

PROPERTIES IN THE CARE OF SCOTTISH MINISTERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the activity undertaken at the Properties in Care and the associated collections in the 2022-23 financial year and serves to fulfil our *Scheme of Delegation* performance management reporting requirements.

In the first quarter of this year, legislative restrictions for COVID-19 were lifted and we began to resume normal activities. We have had a total of 3,309,265 visitors to our staffed properties which is almost three times as many visitors as the previous financial year. Visitor numbers are still not at pre-pandemic levels but are increasing at a steady rate. Overseas visitors accounted for 51% of our footfall which shows that visitors are still travelling to Scotland and visiting Scotland's Heritage.

Ensuring responsible tourism through our operations and in our leadership role in the sector remains a key focus for us. Our visitors have contributed a net direct tourism spend of £342 million with an average spend impact per tourist of £104. This is a net direct tourism expenditure increase of £225 million from the previous financial year of 2021-22.

We invested a total of £40.3 million in the properties in care and associated collections which is a 37% increase on last year. Around three quarters of this investment are on employees and associated costs.

Our *High-Level Masonry Project* has operated steadily throughout the year, opening access to properties where appropriate, and always putting the health and safety of our people and the public at the forefront. At the start of the project in 2021-22, we closed 70 sites and by the end of the 2022-23 financial year we have been able to reopen or improve access at 43 sites.

It remains the case that allocating resources to the maintenance and repair of our PICs is still a challenge. The investment requirement to maintain properties as we have in the past is not viable going forward. A combination of changing climate, as well as legacy challenges from poorly executed repairs in the past, have led to accelerated decay. In response to these challenges, we have prioritised our focus on health and safety, statutory mitigation and proactive compliance.

In the last few years, the organisation has seen great change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently we have encountered other changes to our work from our *Reshaping Project* to improve our strategic and operational efficiency and our *High-Level Masonry Project* which resulted in new inspection techniques and changes to the access of our sites. These changes have necessitated new ways of working for our people who have approached this with dedication and resilience.

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 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.

The PIC Annual Report serves to demonstrate our performance in these areas and fulfils the requirement to report on these areas for monitoring by Scottish Government.

This report relates to the 2022-23 financial year and details our resumption of normal activities after the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the 2022-23 year we completed our *Reshaping* project which modified our operating model to allow the best allocation of resources in achieving our objectives. The organisational structure has remained largely unchanged since Historic Environment Scotland was established which has provided stability, enabled the organisation to focus on successful delivery of our purpose and created a good platform on which to build. However, it is important that we ensure that we continue to be organised in the most appropriate way and allocate our resources in the best manner to achieve our priorities. This project has allowed us to operate with greater efficiency in strategy development and operational delivery of site-based activity at our Properties in Care (PICs).

Our high-level masonry inspection programme has continued to uncover the effects of climate change on our monuments. The programme has allowed us to carry out repair work, engage communities and improve access where appropriate.

2 THE PROPERTIES IN CARE

This year has focussed on resuming activities in the post-pandemic period and has demonstrated the strength and resilience of our people and programmes, as we continue to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the first quarter of this year legislative restrictions were lifted and our *Resumption Operating Standards*, which aligned with a range of corporate policies and management advice for our assets, formally closed in May 2022 after their introduction in September 2021.

As we resume activities in this post-pandemic period, we have continued to prioritise the health and safety of our visitors and staff, with a focus on the mitigation of critical life safety risk. This means that prioritisation of investment on a risk management basis will continue across our operations as set out in our *Asset Management Strategy*. Where required, access has been restricted to our properties to allow our programme of works. Where access restrictions have impacted our Properties in Care our teams and partners have worked together on new interpretation, the continuation of events and maintaining community engagement.

The impact of a changing climate on our heritage is something we are acutely aware of, especially considering our *High-Level Masonry Project* which continues to uncover the effects of time and climate on our monuments. Our *Climate Action Plan*, launched in 2020, sets out how we will work towards making our organisation more prepared for and resilient to changes in our climate. This year we have launched a new *Waste and Resources* plan which aims to kick start our journey towards becoming a more circular organisation where we design circular principles, resource efficiency and waste reduction into everything we do.

The focus this year has been firmly on the future management of our assets and work has begun on a long-term strategy for our Properties in Care, including a new inspection regime and strategic workforce planning. The *Inspection Regime* project will consider how we gather information on our PICs to provide us with data and information to deliver good stewardship. The *Strategic Workforce Plan* is a project which will ensure that we have the right skills in place to deliver Historic Environment Scotland priorities.

Figure 1 – the location of high-level inspections delivered during 2022-23 financial year



2.1 High-Level Masonry

The *High-Level Masonry Project* is a corporate priority and a proactive step in managing the sites in our care within a changing environment, as well as fulfilling our statutory duties to our people, visitors and contractors.

The *High-Level Masonry Project* has been established to carry out a planned programme of tactile inspections at our Properties in Care where masonry exists above 1.5 metres, due to concerns about potential risk of building fabric falling from height. Some sites have restricted access while inspections are conducted, or until repairs can be carried out. The project was established in 2022 after sample inspections in Summer 2021 found a range of decay to high-level masonry, resulting in a risk that fabric might fall and cause serious injury or risk to life. The project is headed by a senior responsible officer, supported by the Project Management Office, and has four cross-functional workstreams which focus on: technical, resourcing and delivery, communications and customer experience, and commercial.

This year, due to the continued programme of works, we have been able to reopen or improve access at 43 of our sites with further improvements planned for the 2023-24 financial year. During 2022-23, as part of the continued programme, we carried out 30 high-level site inspections.

The visitor experience at properties with high-level masonry restrictions in place was improved through suites of interpretive graphics applied to safety fencing and digital resources, such as fly-through virtual tour films of Caerlaverock Castle and Linlithgow Palace. An onsite virtual reality experience that gave visitors a chance to experience the closed site of St Andrews Castle was also developed. Our Retail Team made significant upgrades to our retail spaces at Caerlaverock Castle and Melrose Abbey.

The *High-Level Masonry Project* has allowed us to collect critical data on the high-level fabric of our monuments and provide us with a deeper understanding of our estate. Guidance has been produced for each PIC to help determine high-level access methodology and ground protection measures to protect sensitive archaeology. In addition to gathering information on the monument itself, ecology reports have been produced where necessary as part of the pre-inspection work. We now have a better knowledge of the ecology and biodiversity at our properties, as well as an understanding of related constraints. This data helps inform our future approach to maintenance and conservation of our estate and enable informed decision-making.

We have provided training to ensure the quality and safety of our staff and their work. Our staff have designed a Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) verified qualification. The Scottish Credit and

Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 8 in *Planning, Surveying and Recording the Condition of Built Assets for Conservation* launched in the 2022-23 financial year.

