the architecture.

The survival of a complete agricultural landscape from this time is rare.

Nineteenth-century houses and structures

After a hurricane in October 1860, which damaged many of the blackhouse roofs, the opportunity was taken to further improve the living accommodation in the village. By this time a number of blackhouses had been abandoned due to emigration, and in 1861 construction of just 16 new houses began under the supervision of craftsmen from the Dunvegan Estate.

The 16 houses, strung along The Street, were of a standard Scottish north-west Highland three-roomed design. They were quite different from their predecessors: facing seaward, not end-on to the bay, and they had a hard rectangular outline of cement/lime-mortared stone and chimneyed gables. Their roofs were covered with zinc sheets, subsequently replaced by tarred felt on sarking boards. At some stage the external walls were rendered and some were white-washed. From the late nineteenth century onwards rooms in houses started to be floored with cement or timber, replacing the original earth floors.

The construction of these houses caused modifications to the building pattern on The Street frontage, but most new structures appear to have been fitted into the gaps between the blackhouses. Houses 12 and 13 were built over existing buildings, since the croft occupants had emigrated to Australia. While most of the blackhouses were subsequently only used as byres and stores, one or two, such as Blackhouse X, were still used as dwellings after the construction of the new houses. A good deal is known from documentary and photographic evidence



about the layout and functions within the later houses, and this was supplemented by the excavation of Houses 6 and 8 in the late 1980s.

The present Factor's House was probably also built in the 1860s, taking advantage of the skilled workers and materials being regularly transported to the island at this time. This building was used by the Factor during his visits to collect the rent, as well as for accommodation for the nurse and certain other visitors to the islands. It stands on The Street, towards the Church and Manse. Built on common ground, it is of a conventional mainland type with one-and-a-half storeys and a projecting front porch. It has subtle decorative features, such as the simple finial on the projecting central bay, and access to the first floor from outside.

Marked on Sharbau's plan is a structure described as a 'mill erected in 1861', although it is not known whether this was a grain mill which had a working existence. It is not evident today.

Photographic evidence shows that cleits continued to be built into the late nineteenth century, continuing the traditional style of building. The new houses provided in the 1860s were some of the most modern houses to be found in the Western Isles at the time, a region where people continued to occupy blackhouses until the mid-twentieth century.

Early twentieth century to the evacuation

The addition of the Schoolroom to the north-west side of the Church occurred between 1898 and 1900, for the first time providing a purpose-built school on the island. Fragments of writing slates found in recent excavations may date from around this time. After appeals by the islanders, the slipway and jetty were built in 1899–1901 by the Scottish Office Works Department funded by the Congested Districts Board and, for the first time in millennia of activity, boats could now be simply loaded and unloaded. (A major extension was made to the slipway in 1968 by the MOD). The Manse was extended in 1903.

Before WWI, communication masts were erected and a gun emplacement and ammunitions store were constructed in 1918, in response to a German U-boat attack. This attack destroyed the masts by the

Factor's House, left the Store in ruins, and damaged various other buildings to a greater or lesser extent. Photographic evidence shows that the naval detachment stationed on St Kilda during WWI were housed in temporary wooden buildings.

Excavated artefacts show an increase in imported goods throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as tourism brought in extra income and contact with the outside world, perhaps bringing some additional comforts to a still basic life.



Post-evacuation

Following the evacuation in 1930, the buildings on St Kilda began to deteriorate fairly rapidly, and within ten years most were roofless, due to weather, neglect and vandalism. This was despite, in the early years, summer maintenance work being undertaken by returning islanders and the Marquess of Bute and his party. In 1957 the Air Ministry occupied the Manse and Factor's House, repaired the Church, and built a block of Nissen huts and other temporary accommodation in the fields on the eastern half of Village Bay, below The Street. The road to the top of Mullach Mor was built at this time, using material quarried from the side of the hill, and the radar facilities on Mullach Mor and Mullach Sgar have gradually developed over the last 50 years. Many of the present MOD buildings were constructed in the late 1960s and formed part of a pre-fabricated installation. Interesting features include the power station, rapidly becoming historic itself, which houses four Mirrlees Blackstone diesel generators from the 1960s and 1980s, and also the ablutions block, which is the only remaining building from the early military occupation.

The remains of three WWII aircraft are to be found on St Kilda. A Sunderland flying boat and her crew of six New Zealanders, one Australian and three Britons crashed in Gleann Mor in June 1944 while on a night operational flight from Oban. All crew members died in the crash and much of the wreckage was later dismantled and buried by the RAF in the summer of 1944. However, a significant amount of wreckage has since been exposed and is lying on the surface of Gleann Mor. A Beaufighter, based at Port Ellen on Islay, crashed on Conachair on 3 June 1943, also during a night flight. Most of the wrecked fuselage plunged over the cliffs and no bodies were ever found. One propeller remains on the slopes of Conachair, the other was brought down and sits near the top of the slipway. A Wellington Bomber crashed into Soay in February 1943 during a routine navigational flight from Stornoway. All of these aircraft are treated as archaeological remains and protected under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986.

In the same way, the various shipwrecks around the islands are also treated as archaeological remains (Ridley 1983). These range from a supposed galleon site in Geo Chaimbir, to a trawler in Geo Chruadalain. Although not currently protected by law, if the State assessed them to be of significance, the remains could be designated as a Historic Marine Protected Area under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010; this would afford them statutory protection.

Boreray

Boreray, the most remote island of the archipelago, has long been regarded as a satellite of the main island Hirta. Occupied by the St Kildans during the summer months for the harvesting of seabirds and the plucking of sheep wool, the St Kildans lived in bothies and stored their catch in cleits, whilst staying on the island. In 2010, a team from RCAHMS and the Trust visited Boreray to map and record the archaeological remains, and as well as the 80 or so cleits, they discovered the extensive remains of a complex field system extending across the steep south-west facing slope. The upper limit of this was defined by a head dyke, comparable to the predecessor of the stone walled head dyke in Village Bay on Hirta, and indicates a phase of permanent occupation and farming, predating the seasonal use of the island. Three settlement mounds were also recorded, one of which incorporates a drystone cell with an intact corbelled roof, though the relationship between them and the field system could not be firmly established.



4.4.8

Extensive areas of Hirta have been scheduled by Historic Scotland as being nationally important. The largest is a tract of the Village Bay medieval and later settlement, but excluding the structures associated with the MOD base. It stretches from the enclosures at An Lag to the activity area and the supposed site of St Brianan's Church at Ruaival. The area of features and dykes at Geo Chrubaidh, and the cleits and possible

4.4.9

The archaeological remains of St Kilda are recognised as being of national and international importance as a cultural landscape, and hold many clues about the way of life of the islands' former inhabitants. The pre-1860s vernacular buildings and artefacts are of a style that makes it difficult to separate prehistoric sites from medieval or even later examples. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence for occupation from prehistoric times, and the possible Iron Age remains in Gleann Mor are of particular value in that they are apparently a largely complete prehistoric settlement system, although altered during the medieval and later periods. The Norse period is less well represented, with no upstanding surviving evidence for long-term occupation (although many of St Kilda's place names are a legacy from this era). However, St Kildans appear to have thrived in medieval times, with a population approaching 200 in the late seventeenth century. These medieval and later remains are hidden within the improved nineteenth-century landscape of Village Bay but, combined with the first-class documentary information that has survived, detailed analysis and investigation should provide further invaluable data.

