



ENGLISH HERITAGE

MONUMENTS AT RISK

WEST MIDLANDS

MONUMENTS AT RISK

Scheduled monuments are our most cherished nationally important sites and landscapes. In the West Midlands they range from the more familiar stone circles, burial mounds, and hillforts of the prehistoric period to 20th-century remains of the coal industry, Second World War or Cold War.

The historic environment is a fundamental part of the cultural heritage of the West Midlands. Scheduled monuments form a major part of that heritage and are restricted carefully to the nationally important sites and monuments of each type for which scheduling provides the most appropriate protection.

Scheduling is the only legal protection available specifically for archaeological sites; scheduled monuments can be vulnerable to accidental or deliberate damage or even destruction, as well as to the effects of natural processes such as erosion. Survey in the West Midlands has shown that 29% of the region's scheduled monuments are at high risk from one or more of these agencies.

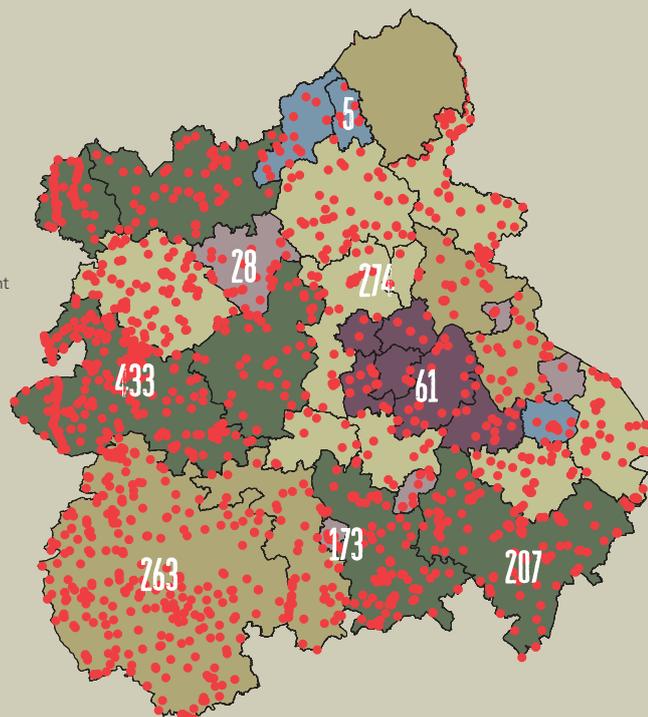
Scheduled monuments help to shape the character of the region's landscape; they can teach us about our past and provide an important educational and recreational resource. This resource is irreplaceable. If it is to be passed on to future generations, it needs careful management in partnership with owners of scheduled monuments and all other organisations involved with heritage management.

NUMBER OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS BY ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

Herefordshire	263
Shropshire	433
Staffordshire	274
Stoke on Trent	5
Telford & Wrekin	28
Warwickshire	207
West Midlands	61
Worcestershire	173

Urban and rural land classifications

- Major Urban
- Large Urban
- Other Urban
- Significant Rural
- Rural 50
- Rural 80
- Scheduled Monument



Front cover Meon Hill multivallate fort, Warwickshire, July 1995. Ploughing continues to damage the monument and management is complicated, due to multiple ownership.

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS AT RISK: WEST MIDLANDS

In 1998 English Heritage published a national Monuments at Risk Survey (MARS). This showed that since 1945, an average of one archaeological site had been destroyed every day. These losses include scheduled monuments – historic sites designated as being nationally important. English Heritage has now undertaken a more detailed assessment of the risks currently facing scheduled monuments in the West Midlands region.

Before the survey began, we already knew that many of the region's scheduled monuments were at risk from different threats – ploughing, development, natural agencies, neglect. But in order to mitigate these risks and prioritise improved management, detailed baseline data were needed for each scheduled monument.

The survey had two main objectives:

- to evaluate the condition, amenity value and setting of scheduled monuments in the region and the extent to which they are at risk
- to establish priorities for action and monument management.

The survey assessed all 1444 (7% of the national total) of the region's scheduled monuments against a set of defined criteria. 594 monuments (41% of the regional total) were visited to assess their condition and vulnerability. The remainder were assessed on the basis of existing field records.