Moving to a national model to deliver our *High-Level Masonry Project* has presented both challenges and opportunities. Staff resourcing has required flexibility as teams have changed activities and roles. Changes which affect our staff have been proactively managed as impact to staff wellbeing was identified as a risk. Techniques to mitigate this impact include scheduled administration time, built-in travel time, team collaboration and shared people resources between teams.

2.2 Condition of the Properties

Many things threaten the condition of our properties and provide challenges to their maintenance or repair. Climate change accelerates the decay of our properties and inherited repairs from our predecessors using incompatible materials are now further accelerating decay.

Not only has the climate affected our monuments but it continues to impact our operations through adverse weather hampering access and technology. Managing our resources to ensure conservation and maintenance has proved challenging and in response we have prioritised our focus on statutory mitigation and proactive compliance. Our usual condition checking programme has been significantly affected while we focus on increasing compliance-based activity at our sites.

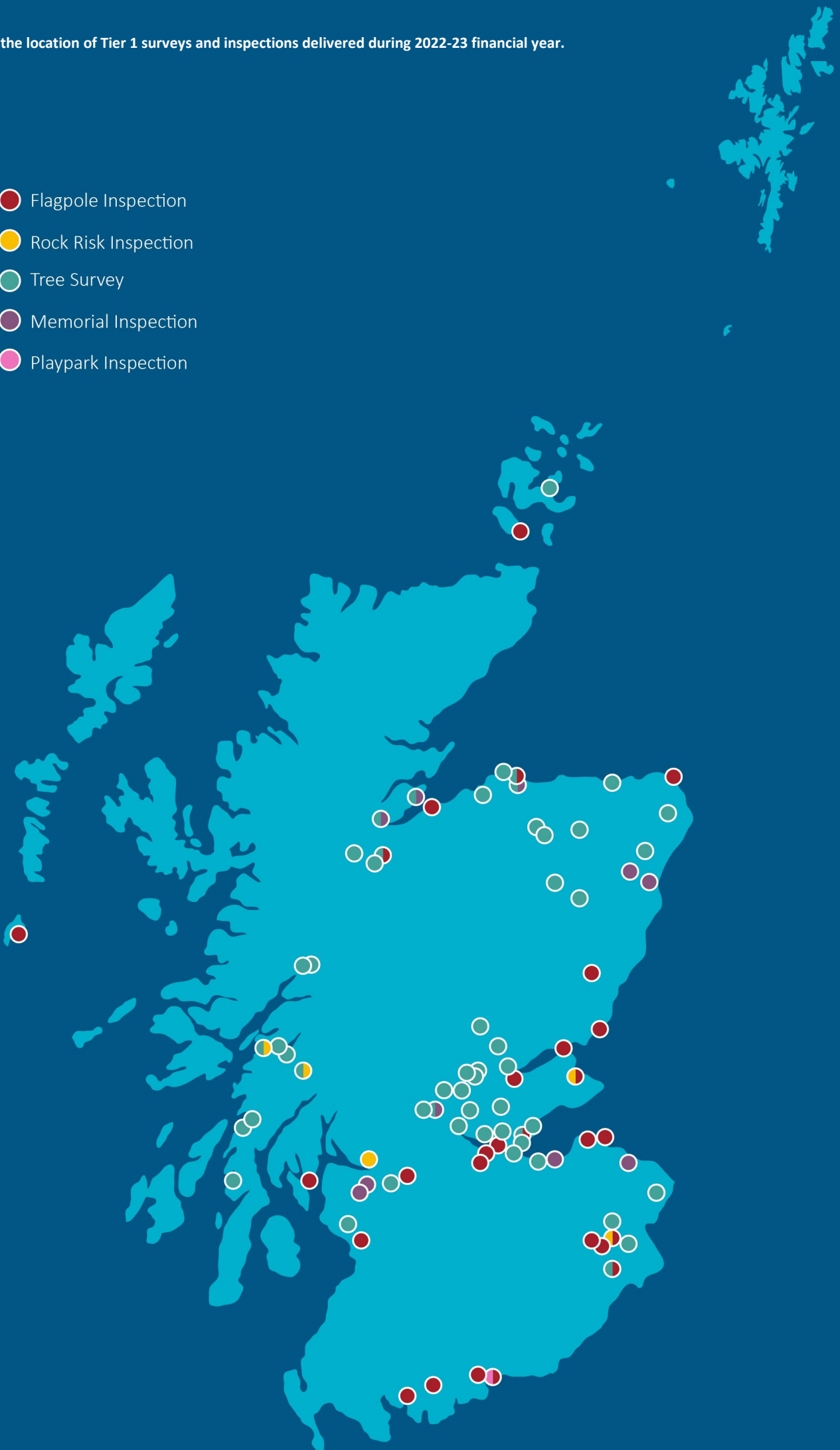
The current Asset Management and Compliance Team (AMC) was established in January 2023. The team focus on delivering Tier 1 Compliance Projects and other statutory and regulatory compliance areas (Tier 2 and 3) and developing operational standards for conserving and maintaining Properties in Care, such as opening and closing procedures and routine maintenance regimes. The team also continue to provide strategic support for the *High-Level Masonry Project*, which was previously a Tier 1 project, and ensures that policies, processes, and systems are fit for purpose by carrying out quality assurance checks. Our Tier 1 Compliance Programme continues to deliver a revised and consistent approach to areas of risk to life which ensures that we are meeting our legal and statutory obligations in these areas. The deliverables from these projects include baseline assessment and establishment of asset registers, policy, procedure, data management system, training (procedural and technical), and audit programme.

During the 2022-23 year we have ensured inspection of 37 flagpoles at 31 PICs, 22 rock slopes across five PICs, memorials at 10 PICs, trees at 71 PICs and one playpark.

To further ensure proactive conservation of the estate, a project is underway which seeks to understand material types of our monuments. The *PIC Stone and Mortar Survey Project* seeks to

Figure 2 – the location of Tier 1 surveys and inspections delivered during 2022-23 financial year.

- Flagpole Inspection
- Rock Risk Inspection
- Tree Survey
- Memorial Inspection
- Playpark Inspection



understand stone and mortar present at our sites to support ongoing maintenance work but also to inform wider strategy in stone procurement, regional or national repairs and maintenance planning, and climate change risk assessment. This work is being carried out with the support of British Geological Survey (BGS) and Scottish Lime Centre Trust (SLCT).

Heritage crime is an important consideration when managing our assets as damage caused to our monuments and landscape can contribute towards their accelerated deterioration.

While instances of heritage crime have decreased for the first time since 2018-19, it's noteworthy that the recorded instances for 2022-23 still represent the second highest figure in the past five years. The years during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions saw greater increases to heritage crime which may be due to behavioural changes combined with unstaffed sites due to closures. During 2022-23, instances of fire account for a quarter of all heritage crimes. Holyrood Park was the subject of 38% of all heritage crimes with fire and vandalism accounting for 58% of these.