³⁷ See Appendix 14a–d for a maps showing the scheduled areas

Scheduled Monuments

structure at Claiageann an Tigh Faire, between Mullach Bi and Claiageann Mor, are also scheduled. In addition, a large swathe of Gleann Mor has been scheduled, including the Amazon's House and the other sites with associated 'horned' structures³⁷. It is important to note that this is the primary legislation that protects heritage assets on the islands of St Kilda.

Archaeological importance

The nineteenth and early twentieth-century archaeological record for St Kilda is almost uniquely detailed, and provides an astonishing insight into the everyday life of the inhabitants. The blackhouses and later houses that form a necklace of structures along The Street are basically complete and fundamentally unchanged, yet they are fragile in terms of the storms which ravage these islands, and demand constant attention to prevent their deterioration. The group is a uniquely well-preserved example of a planned settlement, indicative of major changes throughout Scotland and to some extent the wider world, due to improvement and modernising influences.

In the same way as the gun, magazine and mast bases are a reminder of the events of 1918, so the present MOD base is very much part of the history of St Kilda. As such, the base and other MOD installations must be looked upon as potentially the archaeology of the future, and careful consideration should be given to their future. Further work needs to be carried out to determine their value and significance.



Archaeological observations on St Kilda began as early as the 1690s, in Martin Martin's account of island life, though it is only with the Rev Neil Mackenzie in the 1830s that features are described in more detail. During his agricultural and housing improvements, Mackenzie noted the presence of:

'very numerous ... green mounds called 'cnocan sithichean', which were looked upon as abodes of fairies. These were all removed in the course of agricultural improvements. They were composed of stones mixed with a little earth to a depth of two or three feet. At some distance below this layer were stone coffins formed in two different ways. At times they were formed of four flat stones set on edge and covered by a fifth. At other times both the sides and roof were formed of several stones set in the same way. These were seemingly of different age from the former. In a few of them bones were found, and in nearly all of them pieces of earthen vessels.'

Between the 1830s and the evacuation in 1930, a number of antiquarians and interested individuals came to Hirta and many explored the archaeological features of the island. In 1875 and 1876 John Sands made a number of important observations and undertook some 'clearing out' of various structures. The visits of the Heathcotes and the Keartons in the 1890s also resulted in excavation and observation. Mathieson, visiting as late as 1927, produced a paper specifically on the antiquities of the islands, again excavating within the souterrain. Very little work, if any, seems to have been undertaken between 1930 and 1957, although work by the School of Scottish Studies and the Geography Department of Edinburgh University, the Nature Conservancy and the Ministry of Works all ensured some mapping and recording of structures in Village Bay and Gleann Mor before 1960.

The very first St Kilda Work Party, in August 1958, decided to investigate the remains of Gleann Mor and elsewhere on the islands:

'Set off with sandwiches up the road to the Col and down into Gleann Mor with Prof. O'Dell to examine the beehive dwellings. We took spades and crow-bar with us. Started work on digging out the floors of the buildings. The Amazon House is the best preserved of the buildings - described in detail in the Scottish Field by Ken Williamson. We dug down carefully in several houses but came on nothing of interest.'

This and other early Work Parties occasionally felt the urge to undertake small-scale excavations, but detailed records of these events, if they ever existed, are now lost.

In 1966 the Trust invited Professor Celoria of Lancaster University to develop a research framework for the archaeology of the islands. His proposals are still relevant today. Surveys and excavations over the subsequent two decades provided information on cultivation plots and peat stands in An Lag, the dwellings at the west end of The Street and resulted in the reconstruction of part of the souterrain. More recently, the excavation of the floor deposits in House 6 in advance of development has produced useful results, as has the examination of House 8, Blackhouse W, a rubbish pit behind House 7 and Blackhouse G. The results of these excavations of 1986–90 were published in 1996 as the first in a series of monographs on the archaeology and ethnography of St Kilda (Emery 1996). Other published fieldwork includes Quine's small-scale excavations in Blackhouse U in 1983 and Cottam's work in the 1970s.

Mary Harman undertook the most important single body of fieldwork and research related to St Kilda during the 1970s and 1980s. As well as mapping, photographing, measuring and describing the vast majority of cleits and similar structures, she also produced detailed plans of all the blackhouses, the cellular structures and individual structures throughout the archipelago. She visited all the islands and main stacs of the group in order to undertake archaeological fieldwork; a feat that has not been repeated since. This work was supplemented by a RCAHMS survey in the 1980s and the two combined to produce what is still the most complete account of the buildings and archaeological sites of the island (Harman and Stell 1988).

Following detailed survey and geophysical work by Glasgow University's Archaeology Department at various sites around Village Bay, excavations took place between 1993 and 1997. These were at Ruaival, on the agricultural strips and possible structures above the enclosures, as well as at An Lag on the agricultural strips and the stone settings there and higher up at The Gap. Palaeo-environmental research by Durham University examined the pollen and other remains from a transect through Village Bay, as well as looking at the evidence for plants grown in the planticrues, where the use of medicinal plants was revealed.

Between 1997 and 2003 studies by GUARD concentrated on the screes below Mullach Sgar. They recorded and excavated structures within the screes, while on the terrace below, a 'horned' structure similar to those found over in Gleann Mor was examined. Investigation of an Iron Age building, surviving in places almost to roof height, was also completed. Between 2004 and 2006 a geophysical survey was carried out over a significant part of Village Bay and limited excavation carried out around the souterrain. The results of these studies will be included in the second archaeological research monograph.

Lampeter and Sheffield universities have published their research into the possible quarry sites that were used for the stone tools found on St Kilda (1996 and 1999). These tools were used extensively on the island throughout the prehistoric and later periods.

Continuing fieldwork on Hirta, Andrew Fleming of Lampeter University went on to reinterpret much of the field evidence leading to a greater understanding of the cultural adaptations of the St Kildans (Fleming 2005).

A three-year programme of survey by the RCAHMS and the Trust began in 2007. This has built on the work of the 1970s and 1980s to produce a complete record of all the features in the archipelago and will enable their reinterpretation. The work has also involved cataloguing their exact location, photographing them and noting their character and condition. With well over 1,500 features, this has been a significant task, but is critical to the coherent and successful management of the resource and its significance.

4.4.11

Between 1996 and 2001, an Archaeological Management and Research Plan was implemented. As part of the work contained in this plan, a seasonal archaeologist, part-funded by Historic Scotland, carried out condition surveys and extensive monitoring of the built structures on Hirta on an annual basis. This work resulted in a variety of reports and included recommendations relating to the maintenance of the graveyard, the cleit roofs, and the ruined houses and blackhouses. Monitoring was also regularly undertaken, particularly around Village Bay where coastal erosion

4.4.12

The 2008 season was the 50th consecutive year when St Kilda Work Parties assisted in the conservation of St Kilda. In that time, many of the buildings and dykes have been repaired and thus altered to some degree. In order to help us know what is original and what has been changed, the Work Party work that has been recorded is being incorporated into database records, to produce a conservation history for the structures of St Kilda, as far as is known.

Over the years the Store and six houses have been reconstructed so that they can be used by researchers and Work Party members for accommodation, etc. The houses have been re-roofed and externally resemble their original appearance. They have been fitted out internally for modern needs, but in a way that is reversible. In 2010, the Manse was also internally fitted out to provide staff accommodation, office facilities

Archaeological monitoring and management

was and continues to pose a significant risk. Drawing this wealth of knowledge together, an Archaeological Management Plan for 2002–07 was drafted to ensure that appropriate monitoring and management of the built structures on Hirta continued. This information was also used to direct building maintenance work, by helping to determine priorities for repair or maintenance. A new Management Agreement with Historic Scotland for 2007–12³⁸ sets out the continuing programme of survey, monitoring and conservation works.