FACTS & FIGURES

The West Midlands region covers an area of over 13,000km² and has a population of more than 5 million of which c.20% live in rural areas. The region is topographically diverse, with a mixture of urban and rural landscapes. There is one scheduled monument for every 9km² of land.

OWNERSHIP

78% (1124) of the region's scheduled monuments are in private ownership, 14% (204) are in local authority ownership and 3% (45) are owned by government and/or agencies. The remaining sites belong to utilities or groups such as charitable trusts.

LAND-USE

36% of the region's scheduled monuments are under grassland, 39% are on developed and urban land, 9% are under cultivation, 11% are in woodland and 4% are on semi-natural land.

11%
OF MONUMENTS ARE
IN WOODLAND

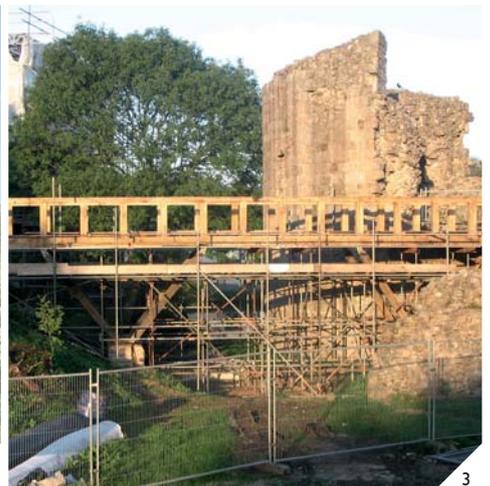
MONUMENT CLASSES

The majority (59%) of scheduled monuments in the region are earthwork sites such as burial mounds, hillforts, moated sites and motte castles, dating mainly from the prehistoric and medieval periods. A further 29% are standing structures such as churchyard crosses, bridges and town walls. The remaining 12% include buried sites that have no visible remains above the ground, such as Roman towns and villas or the overbuilt cores of medieval towns. The form and layout of many of these buried sites are sometimes visible from the air as crop marks and soil marks. Though now buried, they are of equal importance to those that survive above ground and are often rare survivals of particular types of sites such as prehistoric ritual structures or Anglo-Saxon houses.

1 Old Oswestry fort, Shropshire – a major scrub control programme is now underway and new visitor information panels have been installed © CPAT.

2 Snodhill Castle, Herefordshire – the site is deteriorating from total neglect.

3 Whittington Castle, Shropshire. The castle has recently undergone a major repair and conservation programme, largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage.



MEASURING THE RISKS

To understand all the possible threats to scheduled monuments we needed to quantify the damaging processes either already at work or likely to occur on them. This was done under the headings of: agriculture, natural processes (eg animal burrowing, stock erosion, stone decay), development and urbanisation, forestry, mineral extraction, other causes of damage such as vandalism and vehicle and visitor erosion. Monuments considered not to be under any of these threats were recorded as having 'no known threat'.

The setting and amenity value of each monument were also assessed. The setting of a monument is closely linked to how well it can be understood by visitors. If the setting has been compromised and the monument no longer looks like it did when first constructed – for example a moated site hemmed in by modern housing – its appreciation is likely to be diminished. Impacts from inappropriate development such as mineral extraction and road construction will also affect a site's integrity and amenity value. For sites that can be visited, inadequate access and interpretation can also impair amenity value.



KEY FINDINGS

CONDITION

On a scale ranging from optimal (the best we can hope to achieve) to extremely bad, 21% of monuments have general management problems while 12% are in a wholly unsatisfactory condition. Evaluation of their condition over time showed that 26% are in declining condition and only 9% are improving.

RISK

29% of the region's scheduled monuments are at high risk from imminent collapse or further deterioration and 34% are at medium risk. More than one-third require action to prevent further loss, deterioration or damage. The remaining 37% of monuments at low risk will stay that way only if their present circumstances continue; if they change then some of them may move into higher risk bands.

