

## Historic Environment Scotland Workshop documentation



### Introduction

This workshop was held in Longmore House, Edinburgh on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018. Twenty two people participated; 10 from the SU11 team, 10 from HES, one attendee from SCAPE and one attendee from Scottish Natural Heritage.

The aim of the workshop was to bring the SU11 team together with staff in Historic Environment Scotland (3 of whom attending participated in the programme) to discuss similar questions explored during the fieldtrip with local communities and other stakeholders; and to feedback to HES information and insights gained during the preceding 10 days.

### Workshop format

Participants were divided into 4 mixed groups with sub-groups within the SU11 team and HES split up between tables. Each table discussed the same 4 pre-defined questions, based upon the SU11 Learning from Loss programme objectives. Each question had a 15 minute discussion slot.

- Q1. *What are the main risks facing coastal heritage and carved stone heritage now to 2030?*
- Q2. *Given the challenges facing coastal heritage and carved stone heritage, are our current approaches to assessing significance fit for purpose?*
- Q3. *Given the challenges and limited resources, how do we prioritise sites for action?*

**Q4. Who should be involved in decision-making?**

At the end of the small-group discussion period, the nominated note-taker from each group reported back their key discussion topics to all. Notes of the discussion as recorded by each note-taker are reproduced below with only very light editing.

## Main findings of the workshop

**Q1. Threats**

***What are the main threats facing coastal heritage and carved stone heritage now to 2030?***

In this forum, discussions quickly moved on from identification of the main threats to the challenge of assessing risk and to a consideration of responses to it.

### Threats

The multiplicity of risks identified facing heritage now and in the future can be broadly grouped under:

- natural erosive processes and the accelerator effect of climate change,
- intentional or unintentional harm caused by individual/small group human behaviour, and
- unintentional harm caused by maladaptation and poor decisions,
- societal risks such as withdrawal of political support or economic change.

The pressures introduced by tourism were singled out by two groups as a risk to heritage.

### Risk assessment

Given the sheer volume and variety of heritage outwith that which is designated, we struggle with key components of risk assessment. Namely understanding the significance of the heritage (what is important? what about the unknown?), and sensitivity to risk.

A lack of knowledge about the overall value of the archaeological resource was raised as a concern "*struggling to capture significance of what is most important - can't see the wood for the trees*".

There was also discussion around tipping points and how to deal with incremental versus dramatic change. This is particularly relevant to carved stone heritage because the nature of the long-term weathering processes to which it is exposed is difficult to measure. It was felt that current risk assessments do not adequately deal with carved stones and that if a shared risk assessment methodology for carved stone heritage and coastal heritage were developed relative weighting of criteria would be important. Risk assessments should also be iterative and flexible.

## Response

The nature of the risk may influence the response. US colleagues related how the response of First Nations groups to loss of heritage is determined by the source of the threat. If a result of natural processes, a let go policy is nearly always preferred. If a result of human processes, action is taken.

From an HES perspective it was pointed out that when dealing with sites at risk or perceived as being at risk, *“the expectation from the public towards HES [to take action] is very high”*.

One group highlighted the positives of heritage at risk which can provide a catalyst for community action and involvement with heritage - making use of its potential for building social capital.

- weather
- interaction between multiple erosive impacts accelerated by climate change
- maladaptation and unintended consequences of decisions
- intended and unintended harm from human behaviour
- tourism
- political change
- lack of resources / economic change
- lack of awareness of the issues or avoidance of the issues
- lack of understanding of the resource beyond designated assets
- how to deal with incremental versus dramatic change?
- current risk assessments don't adequately deal with carved stones
- heritage at risk also presents opportunities

## **Q2. Significance**

***Given the challenges facing coastal heritage and carved stone heritage, are our current approaches to assessing significance fit for purpose?***

Given the composition of this meeting, issues around designation dominated discussions. It was recognised that current approaches to assessment of significance are inherited from the designation process and do not adequately capture social value; but also an awareness of the pitfalls of overstating the interests of the present community through social value *“everywhere is important to someone”*. There was a call for guidelines for evaluating social value. In more than one group, HES colleagues expressed discomfort that currently the system works best for *“those that shout the loudest”*. A practical method of assessing significance which better captures the range of values may help overcome this.

Despite the shortcomings of the present system, the PIC assessments of significance were thought to be a good model to develop and apply to all heritage.

- currently dominated by significance criteria for designation
- social value 'shoe-horned' in
- need a practical way / guidelines of evaluating social value
- significance should be a balance between the whole range of values

Summary of discussions

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- o a lot of relevant knowledge in communities of practise poorly captured in significance assessments
- o professional judgement important
- o PIC assessments of significance are a good model
- o proactively do assessment of significance - not only reactive for designation
- o designation shifts perception of responsibility and can be a barrier for action
- o there is a tension between maintaining a national perspective and overall parity and the integration of local values

**Q3. Prioritisation**

***Given the challenges and limited resources, how do we prioritise sites for action?***

All groups highlighted the need to reconcile a national scheme of prioritisation, (implicit in this, the necessary role of expert judgement and national parity), with local priorities (implicit in this, social value [and economic benefit]) along with site vulnerability.

This could be achieved with a staged approach that proposed priorities based upon a national overview followed by consultation to refine through local priorities. The challenge of capturing the diversity of views within communities in the setting of local priorities was acknowledged.

Most groups thought that site vulnerability and the potential of a site for public engagement and education should be weighted criteria in prioritisation. Two groups took this further suggesting an interesting approach of prioritising sites with the most potential to tell stories that would help address modern problems, such as climate change.

Once again, the reactive nature of resource allocation to well-informed, well-organised individuals or groups who submit applications – rather than being priority-led was highlighted as a concern.

- o value (social, intrinsic, economic) + vulnerability
- o give heavier weighting to threat and potential for engagement and education
- o national overview followed by consultation for local priorities
- o but difficult to capture diversity in local priorities – some groups under-represented
- o use separate prioritisation criteria for carved stone heritage and coastal heritage because they are not comparable
- o prioritise sites with potential to help solve modern problems, e.g. climate change
- o prioritise sites with most potential to tell stories
- o bang for buck/ best return on investment of resources

**Q4. Who should be involved in decision-making?**

All groups agreed that good decisions are founded upon a wide range of views, (which may be conflicting), that balance expertise and professional overview with local priorities and concerns. Those with a connection to a site, including landowners and local authorities should be involved. In

Summary of discussions

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many cases, it is desirable that someone takes the lead, and often this expectation falls upon HES. However, all heritage professionals have a responsibility for communicating the information that enables informed decisions to be made, and a continuous education and re-education cycle is necessary to achieve this. There may be benefit of having a process to guide the decision-making process, especially how to manage a range of views.

- o communities of interest
- o not going to get everybody so recognise that louder voices are not necessarily representative
- o views amongst and between experts and local interests may conflict
- o someone needs to take the lead
- o local authorities need to engage
- o a process to guide people through
- o informed decision making very important. National organisations, heritage professionals responsible for communicating the knowledge that enable a wider group to make informed decisions
- o those with a connection to sites should be involved