

HS Consultation Response ref: ORK/WHS/012
RESPONSE FORM:

HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13

Please complete your name and address below and add your comments on the consultation beneath each question. Please return it with your respondent information form.
Thank you for your help.

Name	Dr John Flett Brown
Postal Address	
HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13	
Question 1	
Do you have any comments on the current Buffer Zone?	
<p>The current outer buffer zones are already too restrictive with respect to all local development. No codification of the impact with respect to distance has been attempted. The inner buffer zone, being the major area around the monuments are rightly restrictive. Justification for utilising the ZVI for the outer buffer zone is going too far. My own observations of visitors, particularly at Brodgar, show that they rarely look outwards but their concentration is mainly aimed towards the stones. The winter sunset vista over the hills of Hoy should be protected. Preparation of the monuments for visitor access, paths fences etc should be resisted. Although in some ways necessary due to heavy traffic Scara Brae is much more sterile than the magic I remember as a child visiting it. It is arguable that the setting has been irrevocably changed, like Stonehenge, by preparing it for visitors. Brodgar Stennis and Maeshowe likewise are starting to accumulate the paraphernalia of a visitor attraction, all that's missing is the burger van. This preparation for visitors is much more destructive of the setting and "outstanding universal value" than any horizontal or vertical developments in the wider landscape.</p>	
Question 2	
Do you have any comments on the proposed Buffer Zones?	
<p>Given that I think the current buffer zones are themselves too Draconian the proposed buffer zones are even more so. The observed effects of any development on the inner edge of the buffer zones are manifestly not the same as the same development on the outer edge. In the absence of quantifiable gradational criteria the absolute prohibitional area for development should be much less and be justifiable. Vertical structures like grain silos and wind turbines are by their nature temporary (20 -- 25 years). If there are proven problems from such developments on the world heritage site then they can be removed. This can be covered by restrictions in the planning permission if required. Some of the justification for the outer buffer zones ZVI and extending it over the crest of the hills to prevent the upper extremities of tall structures crossing the ZVI relates to the unproven statements associated with a possible (not actually present) bank around the circular moat at each of the monuments. If this was actually the case that the bank was to mimic the ring of Hills the monument location would be in the centre of the ring and since they were conversant with geometry of the circle surely the bank would have reflected the fact that the surrounding Hills define an oval shaped periphery. Significant astro archaeology alignments have not been proven for Brodgar or Stennis. If the circles were of religious significance to the community 5000 years ago it is more likely that ceremonies took place in the centre of the circle with the population looking</p>	

RESPONSE FORM:
HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13

inwards rather than outwards. The containment of the circle is as important to the feeling of serenity one finds at Brodgar as any of the views which in a winter (or even a summer!) visit are rarely to be seen in any case. There is a proven alignment for Maeshowe over the Barnhouse stone at midwinter so a 10° protection zone from the Maeshowe entrance is justifiable. Also from Brodgar (and less at Stennis) midwinter sunsets, although of probably no ancient religious significance, are quite spectacular to the modern photographer and should also be protected. All other areas of the rim of Hills do not have significant alignments (although a case can be made for equinoctial sunrise over the Eastern hill). Burger Hill has always had several turbines which are easily visible, on clear days, from Brodgar and certainly did not worry the UNESCO inspectors at the time of designation as a world Heritage site. In private conversations these same inspectors saw the setting that was worthy of strong protection to be the immediate areas around the monuments on the peninsula. On a final note the management plan should not alienate the community, who have lived with and protected the monuments, over many years. Orcadians are proud of our heritage and jealously guard it and would not jeopardise its fabric and magic. The management plan is in danger of saying to the Orkney people "we at Historic Scotland know best" I would suggest that this perception is expunged from the plan.

Question 3

Do you have any comments on the Other Values of the World Heritage Site; is anything missing?

The principles of sustainability which involves -- community, economy and environment are supposed to be at the centre of the plan. My perception is that the plan does not address all the main issues from these three different points of view. Therefore a balanced position or recommendation can not be made or be seen to be made.

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the range of Stakeholders that have an interest in the World Heritage Site; are any missing?