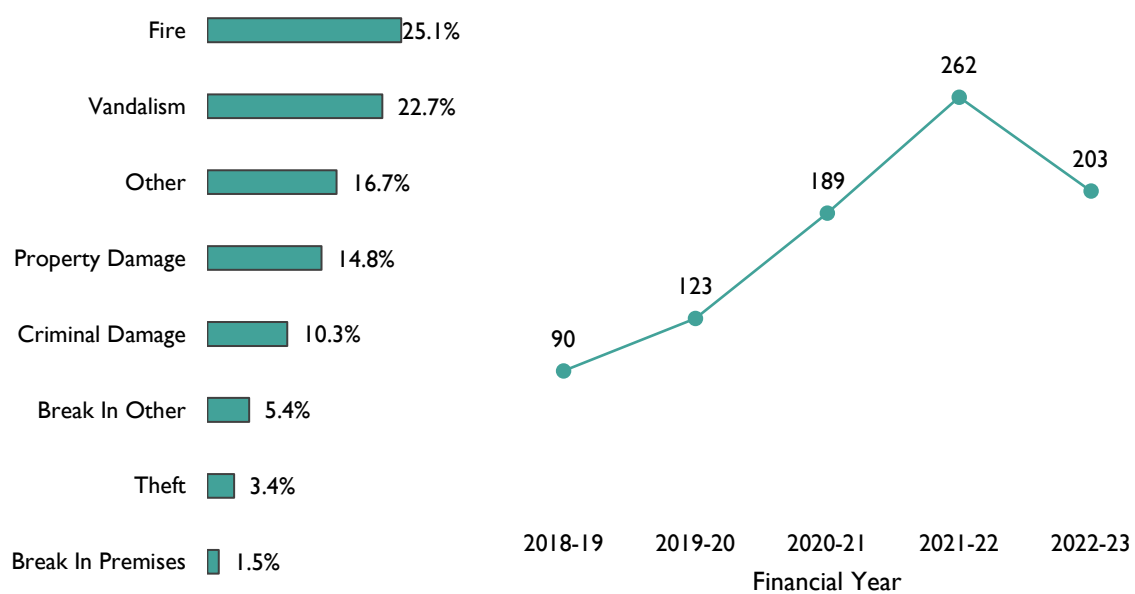


Figure 3 – Type and instances of heritage crime at Properties in Care during the 2022-23 financial year

2.3 Digital Systems and Documentation

We have made great steps in the past few years to digitise our data and improve connectivity, but challenges remain due to the remote nature of many of our sites.

The Properties in Care Asset Management System (PICAMS) has been developed and delivered by our in-house team since 2019. During 2022-23, the system has been used to record 674 routine

inspections. During 2022-23 time has been spent on consolidating new functions, improving access and expanding available information. In 2021 we introduced defect reporting, routine inspection records and site restriction records. This year we consolidated these functions and assessed potential improvements. We have improved content by providing additional information on both cultural heritage and natural heritage designations. We have also improved web accessibility for both desktop and mobile user interfaces.

During 2022-23 we continued to ensure PICAMS was appropriately connected to our new corporate document management system through the *Document Centre* project. We also completed the *Reshaping* project which modified our operating model and changed some operational information which needed to be updated within PICAMS.

Future development plans for PICAMS include tools for high-level fabric, risk-to-life safety inspections, emergency response information and geospatial tools and systems. There are also plans for further improvements to reporting of defects, routine inspections and site access restrictions. As well as development and improvement plans, there will also be interoperability testing between our internal document systems as well as online and offline geographic information systems.

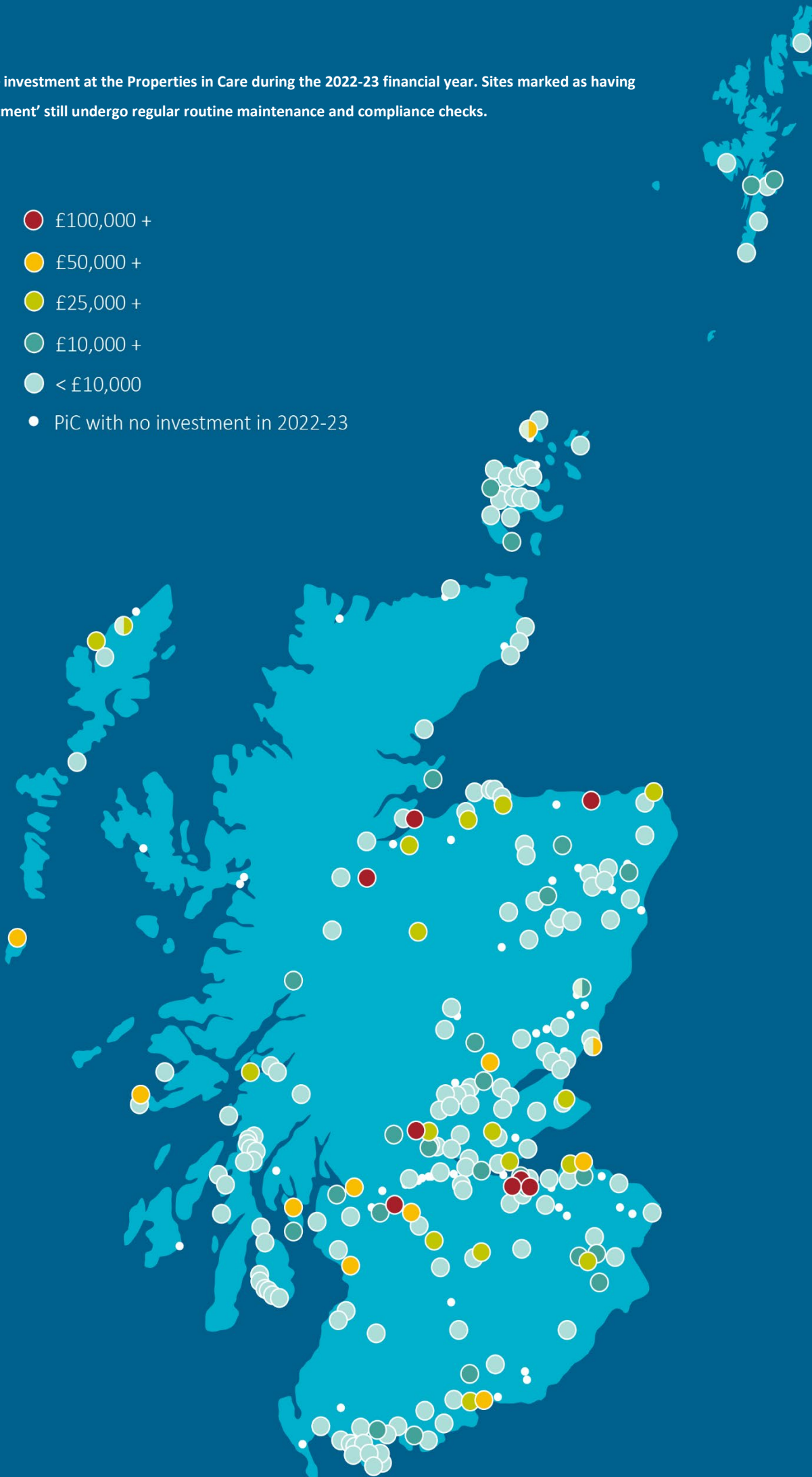
The Digital Documentation and Innovation team (DD&I) have been making steady progress with the *Rae Project*. The *Rae Project* is a digital data capture project which uses cutting-edge technology to create 3D accurate models of objects and historic places. This year we have successfully completed digital documentation at nine properties, including Clackmannan Tower, St Andrews Cathedral, Holyrood Abbey, Dun Carloway and the Great Hall at Edinburgh Castle. The POTREE server, a viewer for point cloud data, came online for Historic Environment Scotland data and 40 high resolution point cloud datasets can now be accessed directly via PICAMS.

