



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES HARDER TO SAVE THAN BUILDINGS IN TOUGH TIMES

**- English Heritage *Heritage at Risk* Register 2009 Reveals
Percentage of Scheduled Monuments at Risk
Almost Six Times that of Buildings -**

A full list of England's scheduled monuments most at risk from decay, neglect and pressure from farming and development has been published for the first time by English Heritage in its *Heritage at Risk* Register 2009, highlighting the challenges, particularly in the current economic climate, of saving archaeological sites that do not generate an income.

The annual *Heritage at Risk* Register, published today (23rd June 2009), contains details of the declining condition of 3,535 scheduled monuments from all over the country, from WW1 artillery buildings on the Northumberland coast and Bronze Age barrows in Dorset to the ruins of a Tudor water conduit in Greenwich. This represents 18% of all scheduled monuments and contrasts with only 3.1% Grade I and Grade II* buildings which are at risk.

Farming activities such as ploughing and drainage, tree and scrub growth, neglect and pressures from development are the main causes putting monuments at risk.

Dr Vince Holyoak, Senior Policy Adviser for English Heritage, said: "While the condition of the nation's listed historic buildings has improved, this year's register shows that proportionately, England's other nationally designated heritage assets such as scheduled monuments still face much greater levels of risk.

“Working with owners and local authorities, we aim to achieve similar success in reducing risk to these important signposts to our distant past, but it won’t be easy. Archaeological sites do not, even in more prosperous times, generate an income. Their importance as part of our heritage is nevertheless immeasurable, and their urgent needs must not be ignored.”

Regional Highlights

South East

270 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 10.3% of the region’s 2,627 scheduled monuments. The most common form (60%) of at risk scheduled monuments is an ancient earthwork.

South West

The region has 7,000, or one third, of England’s scheduled monuments. In 2006 some 1,800 were found to be at high risk, compared to 1,442 at present. This reduction is mainly a result of working closely with owners and managers of monuments and putting management agreements in place. Arable farming and erosion by livestock are the two most significant threats.

North East

205 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 14.8% of the region’s 1,384 scheduled monuments. Prevalent threats in the North East are vandalism, plant growth, arable ploughing and extensive natural erosion.

North West

198 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 15.1% of the region’s 1,311 scheduled monuments. Two of the main threats are from ploughing and from plants and scrub growth, especially bracken. The Cheshire Hillforts and Habitats Project is a good example where effective methods for control of bracken growth have been found.

West Midlands

286 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 20.1% of the region’s 1,422 scheduled monuments. This is a reduction from 29% in 2006,

highlighting the positive outcomes of management initiatives such as Natural England's Environmental Stewardship scheme and English Heritage Management Agreements.

Yorkshire and the Humber

744 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 28.4% of the region's 2,624 scheduled monuments. Direct work with the Forestry Commission, which owns over 230 of the region's scheduled monuments, has seen a dramatic reduction in the number of at risk sites in their care, down from 76 in 2006 to 44. The commonest and most damaging threat is from agricultural practices such as ploughing, stock erosion and drainage.

East of England

221 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 12.8% of the region's 1,725 scheduled monuments. More than 70% of the at-risk monuments in the region are vulnerable to agricultural damage and the recession might have an even worse impact on the ability of farmers to undertake control measures.

East Midlands

130 scheduled monuments are at risk in the region, representing 8.6% of the region's 1,509 scheduled monuments - the smallest proportion in the country. A variety of initiatives have yielded positive results: the Conservation of Scheduled Monuments in Cultivation project, undertaken by Defra and English Heritage, Natural England's Higher Level Stewardships for landowners, and local partnerships to address sites such as Lincolnshire Wolds, Limewoods and Marches.

BACKGROUND

Definition

Scheduled monuments represent our most valued archaeological sites and landscapes, designated because of their national importance. They span over six thousand years of human life, from prehistory to 20th century military and industrial remains. They provide the only record for the millennia before written history and the only testament to the existence of many amongst much later generations who do not appear in documentary records. The later 20th century saw unprecedented levels of landscape change with features that were once commonplace becoming rare. As a result, in many places monuments represent small islands of survival which remind

us what was locally or regionally distinctive in both our towns and our countryside. Although protected by law, scheduled monuments are still at risk from a wide range of processes. Vulnerable to development, they are also exposed to intense pressures beyond the reach of the planning system. These include cultivation, forestry and wholly natural processes, such as plant and scrub growth, animal burrowing and erosion. It is often these pressures which pose the greatest threat to the majority of scheduled monuments.