RISK AND LAND USE

28% of high-risk monuments are in cultivated land, 22% are in grassland, 37% are in developed and urban land and 10% are in woodland. Warwickshire has the highest number (34) of monuments at high risk under arable cultivation but the figures for Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire are also relatively high. Shropshire has the highest number (13) at high risk from stock erosion.

VULNERABILITY

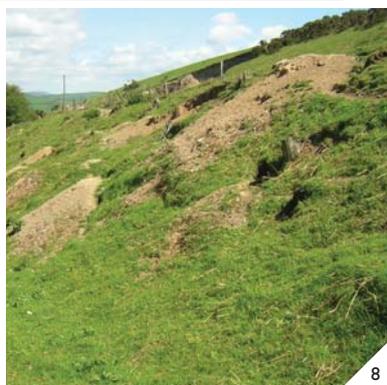
25% of scheduled monuments are at risk from agriculture (mainly cultivation and stock erosion); and more than one-third of these are at high risk. 14% are at risk from unmanaged scrub and tree growth (half of these are at high risk). 8% of monuments are at risk from deterioration as a result of neglect. 11% of monuments are at risk from natural erosion such as stone decay.



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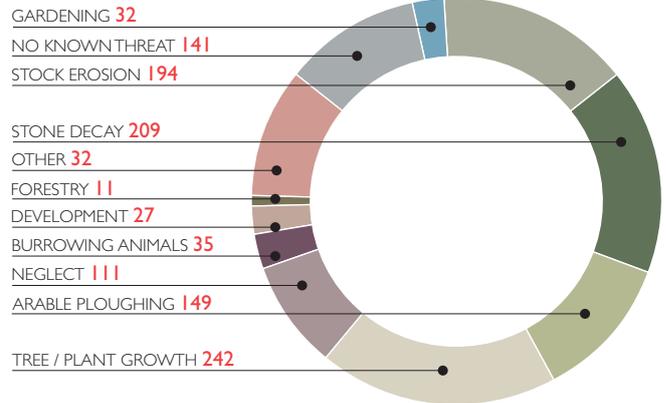
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RISK BY TYPE OF DESIGNATION	HIGH RISK	MEDIUM RISK	LOW RISK
	SCHEDULED MONUMENTS		
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY	1	13	26
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST	6	8	16
NATIONAL PARK	1	5	8
SITES IN MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS	3	35	76

SOURCE OF RISK



- 4 Guesten Hall, Worcestershire – this unsupported wall will collapse eventually. The monument is on English Heritage’s Buildings at Risk Register.
- 5 Sinai Park moated site, Staffordshire – a monument on English Heritage’s Buildings at Risk Register: Deterioration continues to be a problem.
- 6 Kynaston’s Cave, Nescliffe, Shropshire – hewn from solid sandstone, the monument, formerly open to the public, is now inaccessible due to the unsafe, eroded steps. Restoring public access will present a challenge to preserve the monument’s appearance and make it safe for visitors.
- 7 Alberbury Castle, Shropshire – masonry here is in danger of collapse. The monument is on English Heritage’s Buildings at Risk Register.
- 8 Offa’s Dyke, Shropshire – badger damage, as shown here, is a serious threat to the dyke.

LEGISLATION

Current ancient monuments legislation allows potentially damaging activities (ploughing, horticulture, forestry and gardening) on all or parts of 13% of the region’s scheduled monuments.

41%
OF MONUMENTS ARE
HIGHLY VISIBLE

AMENITY VALUE

41% of monuments are highly visible (ie they have substantial above-ground masonry and/or earthwork remains). 48% of monuments have limited visibility (ie they are understandable only with further information). 12% of monuments survive only as buried remains. Some 32% are fully accessible to the public while 42% are only partly accessible (ie not always open or only partly visible from a public footpath). On only 4% of monuments is there

detailed interpretation to enable visitors to fully understand the site. 15% have more limited interpretation and 79% have none.

SETTING

At 18% of the region’s scheduled monuments, setting has been entirely compromised by recent intrusions, on a further 58% there have been some intrusions and on 24% there have been few recent intrusions. On 75% of monuments setting has been

substantially altered since the monument was first constructed. A further 20% have been partially changed in this respect. Only 5% remain unchanged since their major period of use.