The DD&I team have been moving forward with 3D capture of Collections. In January we undertook an extensive programme of digital documentation of the Honours of Scotland including updated 3D capture of the Stone of Destiny. During 2022-23 the team have captured 13 objects, most of which were technically very challenging, leading to development of new streamlined workflows and enhanced capture techniques. A new, dedicated Digital Imaging Studio has been established at the Engine Shed and semi-automated capture technology developed. With these advances, we hope to increase the rate of 3D capture of Collections in the future.

Following a successful grant application, the DD&I team was also the recipient of £1 million research infrastructure funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which has allowed us to invest in state-of-the-art presentation and immersive experience systems for the Engine Shed.

Figure 4 – investment at the Properties in Care during the 2022-23 financial year. Sites marked as having 'no investment' still undergo regular routine maintenance and compliance checks.

- £100,000 +
- £50,000 +
- £25,000 +
- £10,000 +
- < £10,000
- PIC with no investment in 2022-23



This will allow the team to develop multi-user immersive experiences using 3D data as well as developing engaging educational and virtual access content.

During 2022-23 work began to digitise Deeds in a collaborative project between the Factoring Team and Archives Team. The Factoring Team hold 2,702 Deeds for all our Properties in Care, Depots, Offices and Ancillary Properties. These were previously held in fireproof cabinets in Longmore House but during the period of COVID-19 restrictions, were moved to John Sinclair House where they will be stored in the archive. It is envisaged that the Deeds and leases will be digitised by end of Summer 2023, although there will be a few documents that cannot be digitised until they have been conserved.

2.4 Impact of investment on the Properties

We invested a total of £40.3 million on the Properties in Care and associated collections this year. This includes investment relating to conservation and maintenance of the properties, visitor facing aspects of asset management, learning and inclusion, staffing and support. This is a substantial increase of 37% on the previous two years which were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions but more aligned with pre-2020 figures. Staff salaries account for 79% of this year's total investments.

Direct investment on conservation and maintenance of the properties and depots, totals £7.7 million. Like many other heritage asset managers, we are seeing significant challenges in meeting the investment needs of our estate and associated collections. This is going to require us to re-think the strategy for future care.

2.4.1 Economic impact

The economic impact of our properties can be estimated by net direct tourism expenditure; spend by tourists on-site and in the local area, which would otherwise be lacking in the absence of these monuments.

In 2022-23, the total figure for net direct tourism expenditure linked to the Historic Environment Scotland estate was £342 million. This increases to £591 million when introducing supply chain effects, as local businesses increase their spend to meet demand. The 2022-23 year saw an annual increase of £284 million compared to the 2021-22 year, increasing to £474 million with supply chain multipliers. While we have seen an increase in both visits and tourism impact, we are not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Restrictions in relation to the high-level masonry inspection programme, as well as the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are the likely cause.

Direct tourism expenditure supported an estimated 8,942 full-time equivalent jobs across Scotland, increasing to 13,772 when supply chain effects are included.

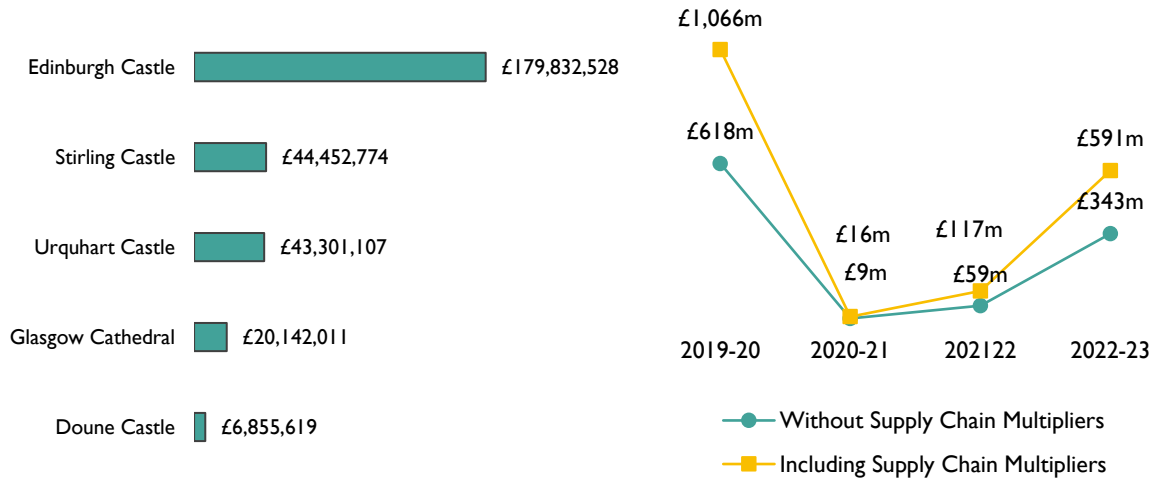


Figure 5 – the top five Properties in Care by net direct tourism impact and pre-COVID-19 figures. The supply chain multipliers have been included to demonstrate the wider economic impact of tourism on the Scottish economy.

The top four sites by net direct tourism are the same top four sites based on visitor numbers. However, Doone Castle was 5th in terms of net direct tourism impact and 6th in terms of footfall. Skara Brae was 5th in terms of visitor footfall (Table 1, page 15), but 6th in terms of net tourism impact with a direct impact of £5,824,715.

The average spend per tourist across the estate was £104. Our overseas visitors accounted for 51% of our footfall but with an impact on net direct tourism of 83%.

2.4.2 Social impact

This year, our site-specific investment in areas characterised by average or above-average deprivation (SIMD ≤ 5th decile) has seen a 4% increase, now totalling 49%, contributing positively to the social impact within these communities. Over half of our direct investment, 52%, was in rural areas which scored 5+, according to the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 8-point system. This is 1% less than the 53% of the 2021-2022 financial year.

2.5 Provision of Public Access to the Properties

From May 2022, all legislative restrictions relating to the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted. This allowed our properties to return to pre-pandemic procedures and activities. Restrictions related to

the *High-Level Masonry Project* continue, as we put our visitors and staff health and safety at the forefront of our activities.