When damaged or destroyed, scheduled monuments and the information they contain cannot be replaced. For those at high risk, urgent action is required if we are to pass them on to future generations in good condition. Paradoxically though, the amount of effort needed to ensure their survival for the future is often minimal and inexpensive – removing brambles, re-routing a footpath or protecting against burrowing rabbits are often all that is required.

In most cases, the risks to scheduled monuments can be reduced simply by good land management, or by well-informed planning policies and decisions that take full account of the national importance of historic sites. However, some monuments do require significant resources in order to stabilise their condition, to carry out repairs, or to change the way in which the land on and around the monument is used. In all cases close co-operation with owners and land managers is essential if progress is to be made.

Criteria for inclusion

For the first time, following completion of the systematic national review of all 19,709 Scheduled Monuments in 2008, it has been possible to identify national and regional priorities for action. With large numbers of sites at risk, identifying clear targets for urgent management action, even within the 'high risk' category, is important for English Heritage, for other organisations and for owners and land managers.

All monuments included in the regional register have been identified as being at high risk. Put simply, this means that on the basis of their current condition and vulnerability, they are considered to be susceptible to significant loss to their fabric in the near future. These high risk monuments are then further sub-divided according to their overall current condition, ranging from 'optimal' (the best that can be achieved) to 'Extensive significant problems', which will plainly provide the greatest challenge.

Provision of this information is a crucial first stage in the process of beginning a dialogue with owners and managers. This includes simple information on the location and extent of sites, which may not be readily visible to land managers, and more detailed advice on the best approaches to improving the condition of sites. English Heritage also provides on-line management advice via the Historic Environment Local Management web site www.helm.org.uk; through its Historic Environment Field Advisers or through the network of local authority Historic Environment Countryside Advisers that we have co-sponsored with selected local authority partners.

Reducing the risks

Although a significant proportion of scheduled monuments remain at risk, in many cases the problems can be reduced by either small changes to land management or better informed decision-making. This is reinforced by the success in reducing the number of monuments at risk since the release of the interim figures in 2008, which shows how the simple act of disseminating information and advice can go a long way towards improving condition. English Heritage provides on-line advice to the owners and managers of sites via the Historic Environment Local Management web site www.helm.org.uk; through its Historic Environment Field Advisers and through the network of local authority Historic Environment Countryside Advisers that we have co-sponsored with local authority partners.

Whilst many owners and managers of scheduled monuments address their long-term care on a voluntary basis, some monuments do require significant resources in order to stabilise their condition, to carry out repairs, or to change the way in which the land on and around them is used. English Heritage therefore works closely with the Heritage Lottery Fund to identify important sites deserving grant-aid and in partnership with Natural England who delivers the Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme on behalf of Defra.

The English Heritage National Monuments Record and local authority Historic Environment Records have increased the information available to land managers and we are continuing to develop their services, most recently through the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE) project, through which owners will be able to view online information on scheduled monuments and other archaeological features on their holdings.

In all cases – whether for rural or urban monuments - close co-operation with owners and land managers is the key to making further progress.

- END -

Notes to Editors

1. The *Heritage at Risk* register 2009 gives details of 5,094 nationally designated sites that are at risk of neglect, decay or inappropriate change. For more information on the Grade I and II* buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wreck sites included, please visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk

2. English Heritage did the preparatory work identifying which monuments were at particular risk in the period leading up to the launch of Heritage at Risk in 2008. However, because we did not wish to produce a public list of individual monuments until we had first talked to the owners, in 2008 we only produced national and regional statistics, rather than identifying all of the sites affected. Work on checking the assessments, and in contacting owners has gone on through 2008-09. It showed not only that the original assessments were accurate, but this and the

dialogue generated by the release of the national statistics has already seen many monuments put into more favourable management.

3. For case studies and photographs of Scheduled Monuments at Risk all over England, please contact English Heritage Corporate Communications as below.

4. For information on Conservation Areas at Risk, the main theme for Heritage at Risk 2009, please visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/conservationareas

For further press information, please contact: Rhiannon Tracy or Ellie Hughes at English Heritage Corporate Communications 020 7973 3250
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Images are available on www.picselect.com in an English Heritage folder called Heritage at Risk 2009.

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact
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