

PROPERTIES IN THE CARE OF SCOTTISH MINISTERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA



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Front cover image:
Corgarff Castle, Aberdeenshire



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the activity undertaken at and on the Properties in Care and the associated collections in the 2021-22 financial year and serves to fulfil our *Scheme of Delegation* performance management reporting requirements.

2021-22 activity was significantly affected yet again by the COVID-19 pandemic and continued restrictions on travel and trade, which prevailed in varying forms throughout most of the year. Despite this, we have seen a marked increase in visitors and site-based activity from the previous year. With over 1.2 million people visiting one of our PICs, this is a fivefold increase on 2020-21. Albeit falling well below a pre-COVID 'business-as-usual' year, this offers a welcome sign of gradual recovery.

In 2021-22 we invested £28.2 million in the Properties in Care and associated collections, a large proportion of this relates to staffing costs and the delivery of care by our own specialist teams.

Our PICs continue to provide a boost to the wider Scottish economy via net direct tourism expenditure. In 2021-22 the HES estate contributed an estimated £117 million of spend from visitors on-site and in areas local to our sites. This is an increase of over £100 million from 2020-21 and vital for local businesses in challenging times.

High level inspections undertaken in May 2021 identified concerns over the condition of high level building fabric at a number of our sites. Proactive and precautionary restrictions were required to undertake 16 sample surveys for more scrutiny of our assets. By the end of the year, 70 of our PICs were either fully or significantly restricted to ensure staff and visitor safety, and to prepare for full site high level masonry tactile surveys. At March 2022, four PICs have been fully surveyed since these restrictions were put in place. An acceleration of the programme and increased inspection resource will see this significantly increase throughout 2022-23. We have moved quickly to develop bespoke specialist training and put in place a major project to deal with this challenge.

This year has shown the continued ability of our staff to adapt and work together when faced with a range of challenges. Whilst activity at our sites has taken a step closer to what it was pre-pandemic, the last two years have allowed us to investigate new ways of working and different approaches to how we manage our sites safely and sustainably in a changing landscape. Our proactive approach to addressing fabric concerns underpins future planning, while maximising access to our sites in line with our sector-leading standards. We hope the coming year sees further improvement in the tourism sector, so we can continue to share the story of our sites in new ways and with new audiences.

I INTRODUCTION

Historic Environment Scotland is the lead public body caring for Scotland's historic environment. We have been delegated authority from Scottish Ministers to care for 336 'Properties in Care' and their associated collections under the *Schemes of Delegation* (under Section 3 of the *Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014*).

The *Schemes of Delegation* require us to have in place mechanisms for performance management in relation to our delivery of the *Schemes*; namely a series of indicators used to assess the effectiveness of our operation of the *Schemes*. These indicators must enable measurement in exercising the delegated functions and, in particular, must show:

- the condition of the Properties in Care (PICs)
 - the impact of the investment made in them
 - the provision of public access to the properties
- the condition of the associated collections
 - the standard of their care
 - the provision of public access to the collections.

This report serves to demonstrate our performance in these areas, and fulfils the requirement to report on these areas of performance for monitoring by Scottish Government.

This report relates specifically to the 2021-22 financial year. Similar to the previous 2020-21 report, this report highlights the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19 as the pandemic entered its second year. Restrictions resulting from high level masonry inspections have also significantly disrupted operations, as investigation uncovers more evidence of the effects of climate change on our monuments. Both factors have significantly impacted our ability to deliver the *Schemes of Delegation* in this period.

Additionally, by the close of the year our Reshaping project is at an advanced stage. Its purpose is to ensure our operating model provides the best allocation of resource to achieve the outcomes in our Corporate Plan and in meeting Scottish Government priorities. This new model will align functions with a PIC focus for greater efficiency in the delivery of site-based activity and works.

1.1 Continuing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

In continued alignment with government guidelines, we maintained our emergency protocol for the management of our properties and associated collections. Our corporate priorities remained:

1. the safety of our staff, members of the public, and external contractors
2. the security of HES assets – PICs, ancillary buildings, equipment, and commercial stock
3. risk management of the collections associated with HES Properties in Care.

As the second government lockdown extended into the 2021-22 financial year, this process allowed for key staff to undertake emergency (and thereafter critical and preventative) works at the properties in alignment with the priorities above. The permitted works at the emergency stage were minimal and associated with life safety checks (e.g. fire and fabric), security and safety systems and response to wilful damage (e.g. arson and theft).

1.2 High level masonry inspections

The resumption of operations for a second time in May 2021 allowed the continuation of high level masonry inspections; a key pillar of the Tier 1 Compliance Programme. These planned inspections identified a potential safety risk to visitors and staff from unstable masonry at height. Therefore, in June 2021, we took the decision to fully or partially restrict access at a number of PICs as a precautionary measure until inspections had taken place.