Figure 6 shows the access status of our properties by the highest impact level at any point throughout the 2022-23 financial year. A high-level impact status includes any closure which prevents the public from accessing the property for any length of duration, whether planned or unplanned.

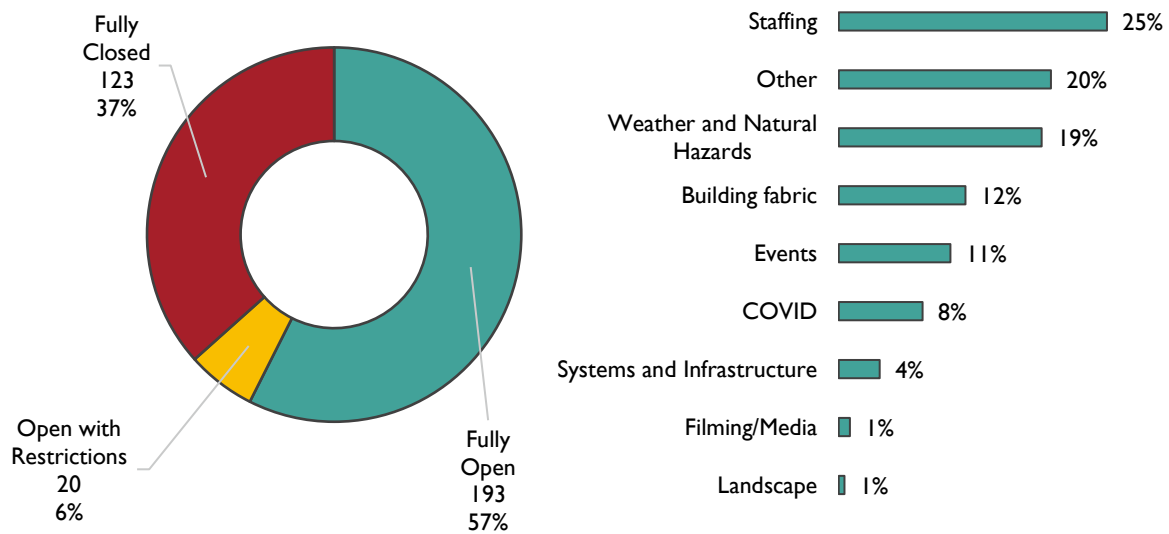


Figure 6 – status of the Properties in Care by their highest impact level at any point during the 2022-23 financial year

High-Level Masonry accounts for the majority of our restrictions in 2022-23, accounting for an average of 290 days of closure per property in the 2022-23 financial year. However, per instance of closure, ‘staffing’ and ‘weather and natural hazards’ are the most common reason for the status change of our properties.

We received a total of 3,309,265 visitors to our staffed properties this year which is a large increase of 168% on the 2021-22 financial year. The top five visited sites account for 80% of all our visitors. For the first time, Skara Brae has appeared in our top five visited sites. While this is always a very popular visitor attraction the relative numbers have never been this high. This is likely to be due to post-COVID-19 pandemic increases in ferry and coach visits to Orkney. Overseas visitors account for 51% of our footfall across the estate.

Ranking	Property in Care	Visitor Numbers
1	Edinburgh Castle	1,477,135
2	Stirling Castle	437,765
3	Urquhart Castle	371,390
4	Glasgow Cathedral	282,759
5	Skara Brae	90,827

Table 1 – visitor numbers at top 5 visited sites in 2022-23

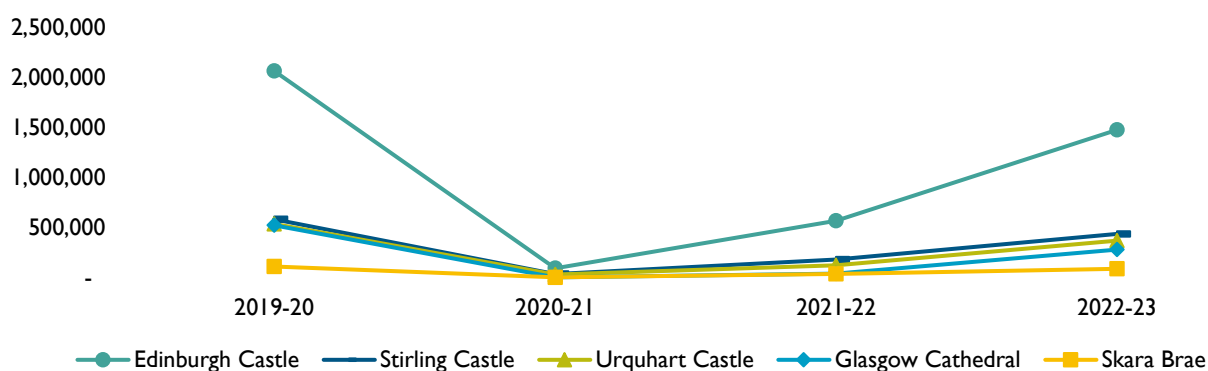


Figure 7 – visitor numbers at top 5 visited sites in 2022-23 with comparison to previous years

2.5.1 Learning and Inclusion

This financial year saw demand for Learning and Inclusion activities increase steadily after final education restrictions relating to COVID-19 were lifted in Spring 2022. Audiences returned in large numbers and over 54,000 learners were engaged through our learning offer, 260% above the KPI target of 15,000, with demand greatly surpassing expectations.

Learning Visits for 2022-23 numbered 39,434 which was an increase of over 840%. This shows that groups were keen to get back to our sites which are clearly viewed as safe learning destinations. Over 15,000 learners were directly engaged through our programme of activities and projects and, for the first time since early 2020, over 90% of those participated through in-person activity at our sites and in community/partnership venues showing a demand to get back to this type of activity. Digital remains a useful engagement medium for audiences with specific needs or in remote locations.

We officially launched two new flagship learning programmes, *Creative Caerlaverock* and *Castle Science*. *Castle Science* is a collaboration with Glasgow Science Centre and is our new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) focused schools outreach programme. We resumed our programme of informal learning activities during school holidays including some specific activities

designed to support areas with High-Level Masonry related site closures. It was also good to see young people in the Highlands and Islands re-connect through our *Heritage Remixed* youth engagement programme and our Junior Guides partnerships resumed across the country.

2.5.2 Experience

During 2022 VisitScotland resumed their programme of Quality Assurance visits, undertaking 22 visits to our staffed sites on an advisory basis. A new Mystery Visit programme was trialled which offers benchmarking with over 100 other attractions on a UK-wide level, with 33 visits to our sites and an overall score of 89.7% compared to the national average of 88%. Our Visitor Survey launched in 2020, and during 2022-23 received almost 22,000 responses from visitors to our staffed sites, exceeding our Key Performance Indicator on Enjoyment scores (8.8/10), achieving an average of 8.9.

