
SCOTTISH HISTORY SOCIETY

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SHEP on Battlefields
Historic Scotland
Room 2.9
Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
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Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Consultation on SHEP for Historic Battlefields

Please find below the response of the Scottish History Society to the above consultation. We have endeavoured to address the specific points raised in the consultation document. Please also find attached a completed respondent information form.

Scottish History Society Response to the Consultation on Historic Battlefields

A Central Contradiction?

A policy for the protection, sustainable development and promotion of battlefield sites is very welcome. A battlefield has the power to connect people with the past and introduce them to the historical context of the battle. There is an inescapable tension, however, between protection and sustainable development on the one hand, and promotion on the other hand.

It is recognised that any policy for protection and sustainable development must be sufficiently robust to be credible and practical in the context of planning. This is unlikely to be achieved without being able to draw lines on a map to define the area

that needs to be protected and managed. 'Fuzzy lines' or lines which will not stand up to scrutiny are unlikely to offer any meaningful protection.

The problem is: how many historic battle sites can be delimited with sufficient confidence and precision? There are bound to be many battles of unquestionable significance which will fail this test.

If battles of unquestionable significance are excluded, how can this be reconciled with the policy's commitment to promote battlefield sites by raising awareness? How will the Inventory 'act as a resource for interpretation, education and research' as well as providing a basis for the protection and sustainable development of battlefields (5.1)?

The importance of promoting battlefields

In an ideal world the inventory could provide formal recognition of battlefields which could have a claim to be nationally important. This would be an invaluable resource for local communities and schools, as well as offering a potential springboard for tourist and heritage development.

A possible solution

Instead of ending up with a minimal list consisting only of those battlefields that can confidently be drawn on a map, a solution would be

- (i) to create a maximal 'basic' list of all those places which can claim to be the site of a battle of national significance, but
- (ii) within this list identify clearly (for example, with an asterisk) those few instances where a battlefield can be identified clearly on a map with sufficient rigour to be useful for planners.

For example, if a brief alphabetical section is taken, the list *might* run something like this (the details and fields are purely indicative):

Corrichie (October 28 1562)

James earl of Moray v. George Gordon earl of Huntly

Historical importance: arguably a turning point in reign of Mary Queen of Scots where she decisively backed her Protestant half-brother James earl of Moray against her co-religionist the Catholic George Gordon earl of Huntly.

Cultural significance: commemorated in ballad 'The Battle of Corrichie'

Location: [a general description]

Cromdale (30 April/1 May 1690)

Hanoverians v. Jacobites

Historical importance: final engagement in first Jacobite rising

Cultural significance: commemorated in song 'The Haughs of Cromdale'

Location: [a general description]

Culblean (30 November 1335)

Andrew Moray (for King David Bruce) v. David Strathbogie (for King Edward Balliol)

Historical importance: the defeat and death of David Strathbogie, a leading supporter of King Edward Balliol, by Andrew Moray, leader of the party supporting King David Bruce, was arguably a turning point in the second war of independence.

Location: [a general description]

***Culloden (16 April 1746)**

Hanoverians (Duke of Cumberland) v. Jacobites (Prince Charles Edward Stuart; Lord George Murray)

Historical importance: final defeat of Jacobites as military force.

Cultural significance: popularly regarded as beginning of end of clan society

Location: [a general description]

Map of area subject to protection and sustainable management

In theory all these battlefields would have the potential, however exceedingly remote, to be defined in the strict and robust sense that would be required for planning purposes. *In practice* a small (maybe very small) number could be defined by drawing a credible line on a map.

Advantages of this approach

- Clear identification of battlefields that would unambiguously fit the rigorous definition 'on the ground' that would be needed if the relevant General Development Procedure Order were to be amended to include a workable provision for battlefields.
- Makes it clear that any battlefield that *cannot* fit the strict criteria required in a planning context is still recognised formally as a site of special significance which could be developed as a resource for enhancing education, community and heritage.
- Risk of exclusion of sensitive sites minimised; no difficulty in updating basic list.
- No need for unnecessarily contentious or detailed definition of what is meant by national significance for inclusion on basic list: difficult cases (such as battles with more than one possible site) or dubious cases (e.g. low number of combatants) could be included without compromising the necessity for strict definitions for planning purposes where this is possible for a few sites.
- A broadly defined basic list allows the inventory to fulfill other functions apart from meeting the needs of planners (e.g. heritage lottery funding, schools)

Other comments on the Consultation Document

Criteria

Responses were largely focused on question 2 in the consultation document, regarding the vexed issues of scope and definition.

Members of the Scottish History Society raised concern about the lack of express criteria for distinguishing between battles and sites of 'national' and 'local' significance. These are, of course, far from neutral terms and might be more clearly defined. For example, one possible impact of a process of identification by a

government agency is to transform a site of 'local' significance into one of 'national' significance.

There was also some concern about the relatively narrow scope adopted in defining a battle (tempered by an understanding that the lines had to be drawn somewhere). Point 4.4 makes it clear what is regarded as beyond the scope of this policy, but it does so on the basis that these events and sites present greater challenges of 'definition, location and evaluation'. The Scottish History Society queries why, in particular, sieges and massacres of 'national' significance would lie outside the scope of this policy, when, in fact, the challenges of location and evaluation certainly seem no more acute than for battlefields.

Many such events would additionally, of course, fall foul of the numerical criterion used in the document. There was concern about what was seen as an unduly arbitrary threshold of 500 combatants. Such a definition would, for example, risk omitting battles fought by Robert Bruce in his campaign of 1307-8 – and thus of undoubted 'national' significance – which Professor A.A.M. Duncan has suggested may have involved only fifty to two-hundred men on Bruce's side.

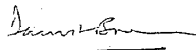
An additional criterion for the more rigorous definition for planning purposes could be a 'character assessment of the site' to determine whether, for example, there is a section of the site that could enable visitors to experience the battlefield more directly as an historical event as a whole. (The field on the site of Bothwell Brig is a possible example: even though the site is in a built-up area, the field enhances appreciation of the battlefield.)

Stakeholders

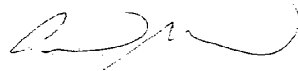
Schools and colleges are important potential users of battlefields as a way of connecting with Scotland's past. The History component in the Curriculum for Excellence will encourage schools to make use of sites of national significance in their locality. Battlefields have clear potential to play an important part in this.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require further information or clarification on particular points.

Yours faithfully



Dr Dauvit Broun (SHS Convener)



Dr Gordon Pentland (SHS Consultations Co-Ordinator)