75% OF
MONUMENTS’
SETTINGS HAVE
CHANGED
SUBSTANTIALLY

OTHER DESIGNATIONS AND INITIATIVES

Some scheduled monuments in areas such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or regeneration areas may be eligible for grants that can help to reduce risk levels. The historic environment's contribution to economic regeneration and in building sustainable communities is often recognised by the award of grants from regeneration bodies and others, including the Heritage Lottery Fund.

9 Cobb's Engine House, Warley, West. Midlands – a significant early survival with free public access
© Graham Eyre-Morgan.



The values of the historic environment are reflected in the protection that is afforded by national and local policies. Keeping a scheduled monument in good condition often requires nothing more than good land management – for example control of vegetation growth or erosion. Other monuments, such as those including buildings, require more complex management.

Some of the various approaches used for alleviating risks are:

Small grants in the form of Management Agreements: under Section 17 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979, English Heritage is empowered to enter short-term agreements with landowners and tenants to promote the preservation and good management of scheduled monuments.

There are currently c. 100 of these Section 17 Management Agreements in the West Midlands, established for example, for scrub and weed clearance, and erosion repairs.

Condition Surveys and Conservation Management Plans: these enable maintenance work to be prioritised and sustained and have been particularly effective in addressing some of the management issues on Offa's Dyke and a number of the region's Iron Age hillforts, medieval castles and churchyard crosses.

For the first time, factors causing a deterioration in the condition of scheduled sites have been assessed and documented. The suggested management actions within the study will enable a strategy to target monuments in need across the region.

Practical advice on the management of scheduled monuments is available from the Historic Environment Local Management website at www.helm.org.uk

10 Market cross, Leek, Staffordshire – monuments in town centres are often vulnerable to traffic pollution and development.



11 Handsacre Hall moated site, Staffordshire – the site suffers from vandalism and fly-tipping.



12 Limebrook Priory, Herefordshire – masonry remains are in danger of collapse. The monument is on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register.



THE RISKS TO SCHEDULED MONUMENTS CAN BE REDUCED BY GOOD LAND MANAGEMENT

THE WAY FORWARD

English Heritage exists to make the past part of our future. Our strategy is to enable a cycle of understanding, valuing, caring and enjoyment of the historic environment. Reducing risk and putting in place measures to ensure the survival of scheduled monuments for future generations is a part of that process. More than a third of the region's scheduled monuments are in need of improved management to prevent further damage, deterioration or loss altogether and English Heritage is committed to reducing the 29% of monuments currently at high risk.

At the very least, the challenge is to ensure that scheduled monuments remain in stable condition; ideally, we would like to see them all in optimal condition. English Heritage recognises that much more can be achieved by working in partnership with owners and other organisations such as Natural England.

A holistic approach is increasingly being taken towards management options. For instance, the Defra Entry and Higher Level Stewardship schemes provide increasing opportunities for improving the management and amenity value of scheduled monuments.

One of the impediments to efficient and effective management of scheduled monuments has until now been England's overly complicated system of heritage legislation. We therefore welcome government's commitment to reform the current arrangements for the protection of the historic environment in the context of the draft Heritage Protection Bill presented to Parliament in April 2008.

English Heritage is committed to measuring its success as an organisation by securing a year-on-year reduction in the number of monuments, buildings and designed landscapes at risk. As part of our Heritage at Risk strategy we will set targets for reducing the types and degree of threats to scheduled monuments in the West Midlands.

Wilton Castle, Herefordshire – repairs in progress to the curtain wall. The monument was removed from the Buildings at Risk Register in 2007, following a repair programme funded by the owner and English Heritage.