Face-to-face training resumed for our Visitor and Community Teams with 24 customer service-focused courses delivered through the Quality Services Site Trainer Programme:

- Exceeding Visitor Expectations – 87 staff trained
- Promoting our Product – 57 staff trained
- Telling Our Stories – 53 staff trained
- Measuring Our Success – 29 staff trained

As part of an ongoing programme to create up-to-date interpretative panels for all our properties, our Interpretation Team upgraded panels at 10 unstaffed properties including Restenneth Priory in Angus; Earl's Palace, Birsay, in Orkney; and a suite of sites in Dumfries and Galloway. As part of the *Doune Rural Tourism Infrastructure Project* we completed new paths and a bridge, providing a series of interpretive panels developed in consultation with the local community, to increase and improve access to the village and engage visitors with its stories.

We continued to broaden access to our properties through a range of new developments. These included the addition of Ukrainian to the audio guide at Edinburgh Castle, the development of autism resources, new access guides for seven sites and an online British Sign Language (BSL) guided tour of Holyrood Park. A new guidebook was also published for Holyrood Park. We supplied new resources for families which included outdoor games, explorer back packs, quizzes, craft activities and Easter trails. The Easter trails were held at 16 properties.

Our visitors enjoyed a full programme of Summer events which were restarted following COVID-19 restrictions. This saw the return of the jousting events at Linlithgow Palace and Caerlaverock Castle. Both properties had restricted access due to the *High-Level Masonry Project*, however we were able to stage the events in full, with Linlithgow selling out a 10,000-visitor capacity. Our multi-period event, *Celebration of the Centuries* returned to Fort George in August.

The temporary exhibition team led *Our Year of Stories* exhibiting *Unforgettable* which toured several properties and celebrated the lives of some unsung individuals in Scottish history. Working with artists and writers from a diverse range of communities, it challenged us to think about whose stories we tell, and whose we do not.

As part of the programme for *Our Year of Stories*, our Events Team staged a brand-new evening experience with funding from Event Scotland at Stirling Castle, *Tales from the Castle*, in November 2022. The event brought the castle to life with costumed performers populating all areas of the castle and a ceilidh in the Great Hall.

Castle of Light: A Kingdom of Colours mesmerised visitors to Edinburgh Castle throughout December. The reduced capacity access night allowed the event to be enjoyed by people with specific access needs.

3 THE ASSOCIATED COLLECTIONS

This year we have been balancing ongoing collections activities with four major projects: *Operation Unicorn*, *Coronation and Stone of Destiny*, *Government Indemnity Scheme Action Plan*, and *Collections Inventory Project*. We continued to utilise our draft Collections and Applied Conservation Forward Plan 2022-27 which helps to guide our work, aligning with Historic Environment Scotland Corporate priorities and values, and our industry standards and statutory obligations.

Operation Unicorn was deployed in September 2022, in response to the death of Queen Elizabeth, and saw the Collections and Applied Conservation team provide crucial support to the Thanksgiving Service at St Giles's Cathedral, Edinburgh by providing and ensuring safe use of the Scottish Crown in the ceremonials and the Lying-at-Rest period. As part of a wider Historic Environment Scotland response team, this was a unique moment in history and laid the foundations for our partnership working to support the Coronation activities. Following this, a project relating to the Coronation of King Charles III was set up, to support a range of activities: inclusion of the Stone of Destiny in the Coronation at Westminster Abbey; inclusion of the Stone, Honours of Scotland, new Elizabeth Sword

at the Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication at St Giles' Cathedral, and leading on rehearsals for the ceremonial aspects of that Service. The Head of Collections and Applied Conservation led both an internal project team for all activities and a Scottish Government workstream for the move of the Stone of Destiny for the Coronation. Significant planning and preparation activities were undertaken in this financial year, with cross-organisational support and many members of the Collections and Applied Conservation team contributing such as our Stone Conservation team, Regional Collections Manager, Registrar and Head of Applied Conservation. As the Stone of Destiny had not been held by Historic Environment Scotland at the time of the previous Coronation, a new plan was created for this element. There was a focus on technical requirements for move and installation, logistics and security, science and conservation, media engagement, ceremonials, and considerable partnership working - particularly with the Westminster Abbey team and other agencies and stakeholders - to ensure the safety of the Stone and the Coronation Chair into which it would be placed. We undertook new analysis and documentation to help support this process.

The *GIS (Government Indemnity Scheme) Action Plan* started its first year in 2022-23. In the first year we carried out work at 11 sites, with 94.7% of tasks meeting programme deadline as well as two brought forward from Year 2 (2023-24) and one task addition. Highlights include the return of several long-term loans from Glasgow Cathedral and St Ann's Maltings Store and specialist work to improve the display cases, object mounting and environment at Skara Brae. The work at Skara Brae culminated in a new loan from National Museums Scotland of one of the finest carved stone balls ever discovered at Skara Brae.

In 2022 we continued our *Collections Inventory Project* which is planned to run until 2025 and will allow us to capture, record and enhance information about our collections. The first full year of the project has allowed the team to establish the project methodology, which describes the inventory process from start to finish. During the 2022-23 year the team has inventoried 9,694 objects at 27 properties. Some highlights included inventories completed for the Seafield Collection at Fort George, Melrose Abbey, Trinity House, and Arbroath Abbey. The inventory process has also identified several objects (up to 20% of those inventoried during this period) not previously recorded in our systems, demonstrating the benefit of the work of the project team to reveal the untapped potential of the cultural assets in our care.

A major piece of work for both our Collections and Applied Conservation Teams has been their involvement in the relocation of the Kilmartin Crosses from the Kilmartin Old Church to the newly renovated Kilmartin Museum. The crosses themselves are scheduled monuments, and following the

sale of Kilmartin Old Church, which was not in Historic Environment Scotland care, it was agreed that relocation to the neighbouring museum was the best way forward to ensure both public access to the crosses, and their long-term protection. Following the necessary permissions and consents process, two of the three crosses are now on loan to Kilmartin Museum, with the third, larger cross due to be relocated by early 2024.

3.1 Standard of Collections Care

To date, there are 34,690 objects recorded as part of the Scottish Ministers’ collections and a further 9,182 objects that are not part of the Scottish Ministers’ collections. This brings our current collections size to 43,872¹ objects. Some 6,315 new records were added to our collections database during the 2022-23 period. This figure includes a mixture of new acquisitions and records created through retrospective documentation.

Our programme of condition checking has now been aligned with the work of the Collections Inventory Project Team. The integration of these programmes has allowed for steady progress in capturing the condition of the objects in our care. We have now undertaken condition checks for 69.3% of Scottish Ministers’ collections in line with Scheme of Delegation requirements. This information provides us with a better understanding of the conservation, storage, and display needs of our collections, and allows us to actively plan improvements required.

