A.1 What are SMRs and HERs?

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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.

[HERs (Historic Environment Records)](#) developed out of [SMRs (Sites and Monuments Records)](#). SMRs were established from the 1960s onwards in response to the loss of the archaeological resource through development. SMRs were developed in a fairly ad hoc manner. They were formed according to local circumstances, and as a result were created in different organisations - some in planning departments, some in Universities, and some in Museums. From their original remit of recording archaeological sites, they have been developed to encompass a wide range of information about the historic environment - including more about historic buildings and landscapes for example - and this has been reflected in the change of name from SMR to HER.

An Historic Environment Record stores and provides access to systematically organised information about a given area. The HER consists of three main elements: a databases or indexing system, a mapping system and a reference collection of more detailed information. In the early days, the database or index was often a card index, but nowadays digital databases are used. Similarly, the mapping used to be paper based, but is increasingly a [GIS](#). The reference collections may contain both digital and hard copy information.

An HER is maintained and updated for public benefit in accordance with national and international standards and guidance. An HER makes information accessible to all 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.

The information held in the HER provides a starting point for management processes, conservation, fieldwork, and research into the historic environment. It also informs local communities about their

area. In turn, many of these activities generate new information which feeds back to HER managers in the form of reports and archives that are used to enhance the HER (Figure. 1).

Figure 1: The HER 'wheel' drives and is powered by an integrated approach to conservation and understanding of the historic environment.

A.1.1 The information resource[#]

HERs cover archaeological and historical features and finds, the activities of people involved in investigating the historic environment, sources of information about their areas and the conservation management process. However, the information contained in individual HERs varies. This is partly a reflection of variations in past human activity, and partly due to differences in the way in which individual HERs have developed, which is expanded on later in this section.

The historic landscape[#]

In general, HERs contain information about all of the ancient and historic features and sites in both countryside and town that make up the historic landscape. They range in date from the earliest evidence for human activity to remains from modern times. Many monuments and features survive in visible form, and both enrich the public's appreciation of the contemporary landscape and contribute to tourism. Other remains lie buried but can provide valuable information for this and future generations. Some sites are interpreted from place name or other evidence, such as from historic maps and documents, and their physical survival may be less certain. In addition to this, coastal HERs include a wide range of sites and features reflecting the complex interaction between man and the sea, from remains of vessels to quays and harbours, inshore fisheries and shellfish cultivation as well as submerged landscapes. Individual HERs vary in the extent to which historic buildings, 20th-century structures, parks, gardens, landscapes and finds are represented in their records, but the scope of each should be clearly set out in a recording policy.

Fieldwork and Research[#]

HERs contain information about fieldwork and research carried out in their area, from the earliest antiquarian investigations through to the present-day activities of archaeologists, architectural recorders, surveyors, photographers and others. This fieldwork and research is the basis of what we know about individual heritage assets, and can lead to changing interpretations as more work is done on a particular site. This information is also used to set the known sites and monuments in the area in the context of the pattern of investigation and discovery. It can be used to identify areas for new fieldwork - to fill in apparent 'blanks' in the distribution of monuments - and to inform new understanding or to suggest investigative techniques that may yield good results. On completion of field projects, contractors supply a summary for inclusion in the HER followed by a report on the work. In Scotland, in addition to submission of fieldwork reports to the HER, summaries are provided to Archaeology Scotland for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland, an annual publication. Project archives should be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland. Similarly in Wales, in addition to their submission to the HER, it is usual for recent fieldwork results to be summarised in the Council for British Archaeology, Wales annual publication Archaeology in Wales. Since it is usually some time before the results are published, HERs are an increasingly important source of information about these projects. The development of the [Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS)](#) project (See sections [B.5.4](#), [C.7.3](#)) is enabling contractors and curators to complete online recording forms, and upload copies of reports, and aims to facilitate the supply of information from field projects to HERs. OASIS has been introduced for use in England and Scotland, and many HERs and contracting units are registered to use the system. A version of OASIS that collects data and grey literature directly from the HER will be implemented in Wales during 2017.