Throughout the summer and autumn, sample surveys were carried out at these sites. By September, these were complete, and provided insight into the scale of the work required to assess all 206 monuments with masonry at high level. A further exercise in risk and assurance identified a group of 70 priority PICs; this resulted in precautionary restrictions at more sites throughout the winter months.

A Project Board was established in January 2022, followed by the creation of cross-functional workstreams focused on resourcing and delivery, communication and engagement, customer experience and commercial affairs, and technical matters. A programme of inspection at all priority sites has now been established, to be delivered throughout 2022-23.

2 THE PROPERTIES IN CARE

This year has continued to be significantly removed from pre-pandemic business-as-usual. Our teams have yet again undertaken the process of safely resuming site operations after the second nationwide coronavirus lockdown, whilst soon thereafter being required to restrict access at a number of sites to ensure the potential risks from high level masonry to staff and visitors are mitigated. The refocusing of efforts has shown the ability of our staff to continually adapt and collectively rise to challenges.

Our *Minimum Operating Standards* in conjunction with established closing down, monitoring and reopening procedures yet again assisted our teams in ensuring sites were made safe and secure for periods of prolonged closure, and in managing and documenting risks when resuming site operations. These COVID operational standards were widely shared and used within the heritage sector.

The development of our PIC Asset Management System (PICAMS) continues to add functionality by digitising many data recording processes and improving access to information for our staff. We have worked with our teams to make the system more accessible and ensure user-friendly digital workflows to support core activities related to conservation, management and operation of the PICs.

Prioritisation of investment on a risk management basis continues across our operations as set out in our *Asset Management Strategy* and, where required, we have taken steps to manage risks by excluding access. We will also continue to explore opportunities for alignment of PIC investment with regional economic and green recovery initiatives.

Whilst access may have been impacted at our sites, we worked creatively within our teams and with partners to provide learning opportunities, develop new interpretation, and host events and exhibitions at our PICs to maintain engagement and offer new experiences for our visitors.

Our changing climate will have a direct impact on how we manage our assets but also in terms of our visitor experience. The experience of our properties is indicative of how the broader built environment will respond to our changing climate; the sensitivity of some means that they can play a role as iconic 'indicators of change'. The way visitors interact with our properties may also need to adapt in response.

2.1 Condition of the Properties

As we develop a deeper understanding of our monuments through high level inspections, we are bearing witness to the impacts a changing climate has on the built fabric, whilst collecting critically important data in the process. This data will underpin and guide our future approach to the maintenance and repair of these highly significant cultural assets.

Our condition checking programme remained significantly affected by site restrictions this year, and as focus was on the rollout of critical Tier 1 High Level Masonry Inspections. However, some activity was able to proceed, and our teams conducted conservation audits at 18 PICs, including Elcho Castle, Iona Abbey, and Stanley Mills.

We are stepping up compliance focused activity at our sites and we continue to develop robust systems and processes to ensure surveys and inspections are carried out and documented to high standards. Figure 1 shows where inspections and surveys were delivered in the 2021-22 financial year as part of our Tier 1 Compliance Programme; we delivered rock slope risk appraisals at 10 properties and full site high level masonry inspections at 4 properties, in addition to 16 sample inspections. Memorial inspections were completed at 14 properties, tree safety inspections at 42 properties and a flagpole inspection was undertaken at Stirling Castle.

In addition to building fabric related challenges, we continue to see a year-on-year increase in instances of heritage crime at our properties; these are primarily related to criminal damage, vandalism, property damage, and fire; which further contribute to, and indeed accelerate, the deterioration of our monuments and their landscapes. In 2021-22, incidents of heritage crime at our sites were up 39% on the previous year. Holyrood Park remains the site with most reported incidents of heritage crime, accounting for 30% of all criminal incidents recorded at HES PICs in 2021-22; criminal damage, fire, and vandalism accounted for almost 90% of Park incidents this year.

We are commencing work on a long-term strategy for the Properties in Care and also have plans in hand to update our Climate Change Risk Assessments, develop a new condition survey regime and undertake strategic workforce planning in the coming year.