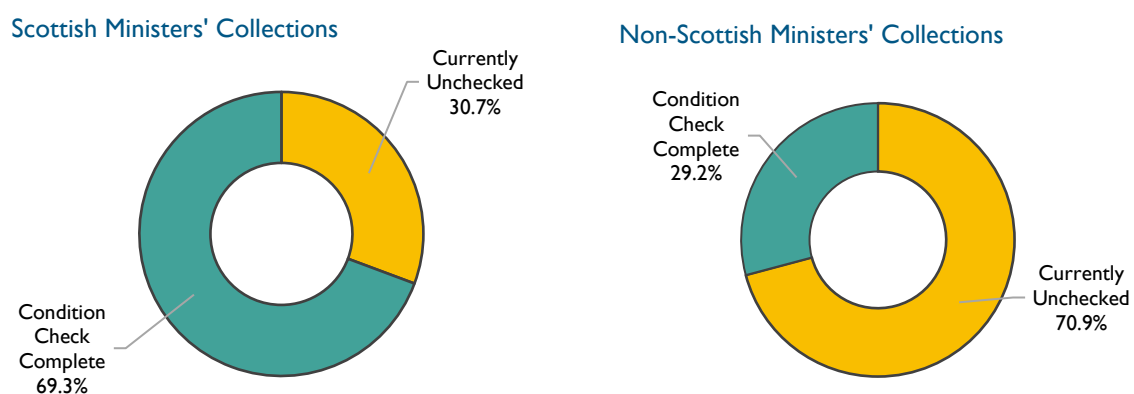


Figure 8 – progress of object checking for Scottish Ministers’ collections (left) and all other collections (right). For the purposes of this data, this refers to condition checking carried out from October 2015 onwards, any objects checked prior to this date will be considered ‘currently unchecked’.

We continue to make progress with our Collections Salvage Plan programme. Six new site plans were written in the 2022-23 year, and training was delivered to staff at Duff House where we have

¹ Due to the reporting mechanism used, this figure is accurate as of July 2023.

significant loaned collections. Our staff also participated in the Edinburgh Collections Response Network (ECRN) *Building a Salvage Network for Scotland* event, which aimed to share best practice and build local networks.

We continue to hold full Museum Accreditation status at 13 of our sites. We have been in contact with Museums Galleries Scotland to establish a programme of application renewals following the reopening of the scheme after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In early 2023, we worked with our Learning and Development colleagues to pilot an internal Work Shadowing programme. Four individuals from across the organisation were given the opportunity to work alongside our team for a day. Two members of staff shadowed our Collections Inventory Team at Trinity House, and two members of staff shadowed our Collections Care Team at Smailholm Tower. We received positive feedback from everyone involved, and the evaluation results from this pilot will help inform our wider approach to work shadowing.

3.2 Condition of the Collections

Access to sites has continued to increase this year following the lifting of all restrictions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the *Collections Inventory Project*, we have continued to increase our condition checking activity, as evidenced in Figure 9 on page 21. During 2022-23 2,579 objects were condition checked, the vast majority of which are part of the Scottish Ministers' collections. Figure 10 on page 21 shows the number of PICs at various levels of progress in relation to the condition checking of objects. This year, condition checks were carried out at three PICs where objects had not previously undergone this process. There has also been an increase of six PICs which now have been fully condition checked. Due to the re-checking of some objects each year, figures for previous years can differ slightly between reports. Over time, more PICs will reach the higher end of the scale as the condition checking for each site nears its baseline completion. However, if a collection increases in size the proportion of objects condition checked may decrease.

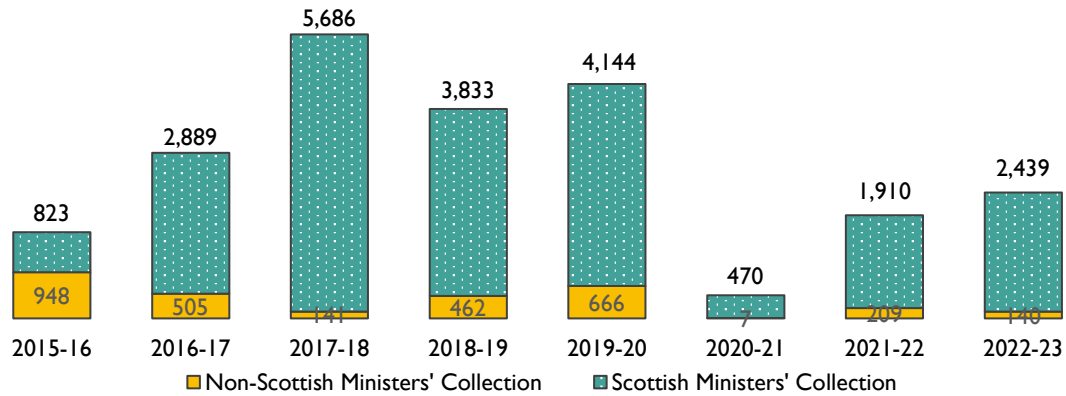


Figure 9 –progress in delivering baseline condition checking of the collections. Due to the re-checking of some objects each year, figures for previous years can differ slightly between reports. Ministers’ Collections are the top figure in each of the stacked bars.

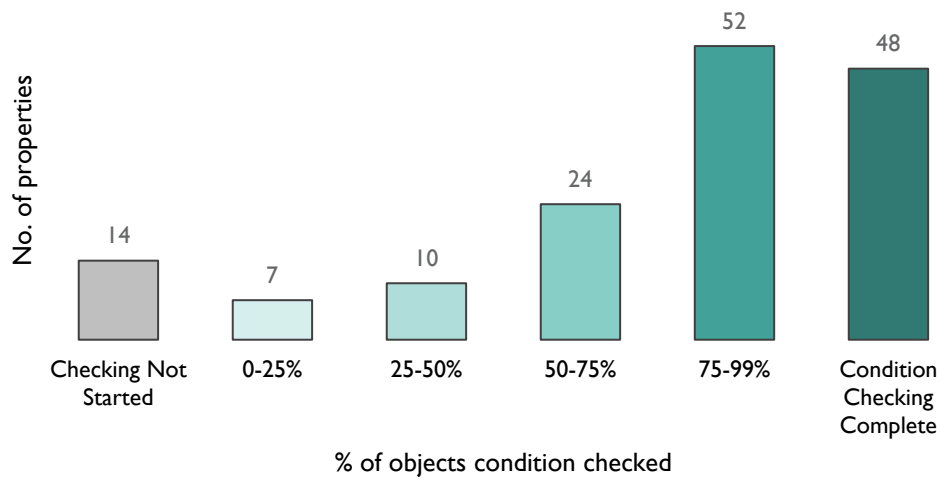


Figure 10 – PICs at various levels of progress in relation to condition checking of objects. Relates to Scottish Ministers’ collections only.