Conservation of structures

and to provide the focus for visitor facilities. Again, all the work undertaken is reversible. All other buildings, cleits and dykes in the Village Bay area are currently being monitored, and only repaired when collapse has occurred. Annual maintenance is important in this area to ensure visitor safety, as these are the structures most often entered by visitors. Other structures on the islands are being monitored and certain examples are being repaired when collapse has occurred; the choice of which structures are to be maintained is based on an assessment of their significance. Conservation work is agreed in advance and in detail with Historic Scotland. It is carried out by the St Kilda Archaeologist, specialist contractors and volunteers, under expert guidance.

4.4.13

Now that the RCAHMS survey is complete, ensuring that the archaeological resource is fully documented, there is a fundamental need to develop and maintain accessible records to enable appropriate conservation and the development of a better understanding of the on-island features.

With the RCAHMS/Trust records in an accessible format, the priority for the Trust will be to apply resources towards establishing an archaeological research framework for the future.

4.4.14

Future research framework

The St Kilda Archaeological Research Committee, which co-ordinated archaeological and historical research work on St Kilda, will be superseded by the St Kilda Research Committee, which will endorse and take forward the Research Frameworks for both the natural and cultural heritage of this WHS. (See [St Kilda Research Committee](#))

St Kilda Research Committee

Opportunities to undertake research on St Kilda are restricted due to limited accommodation, facilities and logistics. Therefore to optimise opportunities in future, a St Kilda Research Committee will be established to take an holistic view of research on the archipelago. The Committee will be made up of internal and external experts and will replace the existing St Kilda Archaeological Research Committee.

In addition, a Research Framework will be produced covering both the natural and cultural heritage and will be driven forward by the Research Committee.

³⁸ See Appendix 7

4.5 Access



4.5.1

Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

Access legislation in Scotland changed during the course of the last Management Plan. In February 2005, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 came into effect and gave Scotland some of the most progressive access legislation in Europe, giving everyone a statutory right of responsible access to most land and inland water. In tandem with this, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) produced the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) to clarify where and when access rights can be exercised, as well as to provide guidance on what those rights and responsibilities are.

4.5.2

Trust mandate

Access to its properties is one of the Trust's founding purposes, as set out in the Trust's *Order Confirmation Act 1938* and *Access, Enjoyment and Education Principles 2005*³⁹. In line with this, the right of free access to St Kilda for the public was embodied within the 1957 Minute of Agreement between the Trust and the then Nature Conservancy as follows:

'There will be reserved to the Trust, their members and members of the public an unrestricted right of access to the Islands ...'

In 1974 the Trust and its partners felt that, given the importance of St Kilda in natural and cultural terms, the question of access should be reviewed to emphasise that access to the islands must be at an appropriate level and that it should not impinge on the nature conservation or cultural interests of the islands. It was agreed that the long-term approach of the Trust on St Kilda should be:

'to provide greater access to the islands for a limited number of people without prejudicing the conditions of the lease to the NCC nor the sublease to the Ministry of Defence, while in all events protecting the environment and artefacts of the islands.' (Trust archives. Meeting 18.11.74)

Although this decision was not made in a Council meeting and was therefore not official Trust policy, it provides a useful insight into the management rationale adopted for the islands at that time. This rationale has largely continued, and thus unrestricted access to the archipelago remains the main principle of access to the islands.

Hirta, with its pier and human presence, is the most easily accessible island in the archipelago and is the most frequently visited. Access to the other islands and stacs of St Kilda requires careful consideration given the difficulties in landing, the steep nature of the terrain, and the burden placed on the distant coastguard services on the Western Isles to provide rescue services in the event of an accident. Also, the wildlife on these other islands and stacs is less used to people and as a result may be more vulnerable to human disturbance. The Trust therefore asks all visitors wishing to go to these outlying islands and stacs to contact the Ranger or view the notice board at the pier in Village Bay for up-to-date information on the current status of breeding sites prior to any visit, in order for them to make an informed decision.

³⁹ See Appendix 5

4.5.3

Work Parties

One of the primary reasons for the establishment of Work Parties in 1958 was to provide members of the public with a way of visiting and staying on Hirta for an extended period of time. Since then, between two and seven Work Parties have visited the archipelago annually, staying for two weeks at a time and carrying out work for the Trust during their stay. Originally embarking from Oban, the parties now leave from Leverburgh in Harris, making the sea voyage much shorter. During their two-week stay on Hirta, the parties either carry out a programme of maintenance and repair of buildings and other structures on Hirta, or they also used to be involved in archaeological research. Early parties lived under canvas, but the windy and damp conditions on the island suggested a move to more suitable accommodation and consequently four of the 1860s houses were restored by Work Parties to provide dormitories, a kitchen and workshop. Over the years Work Parties have also restored the Church and the Schoolroom, converted two additional houses for interpretive purposes, and consolidated and repaired many other structures on the islands such as the cleits and dykes. A conservation methodology has gradually evolved over the years to guide the work these parties undertake and this now forms the core of the Management Agreement with Historic Scotland. All work currently carried out by the Work Parties is carefully planned by the Trust's Countryside & Islands – North Group Surveyor, an Archaeological Consultant and the WIM, and is approved by Historic Scotland and overseen on site by the St Kilda Archaeologist. Each Work Party is led by a skilled and experienced leader.

In addition to the vital conservation work that is undertaken, a number of the Work Parties used to be dedicated to archaeological research. Led by experienced archaeologists, the parties assisted with research of the archaeological remains, thus providing an important contribution to the Trust's increasing knowledge of the islands' archaeology and an opportunity for archaeologists to gain practical fieldwork experience and for members of the public to be involved in archaeological research.

The Work Parties therefore have an important dual purpose: undertaking essential conservation work within the cultural landscape, and enabling access for members of the public.

Work Party participants are charged an amount that covers transport, accommodation and food, and any additional costs are met with money from the Property Reserve Account. Over the years, the Trust has derived a huge benefit from the work carried out by the parties – approximately 2,000 hours per season. However, there are a number of issues associated with the Work Parties, which relate to time, standard of work and continuity. Their role in providing one of the few opportunities to visit St Kilda has partly diminished in recent years due to the advent of the day boat cruises from the Western Isles. But there is no other mechanism that allows members of the public to stay for an extended period of time on the archipelago and to get involved in conservation/research work⁴⁰. Bearing this in mind, and with the changes to the status of the cultural landscape in recent years, the Trust and its partners will review the role and remit of Work Parties.



⁴⁰ Graduates still have an opportunity to visit and stay on Hirta and to participate in field work through some of the research programmes that are run eg the Soay sheep project.

4.5.4

Intellectual access

For those who do not have the opportunity to visit the archipelago in person, intellectual access to the islands and its heritage is now available via the internet. First launched in 2001, the St Kilda website (www.kilda.org.uk) has proved extremely popular. To widen access further, a Gaelic language St Kilda website (www.hiort.org.uk) was launched in 2003, and the Wee Kilda Guide (www.kilda.org.uk/weekildaguide/) – aimed at young people – was launched in 2006.