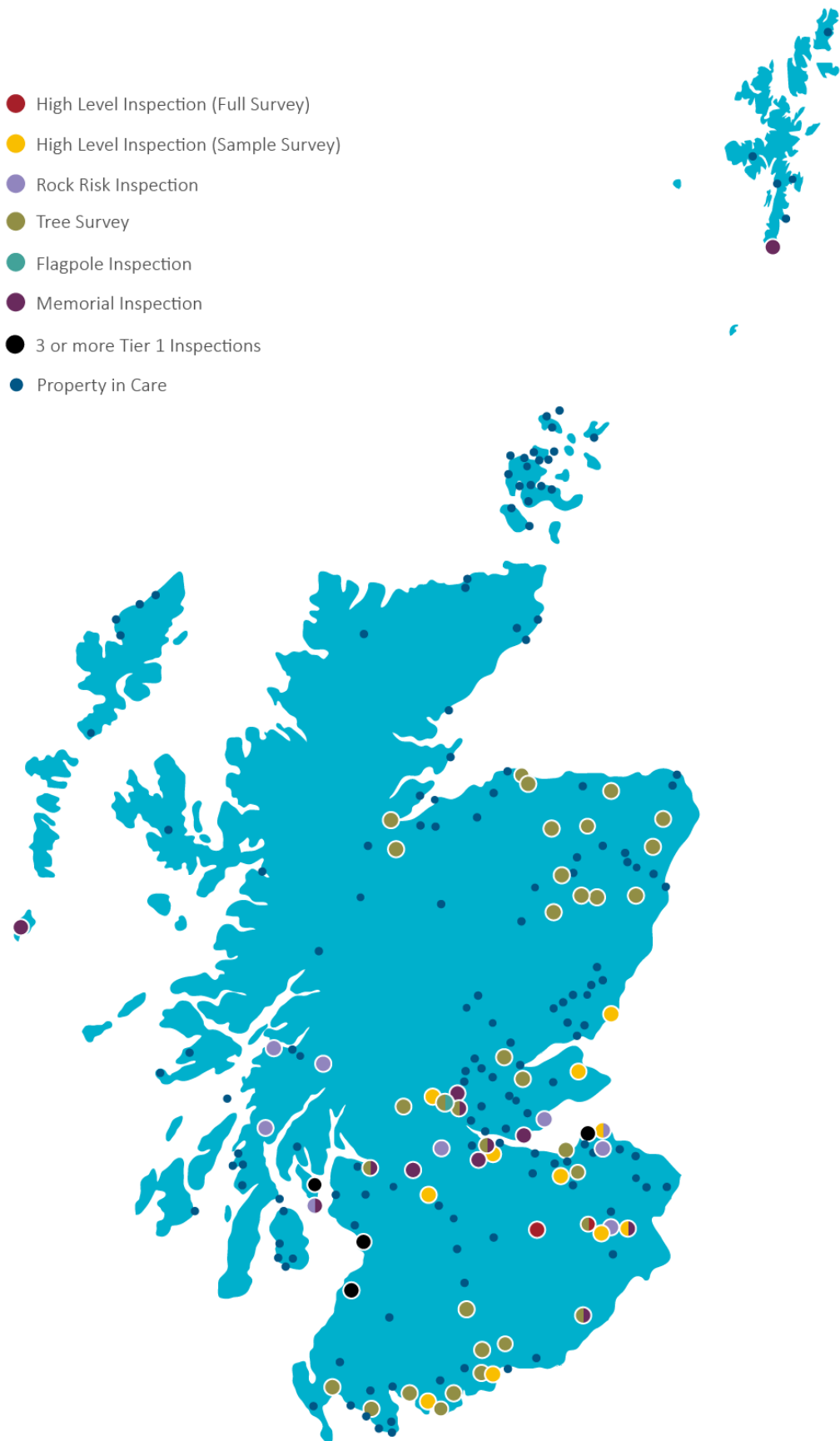


Figure 1 – the location of Tier 1 surveys and inspections delivered during the 2021-22 financial year.

2.2 Impact of investment on the Properties

We invested a total of £28.2 million on the Properties in Care and associated collections this year, this includes staffing and support costs as well as investment relating to conservation and maintenance of the properties, and to visitor facing aspects of asset management. Approximately 70% of this figure relates to staffing costs.

£7.7 million was invested directly on the conservation and maintenance of the properties, visitor centres, and depots that support PIC operations. This is closer to pre-pandemic levels of investment. The spend on health and safety measures, site security, and inspection activity in relation to the High Level Masonry Programme accounts for a significant proportion of the increase from last year.

2.2.1 Economic impact

The economic impact of our PICs in any given year can be estimated by net direct tourism expenditure; spend by tourists on-site and in the local area, that would otherwise be lacking in the absence of these monuments. In 2019-20, the last year largely unaffected by the pandemic, the total figure for net direct tourism expenditure linked to the HES estate was £620 million. Tourism in 2021-22, whilst improving upon the previous year, remained significantly affected by travel restrictions and other government guidelines. Restrictions in relation to the high level masonry inspection programme will also have had a direct impact on visitor spend in local areas.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the HES estate contributed an estimated £117 million in net direct tourism expenditure in 2021-22; an increase of over £100 million from 2020-21.

2.2.2 Social impact

Forty-five per cent of our direct (site specific) investment on the properties was focused at properties located in areas of average or above average deprivation ($SIMD \leq 5^{th}$ decile), which is the same as in 2020-21. Fifty-three per cent of this direct investment was within rural areas, i.e. areas with a Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification of 5+ on the 8-fold classification, which is slightly down from 56% in 2020-21.

2.3 Provision of Public Access to the Properties

For the three years of reporting prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the level of access to PICs relative to their advertised opening schedules remained relatively static around 98%; only dropping to 97% in the last two weeks of 2019-20 due to the first national COVID-19 government lockdown. The full impact of the pandemic in 2020-21 saw this fall to 62%. In 2021-22 this figure has increased to 73%. This shows a welcome improvement to site access, whilst still clearly impacted by the

government guidelines that remained throughout the financial year and compounded by the reduced access to some high level masonry sites.