The condition checking process assigns a ‘condition status’ to each object, which 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 11 shows the proportion of objects in each category and the proportion of objects that are in a stable versus unstable state. 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 11. 0.4% of the Scottish Ministers' collections are known to require immediate action, a slight decrease on last year's figure of 0.5%. The figure for collections considered a high priority remained stable at 2.6%. The overall figure for collections in an unstable condition was 28.3%, a marginal increase on last year's 28.16%. Despite the consistency between this year's and last year's figures, it should be noted that these values are likely to fluctuate over time as the number of collections checked increases and we learn more about the objects in our care.

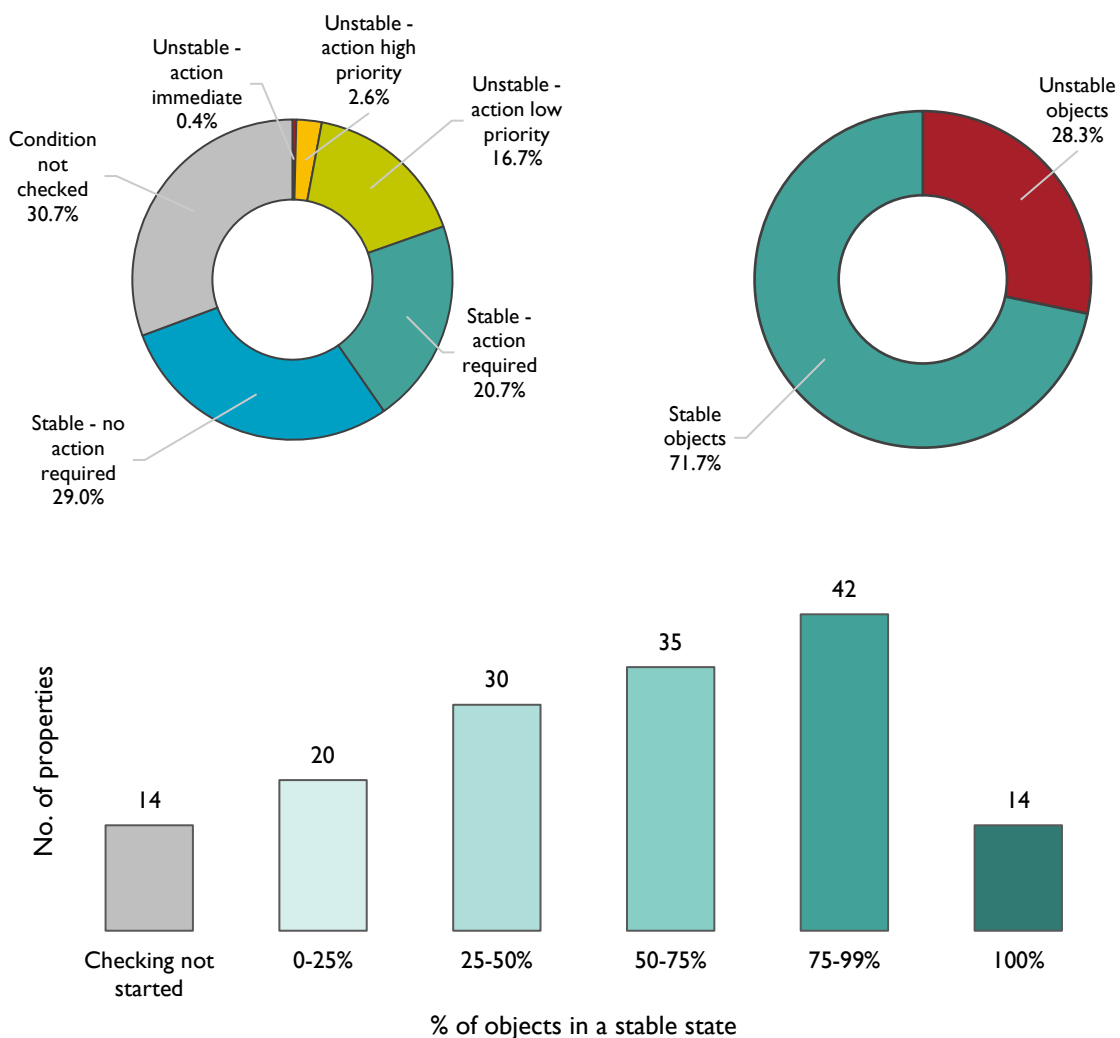


Figure 11 – condition and stability of the Scottish Ministers' collections.
Top left: proportion of Scottish Ministers' collections objects within each condition category.
Top right: overall stability of objects in Scottish Ministers' collections based on those which have been condition checked.
Bottom: percentage of objects in a stable state in relation to number of Properties in Care.

3.3 Provision of Public Access to the Collections

At present, 49% of the Scottish Ministers' collections are on display, an increase of 8% on last year. To put this into context, many institutions struggle to achieve 10%. This uplift on last year's figure is likely due to the work of the inventory project. We maintained 74 inward loans from 53 individual lenders to enhance our collections. In addition to managing our own displays, we had outward loans of 117 objects across 19 outward loans to 13 different borrowers; the majority of which are objects on long-term loan. We supported several exhibitions, including a display of Neolithic archaeology from the Ness of Brodgar dig at Maeshowe Visitor Centre.

There are currently 1,940 objects on our website which is an increase of 21 on last year. Our focus has been on improving upload mechanisms in order to speed up future content management and we hope to be able to see significant increases as the *Collections Inventory Project* data is processed and in line with the development of Trove (the organisation's web portal) in future years. As part of the *Rae Project* 12 objects were digitally documented, including the Honours of Scotland (Sword of State, Sceptre, Crown of Scotland, and Stone of Destiny).

We hosted a placement student from University of Leicester as part of the New Museum School Advanced Programme, between October and December 2022. This saw the student focus on researching the book collection at Trinity House as part of a wider piece of work exploring currently under-represented histories linked to the house, collection, and port of Leith in Edinburgh (for example links to the British Empire and colonialism), and have signed up to take part in the second year of the programme. During Summer 2022 we delivered the Eternal Connections project, funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Capability for Collections programme. Working with 3D models and creative practitioners, we partnered with the 8th Braid Salaam Scout Group and Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre to understand contemporary and historic connections between Scotland and Islam. Both projects help to support our *Equalities Action Plan*. We suspended our Collections Trainee programme this year to focus on hosting a fixed-term Museums and Galleries Technician Modern Apprenticeship, with the aim of widening access to careers in the sector. January 2023 saw the conclusion of our participation in the Museums Galleries Scotland *Upskilling Volunteers* project with our volunteer completing their Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) qualification.

From October 2022, we began supervising a collaborative doctoral project with the University of Stirling. The PhD topic aims to develop a methodology to engage with the hidden stories, values and

meanings of the collection associated with Trinity House. The proposed methodology will be applicable to support further research into collections of portable objects connected with other Properties in Care.

We continued to support outreach activities and events with the presence of the Collections team specialists and selected collections to help our audience engage with cultural heritage in new ways and to enhance the visitor experience at our sites.