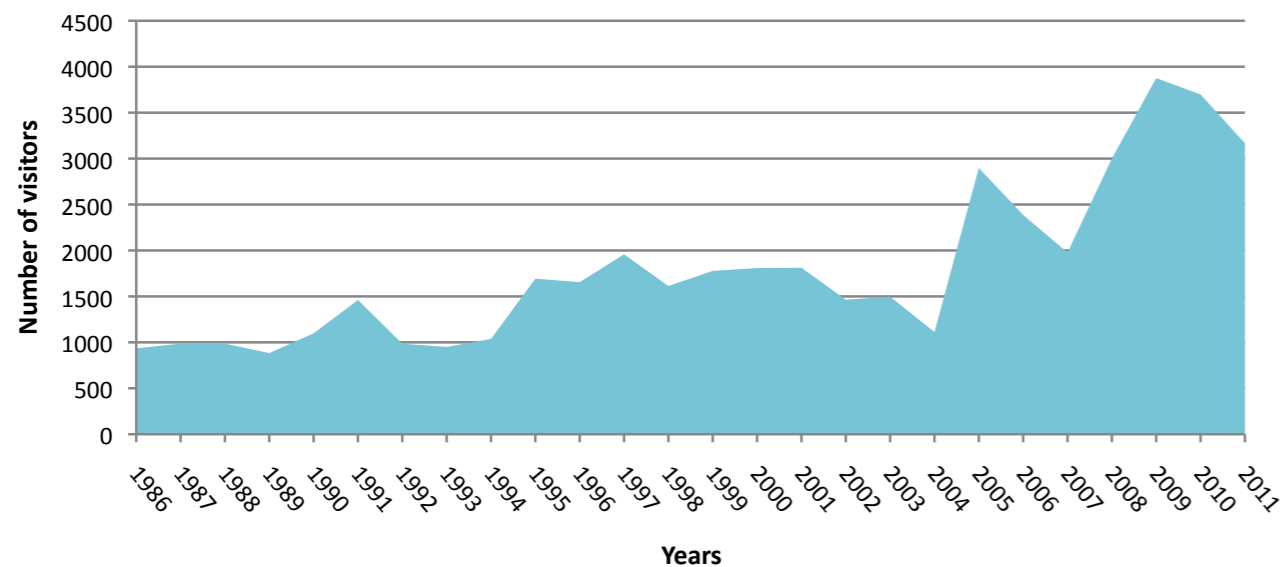


Visitor numbers

Visitor numbers are compiled by the St Kilda Ranger for each month of the summer season. The figures for 1986 to 2011 are shown below. Visitor numbers have grown markedly in recent years, from just under 1,000 in 1986, when records were first kept, to just short of 4,000 in 2009. This increase is mainly due to an increase in cruise ship and day boat visits.

However the weather plays a significant role in determining how many visitors are able to visit St Kilda. After poor weather in the summer of 2011, visitor numbers fell to 3117.

Visitor numbers



Cruise ships and day boats

The Trust has been organising cruises around the coastline of Britain and Europe for over 40 years and these cruises have regularly circumnavigated St Kilda.

Other cruise and charter boat companies also regularly visit St Kilda and often land their passengers on Hirta. In the last five years, there has been a marked increase in both cruise ship and day boat numbers, with four day boats operating from the Western Isles on a regular basis and 20-30 cruise ships visiting St Kilda annually. These boats have made access to St Kilda considerably easier and more affordable, and their visitors contribute significantly to the total number of visitors to St Kilda each year. In 2009, a total of 3,876 visitors were recorded on St Kilda. The 23 cruise ships that landed

accounted for 48% of the total and day boats 37%, with the remaining visitors arriving on private yachts (10%) or on charter boats (5%), the latter tending to decrease in numbers in recent years and numbers of the former remaining roughly stable. By comparison, 2002 saw only 11 cruise ships land, with a total of 513 passengers. The cruise ships vary greatly in size, carrying anything between 40-400 passengers, the average being around 70 passengers.

With the potential for so many visitors to arrive on St Kilda at the same time, the Trust works closely with cruise ship companies to ensure only one cruise ship visits Hirta at any one time, thus helping to spread the visitor load and enhance the visitor experience.

Climbing

The cliffs and stacs of St Kilda are a formidable challenge, reaching over 300m in height in a number of places, with the sea cliff of Conachair reaching 425m, making it the highest of its kind in Britain. Climbing of these stacs and cliffs is a central part of the archipelago's history and culture. The capturing of seabirds, particularly gannets, was central to the existence and survival of the native St Kildans, with the birds and eggs being harvested for food and for trade. Men climbed as a team, Alpine style, using ropes made from plaited horsehair, and either wearing thick socks or climbing barefoot. Socially, exhibiting courage and skill as cliff fowlers was highly regarded and seen as a test of manhood.

The cliffs and stacs have long been an attraction for visitors too, with one of the earliest climbs by a visitor to the islands recorded in 1883, when botanist R M Barrington climbed Stac Biorach on Soay. He described the climb in Volume 27 of the *Alpine Journal*. In 1898, another naturalist, Norman Heathcote, visited the islands with his sister and during their stay climbed Stac Lee.

More recently, in 1969 a party including Dick Balharry and John Morton Boyd made several successful climbs during a visit to the islands, including Boreray, Stac Lee and Stac an Armin, which at 196m is the highest sea stac in Britain. Here, the main difficulty is landing on Stac an Armin, as the climb itself is reported to be straightforward.

In 1987, the Trust gave permission for a rock climbing visit by a party of ten climbers led by Chris Bonnington, which was sponsored by Independent Television News. The group pioneered a total of 19 routes on the Conachair cliffs, including one aptly called 'Edge of the World'. These climbs were graded E5 to E6b in terms of their difficulty.

Visits to the other islands and stacs by members of staff, researchers and members of the public were perhaps more frequent than they are now.

Given the difficulty of the climbs, the lack of any rescue facilities on St Kilda, the risk of disturbance to nesting birds on the cliffs, and risk of damage to the important

Atlantic maritime sea cliff vegetation, climbing on St Kilda was not permitted without the express permission of the Trust, as formally stated under St Kilda byelaw no.10. However, the St Kilda byelaws no longer apply and responsible access, as set out in the SOAC, is now permitted [see [St Kilda byelaws](#)]. In line with these changes, the Trust, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and SNH came together and produced a map identifying several potential climbing areas on non-vegetated sea cliffs on Hirta, Dun, Soay and some of the stacs, where there are currently no nesting seabirds. The maps are colour coded and intended to indicate areas where climbing could take place without causing disturbance to important natural features.

Diving

The stunning underwater landscape of caves and tunnels, the clarity of the water and the marine life combine to provide divers with some of the highest quality, but also most challenging, dive sites in Britain. Guides to the dives around St Kilda were published by Ridley (1983; 1994), including a small number of spectacular dives from Boreray, Dun, Soay and Stac Lee. Some of these are included in Quine (1995). The remoteness of the islands and the high level of competency and experience needed to safely dive around St Kilda acts as a natural control on any potential pressure. In addition, the equipment required and the necessity for diving parties to have their own support vessels often makes diving around St Kilda an expensive activity. At current levels there are no undue pressures imposed on the marine environment from the visiting yachts and scuba divers. A code of conduct for divers was produced in 2003.

Other activities

St Kilda offers a spectacular setting and will continue to attract a number of visitors who wish to participate in a number of other recreational activities. Sea kayakers and other watersport participants are occasional visitors at the moment. The SOAC sets out responsible access and will be the basis for any access decisions.

4.5.6

Visitor pressure

Due to the difficulties of getting to St Kilda, visitor numbers are naturally limited and those visitors who reach the islands tend to treat them with respect. The SOAC and the Trust's St Kilda access guide (*St Kilda: a guide to access*) [see [Information and orientation](#)]⁴¹ both encourage responsible access to the archipelago to ensure that the natural and cultural heritage is protected from adverse visitor impact, as well as highlighting respect for the interests of other visitors' enjoyment and for those who live and work on St Kilda.