On 30 April 2021, we re-opened 26 of our ticketed sites that had been closed throughout the second national government lockdown. From May onwards, there were plans to re-open a further 19 ticketed sites, however, concerns over visitor and staff safety in relation to high level masonry affected these plans; 4 did not open at all and 5 were restricted later in the year.

In June 2021, the decision was made to restrict all access at 20 PICs, 13 of which had been opened in April, and subsequent to the completion of sample surveys a further 11 PICs were restricted in November 2021. Analysis of risk and assurance data then led to full or partial restrictions at an additional 39 sites in January 2022. By the end of March 2022, access was either fully or partially restricted at 70 PICs to allow full high level masonry inspections to commence.

By 31 March 2022, there remained a total of 42 PICs that had been closed because of the coronavirus pandemic and not yet resumed operations. Fourteen of these sites were within the priority grouping of 70 restricted PICs for high level masonry inspection, with the other 28 remaining closed in line with remaining government guidelines, for resourcing reasons, or with conservation and maintenance issues needing to be addressed.

Figure 2 gives an indication of performance in maintaining visitor access to the properties by showing the number of PICs at which differing levels of access were achieved or maintained throughout the year. In 2021-22 there were:

- 152 properties at which full access was maintained all year
- 16 properties that were open all year but were partially restricted at some point(s) throughout the year
- 168 properties that were fully closed at some point in the year

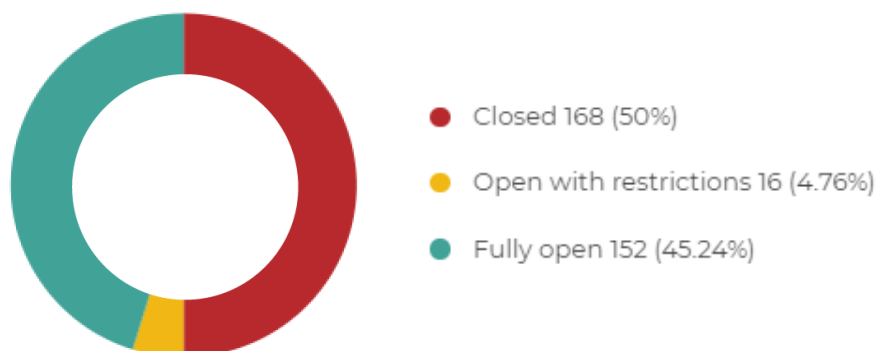


Figure 2 – performance in maintaining visitor access at the Properties in Care. Pie chart shows the status of HES PICs by their highest impact level at any point during the 2021-22 reporting period (taken from the HES Properties in Care Asset Management System restrictions reporting system).

Reasons relating to COVID-19 still account for the majority of our restrictions in 2021-22; 67% of all high impact restrictions are attributed to this (Figure 3). Building fabric related events are predominantly sites which have been restricted pending high level masonry inspections.

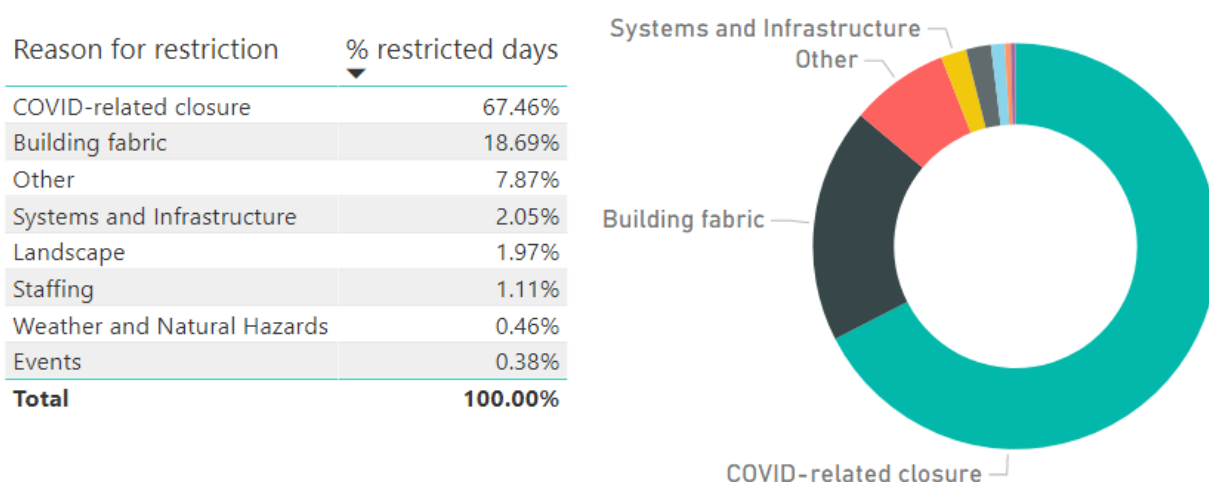


Figure 3 – reasons for high impact (full site) restrictions in 2021-22.