Casework[#]

A growing number of archaeological curators are maintaining databases of their recommendations, the decisions made by the relevant organisations who they advised, and grant applications. This information can relate to casework around Planning applications, land management such as forestry or farming, work by utilities companies, or other infrastructure such as highways. In some cases, these databases are being linked to the main HER database itself. This information is used by the wider advice service to track the progress of planning and other consultations. Some HERs are beginning to record the processes involved in managing field monuments in their casework databases, in order to plan and monitor the impact of changes in management regimes and repair work.

A.1.2 HER collections[#]

The information compiled in HER databases has been gathered from the wide range of sources that is summarised below. HER databases can provide catalogues of sources of information on the historic environment in their areas and refer enquirers to both their own reference collections and to material held in local museums, record offices and other repositories. Individual HERs will record the collections used to compile their records in a recording policy and create source/archive records to catalogue these collections within their database.

Maps[#]

Paper, film and digital copies of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, supplied under licence, are kept in conjunction with the HER database. They are used to record the locations of monuments and finds, or to show archaeological constraint areas to highlight the potential implications of proposed development. Where paper maps are used, the map scales are normally 1:10,000 for rural areas and 1:2,500 or 1:1,250 for urban areas. Associated material includes map overlays, for example cropmark plots, and copies of historic maps, such as early editions of the OS or tithe maps. These may be held either as paper copy or digital mapping. The use of digital mapping and recording through GIS is increasing, and GIS standards are one aspect which is addressed more fully elsewhere (See Section E).

Published materials[#]

This is a library collection, based on local and national series of archaeological and historical society journals; specialist publications such as site monographs; gazetteers, catalogues and other reference works, copies of which will often be held within the HER office, though not always.

Unpublished materials[#]

These include fieldwork and other reports, dissertations, statutory protection documentation (for example scheduling notifications), notes and sometimes correspondence which have not been formally published. These are often called "Grey Literature". Reports can arise from archaeological work undertaken as part of development control, or from planned research objectives, such as field survey or excavation of a particular class of monument. These reports may be held either as paper copy or digitally (or both).

Photographic materials[#]

Colour or black and white photographs and slides, digital photographs and videos may be kept by the HER. These derive from fieldwork, or from the recording of finds in archaeological units, museums or specialist laboratories. This material will originate from both the host organisation and also from other organisations and private individuals who will retain title to its copyright. HERs are

also recommended to maintain a collection of colour slides of illustrative materials for lecture and presentation purposes.

Aerial photography and air-photographic transcriptions#

Colour or black and white, vertical and oblique aerial-photographic prints, negatives and slides are all kept by HERs. Sources of photography include the National Monuments Records for Scotland (NMRS), and Wales (NMRW) and The Historic England Archive, as well as the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (CUCAP), the Ordnance Survey (OS), the Royal Air Force (RAF) and regionally based individuals, including some HERs, taking aerial photographs of archaeological sites. Associated materials include flight traces, showing the route taken by the aircraft, and indexes. Air-photographic transcriptions may also be held on film, paper and digital map form. HERs hold copies of prints whose copyright (and often the original negative or slide) is retained by the photographer or commissioning organisation.

Digital media#

These include old floppy disks, CDs and DVDs, and other media holding digital data in formats which may include: databases, text files, image files, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Computer Aided Design (CAD) files, geophysical survey files. HERs may acquire this material from contractors following fieldwork and also create digital archive, through programmes of database and GIS compilation, data capture and scanning of slides, photographs or paper documents.

A.1.3 Informing services#

Strategic and local plans#

HERs are used to help in the framing of strategic and local policies for conserving the historic environment. They are consulted to help determine the allocation of areas for development, although it is important to recognise that an apparent lack of archaeological features on an HER might reflect lack of fieldwork rather than absence of sites.

