

22 July 2008

SHEP on Historic Battlefields  
Historic Scotland  
Longmore House  
Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh  
EH9 1SH

*By Email to [gordon.barclay@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gordon.barclay@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)*

Dear Sirs

**Consultation on Scottish Historic Environment (SHEP) on Historic Battlefields**

I am pleased to be able to return our response on the above consultation. This is a joint response from Tim Neighbour (CFA Archaeology), Professor Richard Oram and Dr Alasdair Ross (both History Tomorrow).

I hope these comments are useful and please get in touch if you require any further clarification. I would be grateful if you could keep us informed of the outcome of this consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Melanie Johnson  
Project Manager

Enc: Respondent information form  
Responses to questions

## RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM: SCOTTISH HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT POLICY ON HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

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1. Are you responding: (**please delete the line that does not relate to your situation**)

(b) **on behalf of** a group/organisation go to Q3 and then Q4

### INDIVIDUALS

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government website)?  
(**please delete the line that does not relate to your situation**)

Yes (go to 2b below)

No, not at all                      We will treat your response as  
confidential

2b. **Where confidentiality is not requested**, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (**please delete the lines that do not relate to your situation**)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

### ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

3 The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available? (**please delete the line that does not relate to your situation**)

Yes

## **SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT**

4 We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

**(please delete the line that does not relate to your situation)**

Yes

## CFA Archaeology / History Tomorrow joint response to Consultation on Historic Battlefields

This response is made in the light of the experience of CFA Archaeology Ltd and History Tomorrow, University of Stirling, both in conducting the pilot battlefield register study and in undertaking a recent extensive and inter-disciplinary research into the Battle of Pinkie as part of the development control process.

### **Question 1**

A governmental policy for the promotion, protection, and sustainable development of battlefield sites in Scotland would be welcomed. Battlefield sites are able to both instantly connect people with the past and introduce the general public to the archaeological and historical context of a particular battle. Regardless of where they are currently located, they should be identified and protected.

### **Question 2**

We must be clear about what it is we are trying to promote, protect, and develop since very few battles were straightforward affairs and it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to delineate an area on a map and describe that area as the battle of 'X'. Instead, we may have to think about ranking particular areas of any given battle into zones of 'importance' or 'core' and 'periphery'.

Placing importance on the number of combatants in any given battle is mistaken. For many battles we have no idea of the numbers involved on each side and, more importantly, there are a large number of battles that involved far fewer combatants. For example, research by Professor A.A.M. Duncan has indicated that many of the battles fought by King Robert I between 1306 and 1309 only involved around 50-200 men. Does this mean that these battles, all of which were vital to securing the Bruce kingship of Scotland, would not feature on a Scottish battlefield register?

### **Question 3**

Other reasons for valuing battlefields could include the tourism and heritage market, for teaching purposes, and for broader community involvement.

### **Question 4**

Broadly speaking, we support the proposal to create a non-statutory inventory. However, there are problems with the current proposal. How, for example, do we define a 'nationally important battlefield'? Mons Graupius? Nechtanesmere? Bannockburn? Culblean? Inverlochy? Cromdale? Which 'nation' are we referring to: the Picts, the North Britons, the Gaels, or the Scots? While broadly agreeing with the definitions in Annex A 3(i), surely, all battlefields are significant and all are of national importance, depending on how the word 'national' is defined.

Second, it should be recognised that much of the Scottish countryside was often drastically and dramatically altered during the 'age of improvement' and that most battlefields have also been 'improved' as part of that process. This could involve anything from basic landscaping to the complete removal of all topsoil, both of which have important archaeological ramifications. Our ancestors certainly did not hold battlefields in the same high regard as we now do and we should be aware that what we are doing could be regarded by future generations as a passing fad.

Furthermore, if it is intended to exclude battlefields that have been ‘seriously compromised by subsequent land use’, how exactly do we define this? Improvement in general, planting for forestry, removal of topsoil and other material?

Surely it would be far easier for all concerned just to include all battlefields and note which of those have been seriously compromised by ‘improvement’?

### **Question 5**

Yes, but battlefields are not historic gardens and designed landscapes (HGDLS). As such, they are less easily defined than HGDLS, which are known in considerably more detail. Where do battlefields start and stop? The battle of Pinkie, for example, was fought between Musselburgh, Dalkeith, and Holyrood. Also, how certain are we that the battlefield is similar in terms of its topography and vegetation to the time that the battle was fought. Only interdisciplinary work by archaeologists, ecologists, palaeo-ecologists, soil scientists and historians can provide those answers.

