

Statement of Co-operation between
the Royal Commission on the Ancient
and Historical Monuments of Scotland
and Scottish Sites and Monuments
Records

**Sites and Monuments Record
Forum**

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1. Introduction

The Baker Report (Baker 1999) was commissioned by RCAHMS in 1998 to assess Scotland's eighteen SMRs and to make recommendations for the future. The SMR Forum was established in 2000 with the remit of implementing the recommendations in the Report and the Working Group on the Co-operation between the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) and Sites and Monuments Records in Scotland was one of three formed to carry forward this work. The remit of the Working Group was to draft a Co-operation Statement and to produce a summary leaflet on the Baker Report. The leaflet, containing a summary and drawing attention to the Baker Report, was completed and distributed in 2000.

David Baker's concept of a Co-operation Statement was:

'to define the functional inter-relationships and patterns of service delivery for national and local record systems, embodying them in a general statement of principle about co-operation and practical working arrangements.

...The partners to a Co-operation Statement should consider adopting a publicly expressed user-driven goal for Scottish records systems, along the lines of: *to make information on the historic environment available to all who require it in the most appropriate forms and by the most effective means*'

(Baker 1999, 3).

The Working Group therefore discussed areas of co-operation, the exchange of information, and explored opportunities for joint initiatives. In order to define those areas, it was important to define current roles and purpose.

2. Definition of Purpose

The roles and purpose of the RCAHMS and the SMRs in Scotland are set out in more detail in a number of different documents, but can be summarised as follows:

SMRs (HERs)

In 1999, Baker defined an SMR as a

‘definitive permanent general record of the local historic environment in its national context, publicly and professionally maintained, whose data is accessible and retrievable for a wide range of purposes’
(Baker 1999, 3).

In the intervening period since the Baker Report was produced, there has been considerable development and re-thinking of the role and purpose of SMRs. In a report commissioned by an ALGAO/English Heritage working party and prepared by Gillian Chitty (Chitty 2002) a refined definition has been produced that reflects current best practice.

‘The historic environment includes all aspects of our surroundings that have been built, formed or influenced by human activities from earliest to most recent times.

An Historic Environment Record stores and provides access to systematically organised information about these surroundings in a given area. It is maintained and updated for public benefit in accordance with national and international standards and guidance.

An Historic Environment Record makes information accessible in order to:

- Advance knowledge and understanding of the historic environment
- Inform its care and conservation
- Inform public policies and decision-making on land-use planning and management
- Contribute to environmental improvement and economic regeneration
- Contribute to education and social inclusion
- Encourage participation in the exploration, appreciation and enjoyment of the historic environment’

(Chitty 2002, 4).

In Scotland current usage of the term SMR continues to be favoured for reasons of consistency and public recognition, but it is fair to say that the HER definition expresses the aspirations of most SMR Managers.

RCAHMS

RCAHMS holds the National Inventory and Archive of archaeology, buildings and maritime heritage of Scotland which is maintained through annual programmes of surveying and recording and through the deposit of primary archive – paper and digital – in the NMRS national collection.

RCAHMS policies are further described in a series of Policy documents, first published in 1998, currently under revision and due for re-publication with the RCAHMS Corporate Plan for 2004-5. The policies relate to: Collecting, Education, Public Services and Outreach, Publication, and Field Survey.

3. Definitions of the organisational roles

The SMRs and RCAHMS perform different and complementary roles, appropriate to their purpose, in the management, recording and explanation of the historic environment (*Summary report of the Working Group on the Operational Roles of SMRs*, 2003). The information required to support these activities is derived from records held both nationally and locally, and generally maintained in computerised inventories. The primary sources are the databases and related records of the NMRS and the SMRs together with an increasingly wide range of other records.

The current operational roles of local archaeology services are defined in the *Summary report of the Working Group on the Operational Roles of SMRs*, (2003) under the headings of: Development Planning, Development Control, Permitted Development, Agri-environment, Forestry, Promotion and Education, Research, and Stewardship of the Archaeological Resource. Currency of information is vital to support these roles to enable SMRs to give accurate and informed advice. Critical to this is access to a variety of sources of information together with confidence that those sources are up-to-date. Such sources include:

- aerial photographs, current and historic maps.
- 'Grey Literature' such as interim reports, Archaeological Evaluations, and records of 'Events'.
- original data, such as excavation records, Ordnance Survey cards, field survey reports.
- information held in a number of other locations (e.g. Archaeology Data Service, other Local Authority databases including those covering Historic Buildings and Development Control, National Map Library historic maps, *Statistical Accounts*, internet sources, etc).