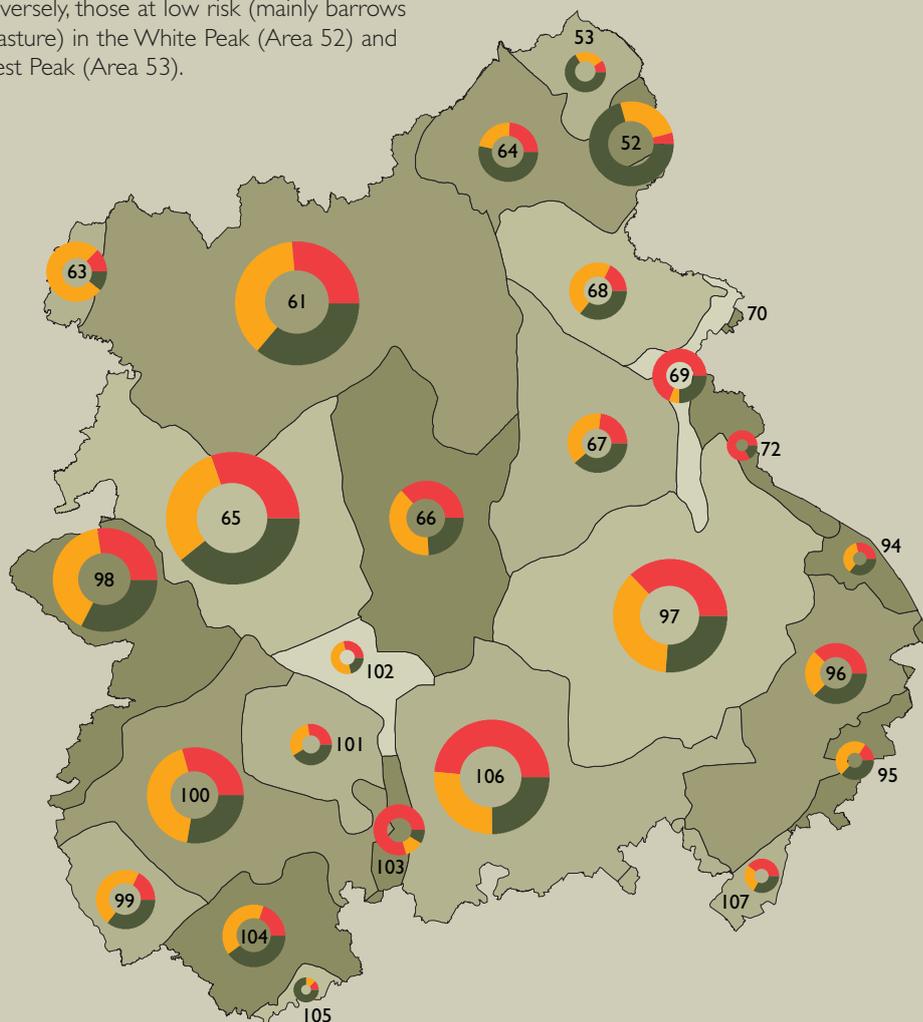
The distribution of scheduled monuments at risk in the West Midlands analysed using Countryside Character Areas. The Joint Character Areas, defined jointly by the statutory conservation agencies are used alongside other datasets in the targeting of environmental farming schemes. Note the number of scheduled monuments at high risk from arable ploughing in the Severn and Avon Vales (Area 106) and, conversely, those at low risk (mainly barrows under pasture) in the White Peak (Area 52) and Southwest Peak (Area 53).

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS RISK CATEGORY

- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk

COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREAS
Number refers to CCA reference code

52	White Peak
53	South West Peak
61	Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain
63	Oswestry Uplands
64	Potteries and Churnet Valley
65	Shropshire Hills
66	Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau
67	Cannock Chase And Cank Wood
68	Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands
69	Trent Valley Washlands
70	Melbourne Parklands
72	Mease/sence Lowlands
94	Leicestershire Vales
95	Northamptonshire Uplands
96	Dunsmore and Feldon
97	Arden
98	Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills
99	Black Mountains and Golden Valley
100	Herefordshire Lowlands
101	Herefordshire Plateau
102	Teme Valley
103	Malvern Hills
104	South Herefordshire and Over Severn
105	Forest Of Dean and Lower Wye
106	Severn and Avon Vales
107	Cotswolds



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This document is one of a series of publications produced as part of English Heritage's new national Heritage at Risk campaign. More information about Heritage at Risk and other titles in the series can be found at www.english-heritage.org.uk/risk

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