Visitor numbers to our staffed properties totalled 1,234,580; an increase of around 400% on the previous year. Our top five visited properties all increased by over 300%, with Glasgow Cathedral visited by seven times as many visitors as in 2020-21. To gauge this against pre-pandemic figures, these sites are viewed next to visitor numbers for the 2019-20 financial year, with percentage of this ‘business-as-usual’ (BAU) to give an indication of progress towards full recovery (Table 1). Pre-pandemic visitor numbers totalled 5.2 million, so this year amounted to just under a quarter of visitors we welcomed two years ago.

Table 1 – visitor numbers at top 5 visited sites in 2021-22, against 2019-20 pre-pandemic “BAU”.

	Property in Care	Visitor numbers		% of pre-pandemic ‘BAU’
		2019-20	2021-22	
1	Edinburgh Castle	2,064,082	571,047	28%
2	Stirling Castle	585,131	182,798	31%
3	Urquhart Castle	538,651	125,130	23%
4	Glasgow Cathedral	524,870	43,566	8%
5	Fort George	74,735	39,434	53%

2.3.1 Learning and inclusion

This was a transitional year while we continued to provide learning opportunities through digital engagement, linked to and inspired by our sites, including a series of films made by schools about their local sites, in partnership with BBC Scotland. We also re-opened our popular access schemes such as Free Learning Visits, which fully re-opened in October 2021, enabling over 4,000 learners to visit our sites by the end of March 2022.

We were awarded a grant by the Scottish Government to support their Get Into Summer campaign, providing opportunities for young people, their families, and carers to get out and re-connect after lockdown and home schooling. The funding supported a kids go free initiative that ran over the summer holidays with over 41,000 children gaining free access. In addition, we delivered a number of site-based workshops for groups from organisations and issued over 5,000 Playing with the Past activity packs to community partners across Scotland.

Many of our partnership projects which had transitioned to digital were able to resume in-person delivery and site-based activity in the second half of the year. This included youth engagement projects linked to Dumbarton, Caerlaverock, and Orkney PICs, Jnr Tour Guides programmes at Linlithgow, Doune, Huntly and Craigmillar, community programmes at Arbroath and Trinity House and Castle CSI our new STEM outreach programme for schools in partnership with Glasgow Science Centre, delivered its first tour in Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders.

2.3.2 Experience

Summer events activity was reintroduced in 2021 following COVID lockdowns. This focussed on a breadth of sites rather than higher volume events. Activity took place at 15 properties across the country. Over the summer we ran the fortnight long CastleFest blending onsite and online activity.

The new Arbroath Abbey Visitor Centre exhibition was opened in August 2021. Previously planned to coincide with the 700-year anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, it was delayed by COVID. The new exhibition contained multimedia and artefactual displays, including the community developed Arbroath Tapestry.

Our digital interpretation programme continued with the launch of a new tour for visitors' phones at Urquhart Castle and several suites of QR coded content including A Taste of Gaelic, Climate Impact upon our properties, and Walter Scott 250 content.

As part of the extended Year of Coast and Waters we toured our Scotland's Coasts exhibition, and staged our online Lightwaves event mixing creative projections, animation and poetry in Scots, English, and Gaelic.

3 THE ASSOCIATED COLLECTIONS

Our collections activities have been many and varied this year as we started to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and step into a new phase of hybrid working.

We undertook two major pilot projects this year, to propose foundational multi-year projects to improve collections management across the estate. The GIS Action Plan undertook to assess compliance across the estate with the Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS), a form of insurance that enables us to borrow loaned collections to enhance our displays. We will now develop and deliver a three-year project to achieve compliance with the GIS, starting in 2022. This work will help us maintain and develop our displays, ensuring public access to the collections. Our Collections Inventory Project was piloted to demonstrate how we could enhance collections information and data and make it accessible, covered in section 3.2.

We delivered a condition assessment of the Honours at Edinburgh Castle and ensured that the Crown was present for the opening of Parliament. We have also procured a 3D scanner, originally built for the International Space Station, which can produce highly detailed scans of the Crown and other Honours of Scotland. A new digital asset base of photographic stills and footage has been created which can be provided to third party media outlets in the future.

A major programme of works at Duff House included testing the Sprinkler systems with a multi-disciplinary team of lenders, building and collection experts, and contractors. We have supported the collections team at Kinnaird Lighthouse, whose museum storage suffered storm damage, and our collections and fabric inspection teams worked together in the development of new procedures to help capture, record, and manage loose stone fragments as teams begin to survey the estate.

With a strong focus on strategy, we developed a draft five year Forward Plan and Delivery Plan which sets out an ambitious programme of work to help us manage the collections and the activities that support them and the sector. We will test and develop this as a model in the coming year.