### **Question 6**

The proposed designation of battlefields into those of ‘national’ and ‘local’ will only lead to trouble in the future, particularly with communities who feel that ‘their’ battlefields are worthy of higher status. Similarly, what about pressures from business interests to get a site downgraded from ‘national’ to ‘local’? Surely it would be better to list all battlefields and then rank them on a sliding scale according to a set of standard criteria like improved/semi-improved/not improved? This ranking could then determine in the first instance whether development could proceed or not.

### **Question 7**

We broadly agree with most of the points in Annex A but have grave reservations about some of the terminology employed (see above). Also, Annex A (ii) completely ignores the input that could be made by historians engaged in primary research with original documents and other family papers. Such research has a valuable contribution to make in defining a battlefield, both in terms of physical location and in assessing the extent to which a battlefield landscape may have been altered across time. Needless to say, such research would require a deep familiarity with the Scottish material, both in terms of context and in palaeographic skills.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that most battles will be capable of definition on a map unless clear instruction is provided to differentiate between the core battle area(s) and secondary skirmishes that could have occurred some miles away from the core and even on a different day.

### **Question 8**

We believe there is a clear difference between protection and sustainable management. We would argue that the latter is preferable to the former since it is difficult in the case of most battlefields to define what we are protecting. Most sites have changed since the battle was fought, sometimes in ways that would be hard to define.

Just because a battlefield core cannot be accurately located or the landscape has been destroyed (like Pinkie), should not negate either its importance to a local community or its wider cultural value to Scots. For example, what might the inhabitants of North-

East Scotland think if the slopes of Bennachie, which is one of the favoured sites of Mons Graupius, were scheduled for some kind of development on the grounds that the land had not been included in the inventory because the battlefield has never been accurately identified? We believe such problems could be circumvented by defining status, then area of interest, and then state the probability of a battle occurring in a particular vicinity and range (core and periphery).

### **Question 9**

As previously stated, we believe that all battlefields should be listed, regardless of current status or uncertainty over the precise location. If lists are to be compiled it makes sense to formulate policies in regard to those sites. We strongly advise that inter-disciplinary work and research should underpin those policies (archaeologists, ecologists, palaeo-ecologists, soil scientists and historians) so that the best possible advice from a wide range of disciplines can be obtained. Furthermore, creating an inventory of all battlefields could be used through local planning policy to drive research into Scotland's battlefields.

At first, we can protect and map a site on a 'best guess' basis and refine that model as new research and evidence becomes available. While we realise that this will never satisfy all parties, at the moment it is clearly impossible to accurately place boundaries on the vast majority of battlefield sites unless we define them as a 'core' with outer zones of differing importance.

### **Question 10**

A best practice guide should be essential and it should be put together by a board representative of inter-disciplinary interests including planning officers, curatorial and commercial archaeologists, historians, palaeo-ecologists, soil scientists, and heritage management professionals.

### **Question 11**

We agree with the roles identified in Section 6.

### **Way forward:**

We suggest the following as a way forward:

1. Decide on 'national' importance, broadly using the criteria defined in Annex 3 (i).
2. Locate the battlefield as accurately as is possible, but recognise that some battlefields of national importance will not be able to be defined with any precision.
3. Assess the landscape in terms of its similarity to the landscape at the time of the battle.
4. Define an area of archaeological potential.
5. Assess the surviving primary historical material relating to the battle.
6. Make statements about research potential and goals.

The Inventory should be as follows:

1. Importance of battle (national, regional, local), based on Annex A (i)
2. Historical context of battle.

3. Is it on the map or mapable (Y/N). Can it be divided into different zones?
4. Research foci:
  - (a) Historical
  - (b) Archaeological
  - (c) Soil and/or palaeo-environmental
5. Core research identified.

Essentially, we believe that the main focus of policy in this area should be on enhancing our knowledge of Scotland's battles, rather than preserving areas in situ that are likely in most cases to bear little resemblance to the battlefield at the time the battle was fought. Thus, the aim of local policy should be in defining areas for archaeological and historical research, rather than in defining areas to be preserved in situ.

Appropriate commemoration of battles would be worth exploring, but, at present, it is unclear what form such commemoration should take, but it would be better for historically valid information to be displayed and made available at a suitable public place (library, tourist information, local museum) than for unrepresentative landscapes to be preserved and uncritically presented as battlefields.

Essentially, the Inventory and the proposed local plan policies represent an ideal opportunity for research into many of Scotland's battlefields to be funded commercially as part of the development programme.

Finally, it is important to stress that it is difficult to define what we mean by battlefield: is it the place where the main clash happened? Is this the most interesting thing about a battle? Is it the area where the manoeuvring before the main clash took place? How do we define the army camps and the land that the armies moved through in the days immediately preceding the battle? How do we (or do we) schedule the locations of preliminary skirmishes?