The role of **RCAHMS** is defined in its Royal Warrant and its mission statement is set out annually in its Corporate Plan for agreement by Ministers:

- to survey and record the man-made environment of Scotland;
- to compile and maintain the National Monuments Record of Scotland as a public record of the archaeological and historical environment; and
- to promote an understanding of this information by all appropriate means.

The focus of all these activities is the creation, management and long-term curation of the national inventory and the national archive of the historic environment of Scotland in the National Monuments Record of Scotland - the publicly available archive and database of RCAHMS. The primary archive, which is held in both paper and, increasingly, in digital form, includes:

- RCAHMS field surveys, including aerial photography: i.e. original archive items such as survey drawings and photographs and primary research data, e.g. RCAHMS field survey reports, descriptions of aerial photographs and other images.
- Original Ordnance Survey Maps and Cards from the OS Archaeology division transferred to RCAHMS in 1983 (also available as text in the NMRS database).
- Deposited archive including historic collections, architectural papers, excavation archives and air photography collections.
- 'Grey literature' for long-term archiving.

Additional supporting information for the national inventory includes:

- Text from *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (in association with the Council for Scottish Archaeology).
- Summary text from the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (with agreement from the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland).
- Links to Historic Scotland datasets.
- SMR references.
- Bibliographical references.

4. Information Content of the *SMRs* and the *NMRS*

The information content held in the *NMRS* and the *SMRs* derives from long-standing data-collection methods and it is recognised that there are naturally areas of overlap, not least because records have been copied in the attempt to maintain the currency required by both local and national users. This overlap, however, is not significant and is diminishing. As on-line resources develop, the information required for the management of the historic environment can be drawn more easily from many sources, the location of which need not be adjacent or apparent to the user. The association between these resources and the primary sources of the *NMRS* and the *SMRs* does not have to be visible to the user (whether the user is a member of the public, or an institution such as those described above).

The partners to this Co-operation statement recognise the intention to maintain the integrity of the primary sources of the *NMRS* and the *SMRs* and will co-operate to ensure that there is mutual benefit to users from these and other relevant resources.

NOTE

In the context of Information Management, currency of information is also important to Historic Scotland (HS), one of whose distinctive roles is to manage the Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings of Scotland. These are protected by the Scottish Ministers under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997.

5. Members of the Working Group

John Dent

Diana Murray

Lorna Main

Rebecca Jones

Ian Shepherd (Convener)

6. Bibliography

Baker, D 1999 *An Assessment of Scotland's Sites and Monument Records*.
(Historic Environment Conservation Report 98/25.)

Chitty, G 2002 *Historic Environment Records: Benchmarks for Good Practice*.
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Fernie, K & Gilman, P.2000 *Informing the Future of the Past: Guidelines for SMRs*. English Heritage.

Murray, D 2002 'RCAHMS User Seminars', in *Monuments on Record: Annual Review 2001-2002*, RCAHMS, 54-6.

SMR Forum: Co-operation Statement between RCAHMS and Scottish SMRs

The RCAHMS and the Scottish SMRs agree:

- to co-operate to make information on the historic environment available to all who require it in the most appropriate forms and by the most effective means, and,
- to recognise each party's distinct roles, acknowledging that there are areas of 'overlap' or 'co-incidence' within our unique respective roles where we need to work together to deliver a common set of aims and standards, in particular regarding data.

It is proposed that the areas of co-operation outlined below should be considered and prioritised by the SMR Forum. They then should be used as primary agenda items for individual consideration from which substantive actions can be developed.

Liaison:

- to work together to develop areas of mutual interest, including field and aerial survey, Historic Landuse Assessment and archiving.

On-line resources:

- to work together to provide a strategic view of the development of on-line resources.
- to co-operate as more information becomes available on-line.
- to create links between records.
- to facilitate public access to information on the Historic Environment.
- to develop means of searching multiple resources.

User Feedback and Analysis:

- to work together to provide a strategic view of user requirements.
- to exchange information on user feedback and audience development initiatives.
- to explore potential joint initiatives for user feedback and audience development (e.g. the HEIRNET *User Survey*).

Workshops and training:

- to set up workshops or training sessions on areas of mutual interest such as introductions to relevant on-line resources, guides to archives, building recording, Historic Landuse Assessment etc.

Joint Services:

- to explore the potential of on-line information resources (e.g. dedicated websites etc).
- to maintain the ScotSMRForum discussion list.

Education and Tourism:

- to work together on educational initiatives, exchanging ideas and information.
- to work together with appropriate bodies to promote the cultural heritage for tourism and other economic and educational purposes.

Research:

- to jointly facilitate research.
- to support the development and application of research frameworks.

As an example of an attempt to cover several of the above points, the *Accessing Scotland's Past: Project 2000 (ASP) 'Proof of Concept'* project has explored both the public use of on-line resources and user feedback on resource discovery.