While perhaps not specifically against wind turbines in the landscape one can read between the lines that this management plan is totally against any renewable energy wind development within sight of the World Heritage Site. I agree that developments need to be assessed on individual impact and as the perception of the aesthetic value of a turbine and tower is very much an individual value judgement then I would suggest that Historic Scotland, as implementers of this plan should hold meaningful discussions with "Orkney Renewable Energy Forum" as a stakeholder in the management plan. To be able to say that this plan had involved such discussions would give it greater validity. It should not be a "them and us" mentality -- much can be done to mitigate impacts. In a climate now where energy costs have doubled and undoubtedly will increase further pushing many more Orcadian families into "fuel poverty" such a dialogue is necessary. Community wind energy projects, where all the proceeds (over £200,000 per megawatt) flowed directly to the community and would mitigate this increase in energy costs should also be involved.

RESPONSE FORM:
HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13

Question 5

Do you have any comments on the Evaluation of the Aims and Actions of the 2001 Management Plan; is anything missing?

While I realise that it may be a bureaucratic necessity to have such a list in a management plan it does not read well. I would suggest reorganised and rewritten with higher-level aspirations first with the lower level actions grouped under each aspiration. "Aims" can be the aspiration and "actions" what you hope to do. I would again caution specifically against putting flagstone paths around Brodgar -- you do not want to destroy what you are hoping to protect. It would be costly but laying a turf path every spring would be preferable. By keeping everyone to a walkway increases the erosion. By removing the "keep to path" and allowing movement across the heather centre you may reduce the erosion. In all likelihood at the time of use heather would not have been underfoot.

Question 6

Do you have any comments on The Vision or Long-term Aims for the World Heritage Site?

Protecting and conserving The World Heritage Site I would suggest is at odds with increasing visitor access. Both are extremely important and I am not sure that you have recognized or stated the balance that is required to be made. To deliver both will undoubtedly require much greater resources and that should be recognized in this plan.

Question 7

Do you have any comments on the Issues identified for the World Heritage Site over the next five years; is anything missing?

My comments above are equally relevant to this section. I am disappointed to see negative value judgement appearing in this section. Unjustified threats of delisting have no place in the management plan. I know that there are many Orcadians who although proud of the World Heritage Site Designation may well ask "what does it do for me" and therefore equally "what disadvantage will I experience if it is delisted". It is still a moot point if there is additional "real" visitors arriving because of the World Heritage Status. Undoubtedly it is a valuable selling point for the cruise liner sector and they do add considerably to the visitor numbers at the World Heritage Sites but have only peripheral effects on the wider economy of Orkney.

Question 8

What in your opinion is/are the Issue(s) of the highest priority and why?

RESPONSE FORM:
HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13

As mentioned in my question three response sustainability with its three branches; community, economy and environment should be at the heart of this section -- whatever is done within the World Heritage Site should not ignore the balance between all three. Using the phrase "in a sustainable way" does not address sustainability.

Question 9

Do you think that there any issues in the Management Plan that may affect an equality group (age, disability, religion and belief, gender, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender), race); if so, how, and what can be done to mitigate them?

No

Question 10

Do you have any comments on any of the specific Objectives, how they relate to the Issues and how they have been prioritised?

Again cautioned against improving car park, creating paths etc to enable better visitor access and ending up destroying the atmospheric quality that has always epitomised these monuments. I sincerely believe that this is a real danger which has led to a sterility associated with a visit now to Scara Brae.

Question 11

Do you have any comments on how any of the specific Objectives will be monitored?

Question 12

Do you have any general comments about how the Management Plan will be implemented

RESPONSE FORM:
HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13

and progress reported?

Question 13

Do you have any other comments about the Management Plan that you have not covered in your responses to other questions?

Running out of time even although I have had a month to reply -- sorry.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Question 14

Do you have any comments on the baseline information, or the environmental problems/issues?

Question 15

Do you have any comments on the approach taken for the environmental assessment?

Question 16

Do you agree with the results of the environmental assessment? Have we identified the key

RESPONSE FORM:
HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008–13

issues?

Question 17

Do you have any comments on the environmental mitigation measures, including the schedule of commitments?

Question 18

Do you have any comments on the proposed additional environmental monitoring indicators?