For the vast majority of visitors, in particular those arriving on cruise ships and day boats, time ashore on Hirta is relatively short. Therefore most tend to remain in the Village Bay area and it is here that the majority of impacts on the heritage are focused. The St Kilda Ranger and Archaeologist keep this under review and at present it is felt that there are no immediate concerns.

However, a more systematic method of monitoring visitor impacts on the islands' heritage, as well as their impacts on the logistics of managing the archipelago, is to be established in the next five years, with action being taken when and where required. Areas which may be sensitive at certain times of the year, such as the parts of An Lag used by nesting Arctic skuas, will continue to be identified and visitors will be requested to stay away from them. The other islands and stacs in the archipelago are more sensitive to visitor impacts and therefore the Trust requests that visitors speak to the St Kilda Ranger prior to any visit to ensure that they are aware of any particularly sensitive areas. The information board on the pier at Hirta is also kept up-to-date with information about breeding seasons and which areas to avoid [see [Information and orientation](#)].



⁴¹ See Appendix 10

4.5.7

Visitor management

Staff

An increasingly large part of the Ranger's role is visitor management, particularly during the summer months. The Ranger, assisted on occasions by the St Kilda Archaeologist and Western Isles Seabird and Marine Ranger (when in post), welcomes visitors to Hirta and gives them a brief introduction to the archipelago, its history, what they can see, what they should be aware of and also ensures that they observe the SOAC. St Kilda can be a dangerous place – and visitors need to be fully aware of potential risks to their health and safety, thereby participating from a position of informed consent.

In 2010, for the first time, volunteer rangers were appointed to assist the St Kilda Ranger with visitor management duties at the height of the visitor season.

In addition to the welcome and introductory talk that staff aim to provide to all visitors, guided walks are also offered to cruise ship passengers. Lack of resources prevents guided walks being offered to all visitors.

St Kilda byelaws

In 1971, prompted by the increase in visitor numbers to the islands, a set of byelaws was enacted by the Trust⁴², to protect the buildings on St Kilda from vandalism and to minimise damage to the flora and fauna. They were also designed to try to reduce the risk of injury or accident to visitors coming to the islands – they were not intended to restrict access.

With the introduction of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the byelaws were reviewed and allowed to lapse, with a decision made that a more positive approach to visitor management would be taken. [See [Information and orientation](#) for the new guide to access]⁴³.



⁴² The Trust was able to instigate these byelaws under Section 33 of the National Trust for Scotland Order 1935 (confirmed by the National Trust for Scotland Order Confirmation Act 1935) and by Section 4 of the National Trust for Scotland Order 1961 (confirmed by the National Trust for Scotland Order Confirmation Act 1961). Approved and signed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on 21 April 1971, they took effect from 21 May 1971.

⁴³ See Appendix 10

Information and orientation

Following the changes to access legislation in Scotland and the removal of the St Kilda Byelaws, the Trust in partnership with SNH produced *St Kilda: a guide to access* to help visitors access St Kilda responsibly and safely⁴⁴. This is available on the Trust's St Kilda websites (in English and Gaelic) and is given to all visitors who travel on the day boats from the Outer Hebrides.

The information board on the pier is an effective tool for providing visitors to Hirta with information when there is no member of Trust staff available to welcome them. It has proved particularly useful for providing information about accessing the other islands in the archipelago and about the seabird breeding seasons. At the top of the slipway are three panels that introduce visitors to the World Heritage Site and give some information about the heritage of the islands.

Education and interpretation

St Kilda has the potential to link into a wide range of subjects for both formal and informal learning for all age ranges, through the interpretation provided on site, resources available online and educational initiatives that have been undertaken. These offer an opportunity to fulfil the Vision for the archipelago as a model for environmental education.

For such a remote location, the interpretive provision on St Kilda is already extremely good. The main focus of interpretation is in the Museum, situated in House 3 on The Street in Village Bay, where a new exhibition was launched in 2003. In a series of panels, with vibrant photographs and text, it looks at what has shaped St Kilda's past. The panels cover the archipelago's geology, botany, mammals and birds, its history, the village, the community and the visitors who came to the islands, finally bringing it right up to the present day. Display cases containing sherds of pottery, textiles, agricultural implements, dress and personal items – all associated with the community and visitors to the islands – add to the authenticity of the exhibition. The climate makes storage and display of artefacts difficult, however de-humidifiers are in operation in the Museum to reduce the moisture content of the room. In addition to the exhibition in the Museum, the Church and Schoolroom have been restored, showing the interiors as they might have been in the 1920s (based on a photograph by Atkinson in 1936). The Schoolroom is furnished with

a teacher's desk, pupil seating, wall maps and shelves, and two interpretation panels. The opening of the Manse in the spring of 2011 provides an additional opportunity for interpretation.

An interpretation audit was carried out in 2009 and it is intended that an Interpretive Plan will follow. This will draw together all aspects of interpretation on the island, identifying gaps and where new initiatives would allow visitors to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the islands, their heritage and the importance of sustainable conservation management. It will also ensure that any interpretive initiatives do not adversely impact upon the cultural and natural heritage or the emotional atmosphere of the islands.

In Glasgow, the refurbished Kelvingrove Museum houses a permanent exhibition on St Kilda's wildlife and heritage: *St Kilda – On the Edge of the World*.

There is a wealth of knowledge about St Kilda in the Western Isles and the Trust will investigate links with other organisations and individuals to enhance our knowledge and the interpretation on offer to visitors. The proposed St Kilda visitor centre to be based in the Western Isles will provide an excellent opportunity to reach people who might not get the chance to visit St Kilda in person. The Trust would like to work closely with the new visitor centre, in particular on the interpretive provision.

The Trust guidebook, *A St Kilda Handbook*, was first published in 1979, then reprinted in 1986. This has since been superseded by other guidebooks including *St Kilda*, published as part of the Colin Baxter Island Guides series, written and illustrated by David Quine, with photographs by Colin Baxter. It provides a



colourful and informative guide to all the main islands of the archipelago: Hirta, Soay, Dun, Boreray and the stacs. A series of walking routes are suggested for each, accompanied by descriptive and historical information. Useful appendices in this publication include a comprehensive chronology of St Kilda, checklists of the plants, birds and rocks of the islands, and a bibliography.

In 1998, RCAHMS in conjunction with the Trust produced a leaflet on the cultural history of the archipelago. This was complemented by a booklet on the St Kilda National Nature Reserve, covering the natural history of the islands, produced by SNH in 2004. This booklet was updated in 2010 to include a guide to the village, incorporating a map and information about responsible access. This has also been produced in Gaelic.

The annual Work Party programme provides a mechanism to enable the general public to gain an *in situ* opportunity to learn about the archipelago's heritage and to experience its unique atmosphere and very special characteristics.

In a more formal educational sense, links have been established with a number of schools in the Western Isles. Links to universities and research institutions have continued to grow, with both long- and short-term scientific research projects, as well as research into aspects of the cultural heritage being carried out on the islands.

St Kilda/Hiort/Wee Kilda websites

The St Kilda/Hiort and Wee Kilda websites are key visitor management tools and resources for visitors and those interested in St Kilda. They continue to be the main location for public information pertaining to the archipelago; they are the key source for information on how to travel there; and they provide information about the archipelago's heritage and history as well as regular updates on any work that is ongoing there. They also provide a portal for members of the public to ask questions and get in touch with others that have an interest in the archipelago.

To maintain interest in the websites and to maximise the opportunities they present, they must be regularly updated and refreshed. A key project over the coming years will be to update and improve the websites and the information on offer.