3.1 Standard of Collections Care

Our progress in condition checking this year, although small, has brought our baseline condition checking a step closer to completion; we have now condition checked 67% of Scottish Ministers' collections in line with *Scheme of Delegation* requirements. This checking gives us a better understanding of the objects and their conservation needs. For the purposes of this *Scheme of Delegation* reporting, any objects checked prior to the implementation of our *Scheme of Delegation* condition checking procedure/standards are considered here as 'currently unchecked'.



Figure 4 – progress of object condition checking for Scottish Ministers' collections (left) and all other collections (right).

This year our full collection grew by 82 objects, 23 of which are in Scottish Ministers' collections. We updated 5,337 object records in our collections database, 4,185 relating to Scottish Ministers' collections. Sixty-eight per cent of our total collection is documented to full catalogue standard; 74 per cent of Scottish Ministers' collections are documented to full catalogue standard.

In 2021-22, we completed 23 new salvage plans, 60 incident response cards, drafted new plan templates, an accompanying handbook, and a new training programme, and carried out training for the CPPU (Army's Cultural Property Protection Unit).

The Museum Accreditation Scheme has now reopened, and we have had regular contact with Museums Galleries Scotland regarding our existing awards and to develop a programme going forward. At present, 13 of our sites continue to hold full Museum Accreditation status.

We continue to host a volunteer as part of the Museums Galleries Scotland 'Upskilling Volunteers' project, and currently have two fixed-term Collections Management Trainees on staff. We also provided a job shadowing opportunity to a member of staff from elsewhere in the organisation, assisting us with a library project at Duff House. We have been forward planning our training opportunities for the 2022/23 year, which will include hosting a placement student from the University of Leicester as part of the New Museum School Advanced Programme, and recruiting a fixed-term Museums and Galleries Technician Modern Apprentice.

3.2 Condition of the Collections

Following several years of restricted access to the collections due to the pandemic, we have steadily been gaining access to sites, and the completion of our Collections Inventory Project Pilot has allowed us to increase our condition checking activity despite ongoing restrictions.

The Collections Inventory Project will allow us to capture, record, and enhance information about HES's collections. Full implementation of the inventory will run from 2022 until 2025. During this time the project team will travel to all PICs with collections to perform detailed inventory work. The inventory process includes object photography, updating physical characteristics, condition checking, and identifying hazards in objects. The information will be captured to industry standards, and will enhance our existing dataset, providing accurate information for long-term use. The project will also increase public access to collections information, with a goal of 100% of eligible records published on the HES Collections website by the end of the project.

Figure 5 illustrates our progress in delivering condition checks since 2015-16. The impact of the pandemic on the delivery of this work is evident in the last two years; however, we are starting to see an uplift in activity this past year. Due to the re-checking of some objects each year, figures for previous years can differ slightly between reports as they relate to the most recent date checked.

Delivery of condition checking activity is based on an approach that considers known priorities and is often aligned with planned works. Therefore, the level of progress varies between PIC associated collections. Figure 6 shows the number of PICs at different stages of condition checking progress. Over time, as objects are checked, more PICs will reach the higher end of the scale (nearing completion). However, if objects are newly associated with a PIC (and its collection therefore increases in size), it is possible for the proportion of objects condition checked to decrease.

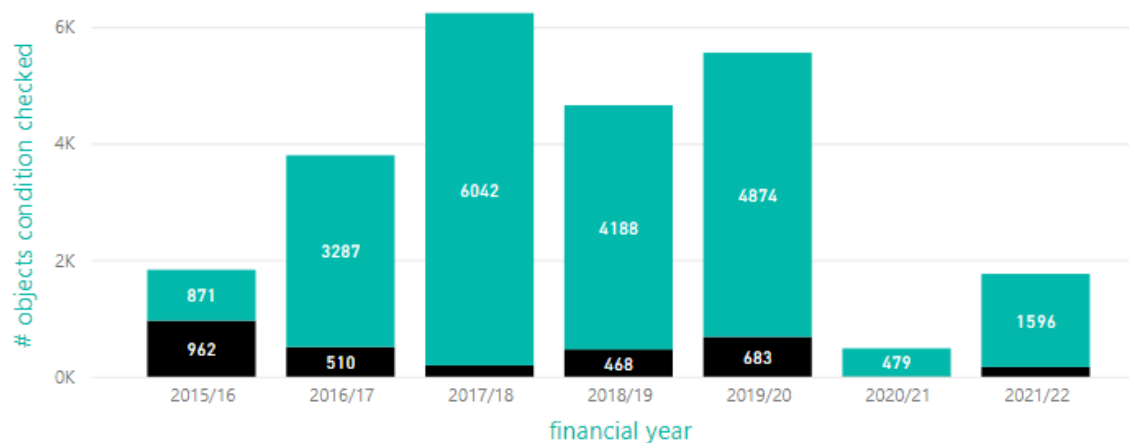


Figure 5 – progress in delivering baseline condition checking of the collections. Scottish Minister's collections are shown in green. Due to the re-checking of some objects each year, figures for previous years can differ slightly between reports.