Facilities

The newly refurbished Manse, situated at the head of the pier, provides the focal point for visitor facilities and visitor management on Hirta. The Ranger's office has been relocated to the Manse, as have the shop and toilets, making them more accessible than before. Visitor information is provided, as is a dry and warm area for visitors to take shelter when the weather becomes unsettled.

Shop

Since 2010, the small shop on Hirta, which is organised by the St Kilda Club, has been situated within the newly refurbished Manse, offering all visitors an opportunity to buy a small range of souvenirs and postcards. The shop is opened for a short time most days during the season by arrangement, for the benefit of visiting cruise ships and other visitors. It is manned by Work Party members, volunteers, or by the Ranger when there are no Work Parties or volunteers on island.

Campsite

A small informal campsite is situated in an enclosure by the Factor's House, close to toilet and shower facilities in the ablutions block. Campsite numbers are limited due to the restricted facilities on Hirta, e.g. water, sewerage, etc, and taking into account the total number using them. The campsite should be booked in advance, through the Trust's Inverness office. Wild camping is permitted under the SOAC, excluding the scheduled areas.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 10

4.6 Land use



4.6.1 National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Scheduled Monuments (SM)



The entire area of St Kilda is designated and managed as a NNR. Four areas of Hirta are designated SM – in Village Bay, Gleann Mor, Geo Chruaidh at Glen Bay and Claigeann an Tigh Faire.

4.6.2

MOD Hebrides Range

The purpose of the MOD Hebrides Range is to provide a safe environment and technical support for the test firing of missiles by the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (RAF), for foreign forces and for defence contractors. The Range operating and support infrastructure comprises several sites spread across North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist as well as St Kilda, operated by QinetiQ on behalf of the MOD. There is a small land danger area on South Uist, and an air and sea danger area extending 260km by 95km into the North Atlantic. St Kilda, which falls within the sea danger area but is not used as a firing target, hosts a forward instrumentation site for the Range – a static platform for highly sensitive instrumentation. The Range comprises:

Inner range: South Uist; primarily used by the Army for the firing of land-based short-range air defence missile systems.

Outer range: used by the Royal Navy and RAF for the firing of longer-range missiles

The topography of Hirta, coupled with its location towards the north-east of the sea danger area, makes it an ideal location for equipment that provides communication links with Range Control, i.e. air and sea surveillance radar, missile tracking radar, steered aerials for the Range telemetry systems and flight termination systems. In addition there are two radar sites on Mullach Mor and Mullach Sgar.

This infrastructure is supported by the Village Bay services complex, a 1.5 hectare site close to the beach, providing accommodation and support facilities for the staff required to maintain the radar facilities on Hirta. The accommodation consists of sleeping quarters with domestic support, a fully equipped medical centre, kitchens and recreational facilities. Support facilities consist of a power house and bulk fuel installation, vehicle workshop, garages, stores and microwave telephone links.

4.7 Designations



4.7.1

World Heritage Site



Nomination and definition

World Heritage Sites (WHS) are designated under the UNESCO *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (also known as the World Heritage Convention). This Convention was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972, came into force in 1975 and was ratified by the UK in 1984. The aim of the Convention is the 'protection of natural and cultural sites of global significance, based on criteria of universal value and integrity'. Such WHSs are recognised under the Convention by being placed on the World Heritage List.

Nominations to the list are evaluated by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) which takes advice from the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). To qualify for addition to the list, sites must meet at least one of a set of criteria for natural heritage and/or a set of criteria for cultural heritage.

St Kilda has the distinction of being one of only 29 mixed World Heritage Sites in the world⁴⁵, nominated for both its natural (including marine) heritage and its cultural landscape. First placed on the World Heritage List in 1986 for its natural characteristics only, in particular for its superlative natural features, its habitats for rare and endangered species, and its impressive populations of seabirds, a decision on cultural status, for which it had also been nominated at this time, was deferred. In 1984 the WHC began to consider sites which had outstanding universal value both as cultural and natural sites. A further amendment to the Convention in 1992 introduced a provision for outstanding 'cultural landscapes' – paving the way for a new nomination to extend St Kilda's WHS status. In 2004, the WHS designation was extended to include the surrounding marine environment, but again consideration of the cultural values was deferred to allow the State Party to undertake a further comparative analysis of relevant relict cultural landscapes. Finally in 2005, following this comparative analysis, St Kilda's WHS designation was extended to include the archipelago's cultural landscape, elevating the archipelago to the rare distinction of being a mixed World Heritage Site.

⁴⁵ As of August 2012

Obligation

Sites accepted onto the World Heritage List must be able to show that they will be protected and properly managed so that ‘their outstanding universal value, the conditions and/or authenticity at the time of inscription are maintained or enhanced in future’⁴⁶. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee Operational Guidelines set out the requirements as follows⁴⁷.

Protection and management

‘All properties inscribed on the World Heritage List must have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory, institutional and/or traditional protection and management to ensure their safeguarding. This protection should include adequately delineated boundaries. Similarly States Parties should demonstrate adequate protection at the national, regional, municipal, and/or traditional level for the nominated property ...’

Legislative, regulatory and contractual measures for protection

‘Legislative and regulatory measures at national and local levels should assure the survival of the property and its protection against development and change that might negatively impact the outstanding universal value, or the integrity and/or authenticity of the property. States Parties should also assure the full and effective implementation of such measures.’

Boundaries for effective protection

‘The delineation of boundaries is an essential requirement in the establishment of effective protection of nominated properties. Boundaries should be drawn to ensure the full expression of the outstanding universal value and the integrity and/or authenticity of the property. For properties nominated under criteria (i) - (vi), boundaries should be drawn to include all those areas and attributes which are a direct tangible expression of the outstanding universal value of the property, as well as those areas which in the light of future research possibilities offer potential to contribute to and enhance such understanding. For properties nominated under criteria (vii) - (x), boundaries should reflect the spatial requirements of habitats, species, processes or phenomena that provide the basis for their inscription on the World Heritage List. The boundaries should include sufficient areas immediately adjacent to the area of outstanding universal value in order to protect the property’s heritage values from direct effect of human encroachments and impacts of resource use outside of the nominated area. The boundaries of the nominated property may coincide with one or more existing or proposed protected areas, such as national parks or nature reserves, biosphere reserves or protected historic districts. While such established areas for protection may contain several management zones, only some of those zones may satisfy criteria for inscription.’

Buffer zones

‘Wherever necessary for the proper conservation of the property, an adequate buffer zone should be provided. For the purposes of effective protection of the nominated property, 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. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection. The area constituting the buffer zone should be determined in each case through appropriate mechanisms. Details on the size, characteristics and authorized uses of a buffer zone, as well as a map indicating the precise boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, should be provided in the nomination. A clear explanation of how the buffer zone protects the property should also be provided. Where no buffer zone is proposed, the nomination should include a statement as to why a buffer zone is not required.’

Management systems

‘Each nominated property should have an appropriate management plan or other documented management system which should specify how the outstanding universal value of a property should be preserved, preferably through participatory means. The purpose of a management system is to ensure the effective protection of the nominated property for present and future generations.’

In a general sense, nomination as a World Heritage Site is simply a recognition that a site is of global importance. This brings with it a greater public appreciation of the need to cherish the site; this may bring increased visitor pressure, but can also be a useful counter to any development pressures which may

threaten it. Even the status of World Heritage listing increases public interest, which can lead to pressure or damage from higher visitor numbers. In recent years the WHC has attached increasing importance to the monitoring of the state of conservation of sites on the List. If the results of this procedure show that there are threats to a site or a degradation in its quality, the Committee may decide to include it on the List of World Heritage in Danger, or if the outstanding universal value of the property for which it has been inscribed is destroyed, it might be removed from the World Heritage List altogether (UNESCO 2008). The List of World Heritage in Danger was established under Article 11 (4) of the Convention and is designed to bring attention to the problems facing certain sites, and thus to focus the attention of those bodies who could influence the situation, principally the state governments concerned, on the development of support and assistance for the site.

As the UK Government is party to the Convention, it has formally recognised its duties ‘of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage ... on its territory’ (Article 4). It has agreed to perform this duty ‘to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and co-operation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain’ (Article 4). It is also obliged to adopt a general policy which is designed to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community, to set up appropriate services, to develop scientific and technical studies and research, to take appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage (Article 5).

World Heritage Sites are also defined as ‘sensitive areas’ under Circular 15/1999 – The Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999. This means that the consideration of an Environmental Impact Assessment has to apply for any development, whether on land or sea, and any impact on the WHS, including visual impact, fully addressed and mitigated.

⁴⁶ Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, paragraph 96

⁴⁷ Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, paragraphs 97-106, 108-109

4.7.2

Natural heritage designations

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

St Kilda is designated a SAC for its vegetated sea cliffs, its reefs and its submerged or partially submerged sea caves. These areas are considered to have a high diversity of habitats/species of European importance. SACs are designated under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Directive 92/43/EEC).

There is currently no management scheme in place for the marine SAC designation, though management and use guidelines are proposed in the new Management Plan. It is anticipated that the guidelines will address the relevant issues to ensure appropriate protection of the interests of the marine component of the European Marine Site/World Heritage Site. The development of the guidelines is seen as a collaborative process involving all relevant and competent authorities together with representatives of interested stakeholder groups. In the absence of guidelines, potentially damaging fishing activities, such as scallop trawling, are not controlled. Should these guidelines prove insufficient in protecting the marine SAC and WHS, a more formal management plan will be drawn up in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Special Protection Area (SPA)

St Kilda was designated as a SPA in 1992. The EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Directive 79/409/EEC) established SPAs, which were to be designated by member states to ensure the protection of birds and conservation of the habitats upon which particular species are dependent. This Directive places an obligation on the UK Government to maintain or re-establish a sufficient diversity and area of habitats for all species of wild birds naturally occurring in their European territories. A marine extension to the SPA, extending the boundary 4km into the marine environment around St Kilda, was approved in 2009. This will protect the parts of the sea used by seabirds in the immediate vicinity of the breeding colonies; it will not protect the main feeding grounds which, for a number of species, lie further offshore.

National Nature Reserve (NNR)

St Kilda was created a NNR in 1957. The NNR designation was created under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and Section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A NNR is selected because of its national importance as a site that can be managed in the long term for the primacy of nature.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

St Kilda was first designated as a SSSI in 1964. SSSIs are areas that have either biological, geological or geomorphological features of special interest and are deemed to best represent our natural heritage – its diversity of plants, animals and habitats, rocks and landforms, or a combination of such natural features. Together they form a series designed to conserve the full range of features in the UK. The entire area of St Kilda was renotified as a SSSI in 2009 under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 for its biological features, notably its maritime cliff vegetation, its seabirds and geological and geomorphological structures.

Protection of the SSSI is afforded down to the low water mark, by co-ordinated management and development control to ensure that special features are not damaged. A list of Operations Requiring Consent (ORCs) has been drawn up and should the Trust or the MOD wish to carry out any of these operations, prior discussion with and consent from SNH must take place.

Marine Consultation Area

St Kilda is one of 29 Marine Consultation Areas which have been identified in Scotland by SNH. Each has been designated as ‘a site deserving special distinction in respect of the quality and sensitivity of its marine environment and where scientific information available fully substantiates its nature conservation importance’ (NCC 1990). Marine Consultation Areas have no statutory standing but have an important management role. They are brought to the attention of bodies which SNH advises on marine conservation issues (Marine Scotland, developers and others) and were introduced initially in the absence of a formal nature conservation designation below low water (such as SSSIs on land). The role continues despite the introduction of European legislation that has led to the formation of a new suite of marine Natura sites.

Geological Conservation Review Site (GCR)

St Kilda was designated as a GCR in 1984, under three different subject headings: Tertiary igneous geology; Quaternary geology; and coastal geomorphology.

The Geological Conservation Review was begun in 1977 by the NCC (and latterly JNCC) to identify and help conserve geological and geomorphological sites of national and international importance in Britain. Designation of geological and geomorphological features in SSSIs is underpinned by the GCR. St Kilda is one of over 3,000 GCR sites, selected from 100 categories encompassing the range of geological and geomorphological features of Britain.

National Scenic Area (NSA)

St Kilda was designated a NSA in 1981. NSAs were identified by the Countryside Commission for Scotland in 1978 and were defined under the provisions of an order by the Secretary of State for Scotland (Scottish Office Circular 20/1980). The enabling legislation for NSAs, provided under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972, was amended by the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. NSAs gained a new statutory basis in 2006 under The Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. NSAs are areas deemed to be of outstanding scenic beauty in a national context and their purpose is to draw attention to the need to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the designated areas. Protection of the land in NSAs is largely through the planning system. Where there is disagreement over a planning application, Scottish Ministers have the power to call in the application and make a decision following a public inquiry. Where appropriate, applications covered under NSA legislation are monitored by the local authority and by SNH.

Marine Environment High Risk Area (MEHRA)

Following Lord Donaldson’s report, *Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas*, and Department of Transport and Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) maritime traffic vessel surveys on the Hebrides and St Kilda in 2004, two MEHRAs have been designated to the north and south of St Kilda. These are areas defined as having high environmental sensitivities and being at risk from shipping activity. Marked on Admiralty charts, MEHRAs are intended to act as an encouragement to mariners to take extra care in these areas and to take them into account when planning their passage.

Biosphere Reserve

St Kilda was designated as a Biosphere Reserve on 17 January 1977. It was delisted in 2002. Since the late 1970s the intended functions of Biosphere Reserves have changed significantly, with a greater focus on sustainable development, research, training and education in addition to conservation. Revised criteria for Biosphere Reserves were agreed by UNESCO in 1995, and many of the original reserves do not match the new criteria.

Detailed information on the qualifying features of each of these designations can be found in [Appendices 12–13](#) and [15–19](#).

4.7.3

Cultural heritage designations

Scheduled Monuments (SM)

Four large areas on Hirta have been designated SMs by Historic Scotland for the national importance of their archaeology. They comprise diverse and well-preserved multi-period remains of settlement on St Kilda; structures that date from prehistory through to the early twentieth century. The remains have the potential to provide important information about life on St Kilda over thousands of years – an existence that was and continues to be of enormous interest to Scottish and international observers.

Scheduled Monuments are given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeology Areas Act 1979. The Scottish Historic Environment Policy governs the way scheduled monuments are managed.