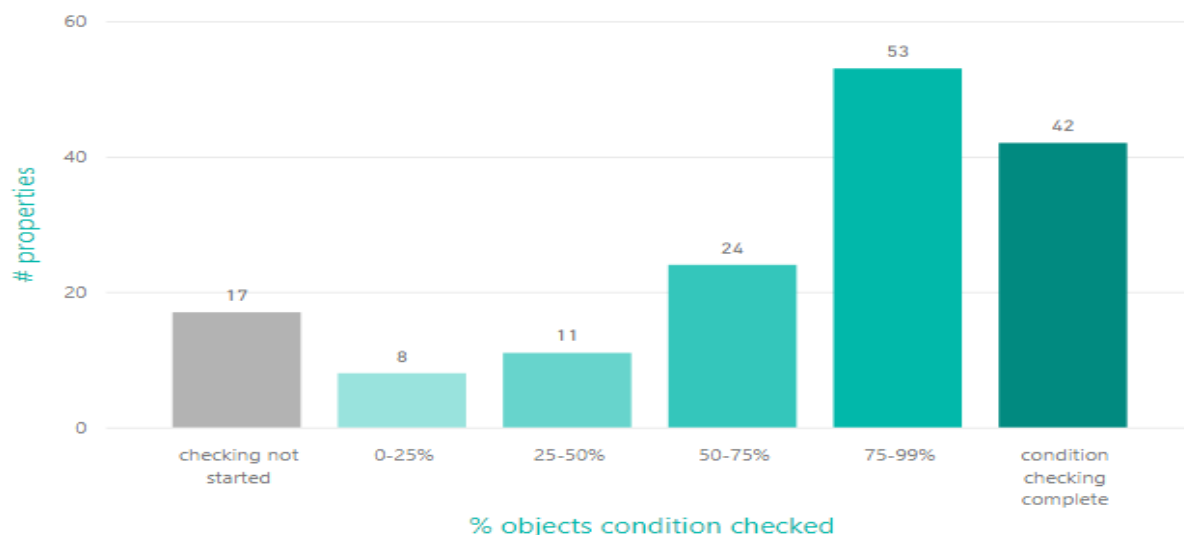


Figure 6 – PICs at various levels of progress in relation to condition checking of objects. Relates to Scottish Ministers' collections only. Class intervals include the right endpoint, but not the left.

The condition checking process assigns a 'condition status' to each object, this indicates the overall condition of that object and provides an indication of its stability. The categories are:

- stable – no action required
- stable – action required
- unstable – action low priority
- unstable – action high priority
- unstable – action immediately

Figure 7 shows the proportion of objects in each category (top left) and the proportion of objects that are in a stable versus unstable state (top right). We can track the changing stability of the collections and our progress in improving condition by tracking the proportion of PICs at which the collection falls within a certain stability banding, as shown in Figure 7 (bottom).

Less than 0.5% of the Scottish Ministers' collections (140 objects) are known to require immediate action and just 2.6% (829 objects) are considered high priority. These values are likely to fluctuate over time as condition checking continues and we learn more about the objects in our care.

We undertook a review of the condition checking process this year, consulting with our teams and looking at approaches used by our conservators to better understand how condition checking can inform a programme of treatment. We intend to progress this work in the coming year and look at how our collections management system can support an improved approach, embedding learning from the work of our Collections Inventory Team in the process.

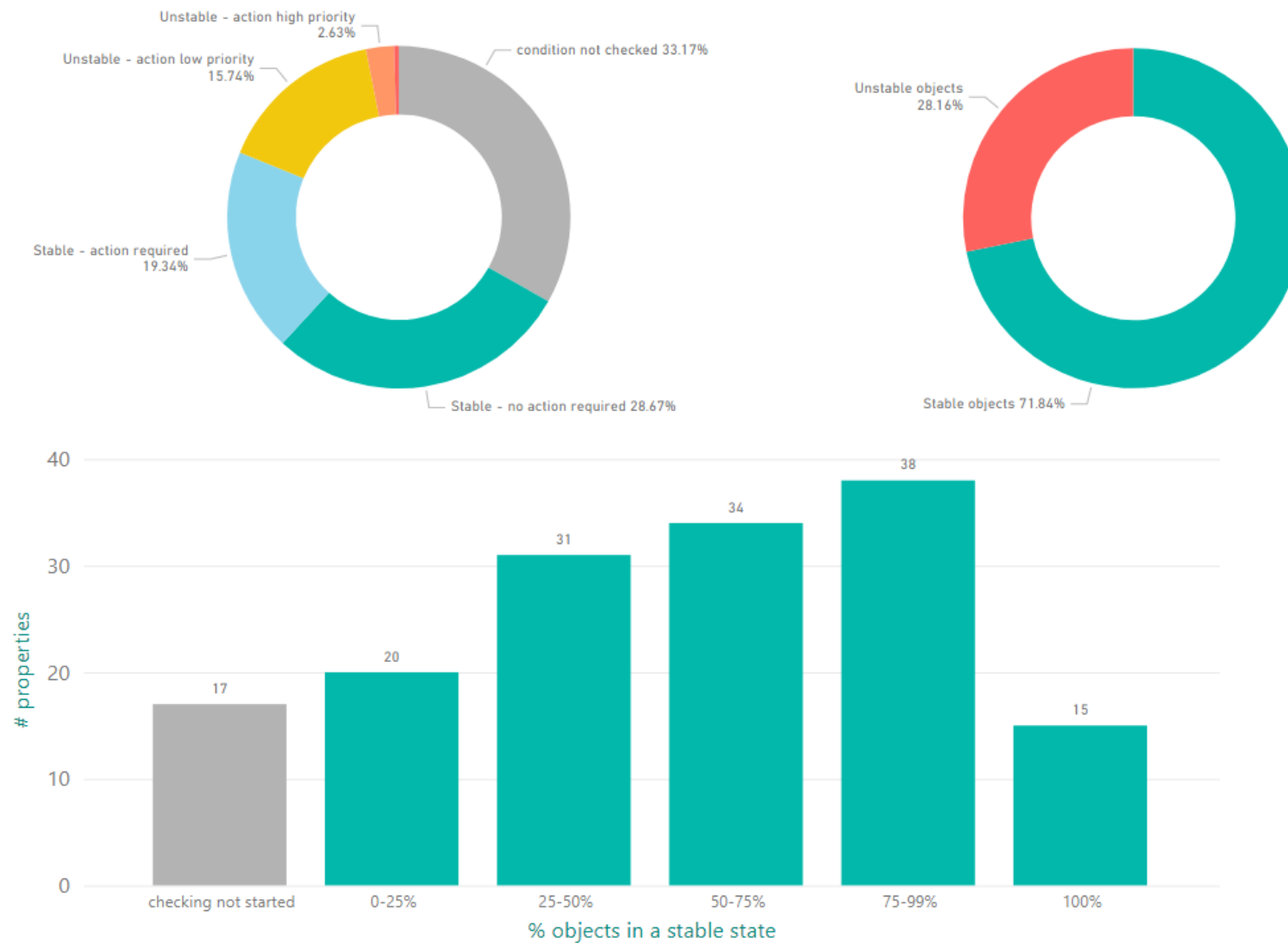


Figure 7 – condition and stability of the Scottish Minister’s collections. Top left: proportion of Scottish Ministers’ collections objects within each condition category. Top right: overall stability of objects in Scottish Minister’s collections based on those which have been condition checked. Bottom: number of properties in each collection stability ‘bracket’; class intervals include the right endpoint, but not the left.

3.3 Provision of Public Access to the Collections

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions meant that we were able to provide some additional physical access to collections relative to last year. This included a small display as part of Stirling Castle's Castle Fest event, as well as opening up Trinity House for Hallowe'en and Christmas tours.

In partnership with the University of Stirling, we were awarded funding for a 3½ year Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PHD entitled "Unlocking the hidden stories, values, and lives of the HES Trinity House object collection". This collaborative project will undertake original research on the object collections associated with Trinity House, examining not only how and why objects were acquired but their relationships to Trinity House, the Port of Leith and the local community.

A successful bid for Arts and Humanities Research Council Capability for Collections grant funding will also enable us to undertake an engagement project in the coming year. This project uses our upgraded digital documentation and heritage science equipment to analyse three small fragments of medieval Islamic glass excavated at Caerlaverock Castle. Working with 3D models and creative practitioners, we will engage with the 8th Braid Salaam Scout Group and Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre to understand contemporary and historic connections between Scotland and Islam.

Increased physical access to our collections has also allowed us to restart our photography and digital documentation programmes. New photos were commissioned for approximately 300 objects, and 14 objects were digitally documented as part of the Rae Project.

We continue to have good levels of collections on display and our core ethos is one of keeping objects on display in situ where at all possible. Currently, 43% of our total collection is on display, and 41% of Scottish Ministers' collections are displayed. To put this in context, many institutions struggle to achieve 10%. In addition to our own displays, we had outward loans of 103 objects to 14 borrowers at 14 venues; the majority of which are objects on long-term loan. We supported several temporary exhibitions, including loans to the Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh, the Wardlaw Museum at the University of St Andrews and the British Library in London.

In the 2021-22 financial year, 77 new objects were added to our website. These are a mix of Scottish Ministers' collections and others. This brings the total number of objects published on the website at the end of March 2022 to 1,919. In addition to the objects on our website, we also have 322 collections models publicly available on Sketchfab.

This coming year, we plan to undertake an appraisal of our facilities and storage across the estate, to build a vision of what is required to support our organisation and the sector going forward.