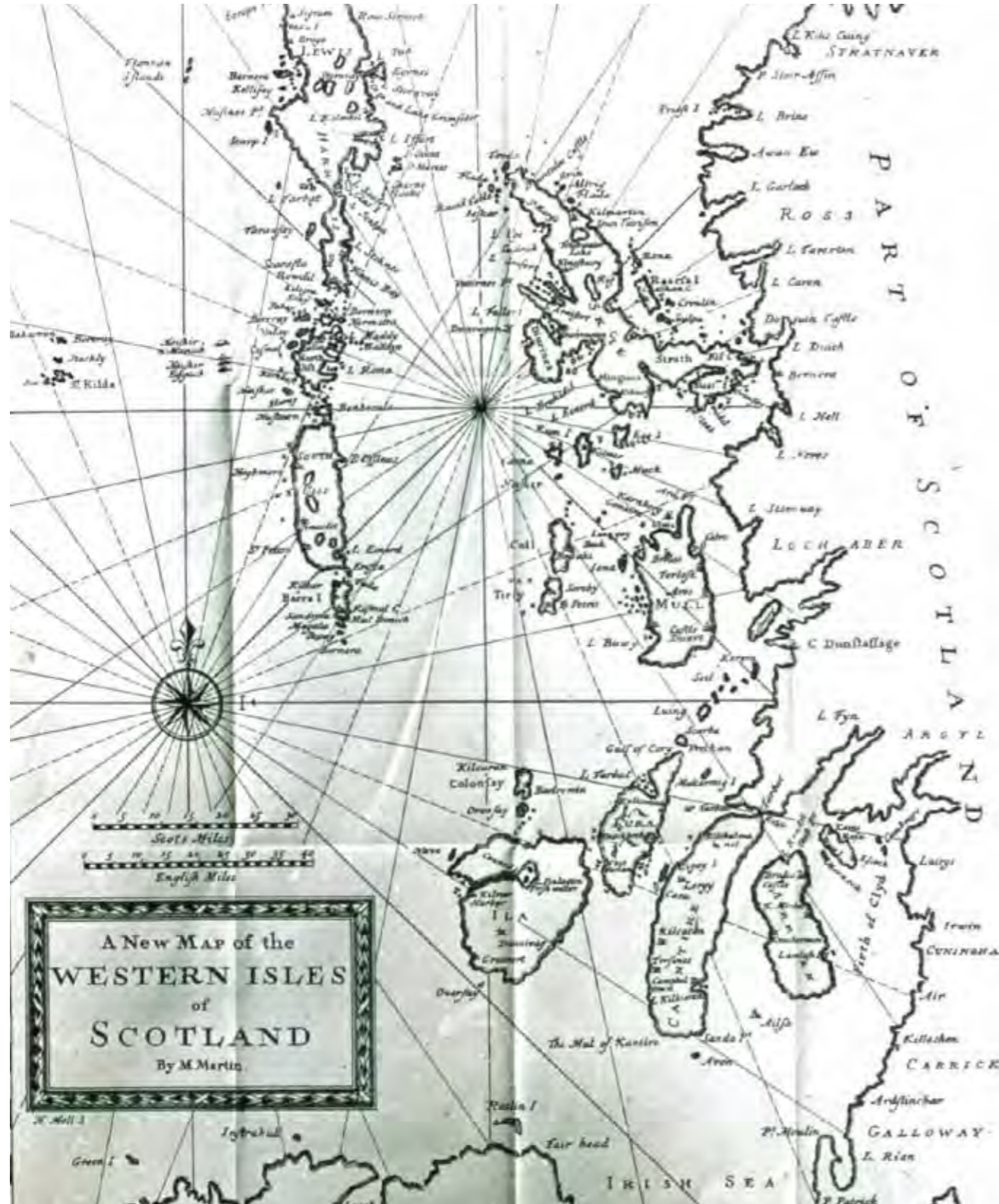
Detailed information on the Scheduled Monuments can be found in [Appendices 14a–d](#).



4.8 Abbreviations

4.8.1

Stakeholders



| | |
|--|-----------|
| Civil Aviation Authority | CAA |
| Comhairle nan Eilean Siar | CnES |
| Department of Culture Media & Sport | DCMS |
| Department of Energy and Climate Change | DECC |
| European Commission | EC |
| Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division | GUARD |
| Historic Scotland | HS |
| International Council on Monuments and Sites | ICOMOS |
| International Union for Conservation of Nature | IUCN |
| Islands Book Trust | IBT |
| Joint Nature Conservation Committee | JNCC |
| Maritime & Coastguard Agency | MCA |
| Ministry of Defence | MOD |
| Museum nan Eilean | MnE |
| National Trust for Scotland | Trust/NTS |
| Nature Conservancy (1949-73)/Nature Conservancy Council (1973-1991) | NC/NCC |
| Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland | RCAHMS |
| Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland | RHASS |
| School of Scottish Studies | SSS |
| Scottish Environment Protection Agency | SEPA |
| Scottish Natural Heritage | SNH |
| United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation | UNESCO |

4.8.2

Designations

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| European Marine Site | EMS |
| Geological Conservation Review Site | GCR |
| Marine Environmental High Risk Area | MEHRA |
| National Nature Reserve | NNR |
| National Scenic Area | NSA |
| Scheduled Monument | SM |
| Special Area of Conservation | SAC |
| Special Protection Area | SPA |
| Site of Special Scientific Interest | SSSI |



4.8.3

Others

| | |
|--|------|
| A Nature Conservation Review | NCR |
| Biodiversity Action Plan | BAP |
| Cleit Conservation Programme | CCP |
| Deep Water Route | DWR |
| Environmental Impact Assessment | EIA |
| Escort and Salvage Tug | ETV |
| Full Time Equivalent | FTE |
| Geographical Information System | GIS |
| Global Positioning System | GPS |
| Group Manager, Countryside & Islands, North, the National Trust for Scotland | CIN |
| National Biodiversity Network Gateway | NBN |
| Operational Management Group | OMG |
| Operations Requiring Consent | ORC |
| Scottish Historic Environment Policy | SHEP |
| Scottish Outdoor Access Code | SOAC |
| Scheduled Monument Consent | SMC |
| Service Level Agreement | SLA |
| Strategic Environmental Assessment | SEA |
| Statement of Intent | SoI |
| Statement of Outstanding Universal Value | SOUV |
| Strategic Management Group | SMG |
| Visitor Management Plan | VMP |
| Western Isles Manager, the National Trust for Scotland | WIM |
| World Heritage Site | WHS |
| Zone of Intervention | ZoI |

APPENDICES

Documents

1. Statement of Outstanding Universal Value
2. World Heritage Committee – Record of Decisions
3. IUCN and ICOMOS Evaluations
4. National Trust for Scotland Conservation Principles
5. National Trust for Scotland Access, Enjoyment and Education Principles
6. Management Principles to support MOD lease for St Kilda
7. Historic Scotland/National Trust for Scotland Management Agreement
8. Scottish Natural Heritage/National Trust for Scotland National Nature Reserve Management Declaration
9. Terms of Reference for St Kilda Strategic Management Group and St Kilda Operational Management Group
10. St Kilda: a guide to access
11. Dogs at Trust properties policy
12. St Kilda Special Area of Conservation
13. St Kilda Special Protection Area
14. St Kilda Scheduled Monuments
 - a) St Kilda Village and related structures (including map)
 - b) Gleann Mor (including map)
 - c) Geo Chrubaidh (including map)
 - d) Claiqeann an Tigh Faire, platform and cleitean (including map)
15. St Kilda National Nature Reserve
16. St Kilda Site of Special Scientific Interest (including Operations Requiring Consent)
17. St Kilda National Scenic Area
18. St Kilda Marine Consultation Area
19. St Kilda Geological Conservation Review Site
20. Bibliography

Maps

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------|
| Figure 1 | Location map of St Kilda |
| Figure 2 | WHS, SPA, SAC boundaries |
| Figure 3 | NSA boundary |
| Figure 4 | NNR boundary |
| Figure 5 | SSSI boundary |
| Figure 6 | Village Bay area |



HISTORIC SCOTLAND
ALBA AOSMHOR



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Ministry
of Defence