Planning and development control#

HERs play a key role in providing the information base for recommendations made by archaeological 'curators' in response to planning applications and other proposals. The scale of HER input will vary with the size of particular schemes: major infrastructure projects such as road and rail schemes require considerable numbers of records to be trawled and analysed. HERs are key sources of information for desktop assessments and provide background information used by archaeological contractors in the design of field projects. The results from developer-instigated fieldwork projects are then fed back into the HER.

Managing monuments in the landscape#

This is one area in which the information held in HER is becoming increasingly used proactively, for example as it has been recently in England in the selection of monuments for consideration in English Heritage's Monuments Protection Programme (MPP). HERs formed a major source of information for the Monuments at Risk Survey (MARS) into the condition of field monuments in England (Darvill and Fulton 1998). HERs also form the basis for the selection of sites where improved management regimes or repair work would be beneficial. Whilst there has been no programme comparable to MPP in Scotland, in the past Historic Scotland funded some HERs to compile Non-Statutory Registers of Monuments of Schedulable Quality. Under the terms of the Scottish planning guidance these are to be regarded as equivalent to scheduled sites in their treatment in development plans and the development control process. Non-Statutory Registers were completed for a few local authority areas, but the project was not extended to cover all areas

of Scotland. In Wales, Cadw sponsor a number of annual pan-Wales thematic surveys aimed at assessing the schedule of ancient monuments, making recommendations for new scheduling and identifying other monument and landscape management issues.

HERs in England have been a source of information for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, a grant scheme which was first piloted in 1991. It aims included the conservation of archaeological sites and historic features, by adapting land management practices. The Countryside Stewardship Scheme was replaced by Environmental Stewardship in 2004, comprising two tiers ? Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). HERs supplied information on the archaeology of the area, together with recommendations as to the optimum method of land management for all the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes. English Heritage was able to help many local authorities employ Historic Environment Countryside Advisers to carry out this work.

In 2005, Natural England in partnership with English Heritage and ALGAO, created the Selected National Heritage Dataset (SNHD), comprising selected archaeological sites across England, as recorded in the NMRE, together with datasets supplied from nine participating HERs. The data was used to pre-populate applicant's maps for the Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) schemes. Given the limited coverage and lack of consistency of the archaeological sites included, SNHD was replaced by SHINE in 2009. SHINE - the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England - is a single nationally consistent dataset of undesignated historic environment features from across England that could benefit from management within agri-environment schemes. With over 60,000 records created by HERs to date, SHINE provides a much more consistent and comprehensive dataset, and through Environmental Stewardship, has enabled farmers, land managers, and land owners to identify archaeological and historic sites that might be eligible for grant-aided management, and has focused advice on areas where management options could benefit the historic environment. Environmental Stewardship was closed to new applicants in 2014, although existing agreements will be managed until they reach their agreed end date.

The new Countryside Stewardship will replace Environmental Stewardship in summer 2015. The new scheme comprises Higher Tier (similar to HLS) and Mid Tier (similar to ELS). Countryside Stewardship is more targeted than previous schemes with a focus on biodiversity and water quality, but continues to encourage the protection and improvement of the historic environment. Targeting statements, informed by SHINE, are being used to identify the priority features and issues for the historic environment within each National Character Area (NCA).

HERs have been used in Scotland since 1997 as a source of archaeological information in connection with agri-environment grant application schemes, initially the Countryside Premium Scheme superseded in 2000 by the Rural Stewardship Scheme, then in 2007 by the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Under the current SRDP, HER information is used mostly to inform forestry applications, see the Forestry Commission Scotland. Archaeological information is not routinely taken into account under the current system for other agri-environment schemes, but can usefully be included in farm management plans to help inform conservation and management of the archaeological resource.

From 1999 Tir Gofal, the all Wales agri-environment scheme (which replaced the earlier geographically limited Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Tir Cymen schemes), promoted the conservation and sympathetic management of individual monuments and the wider historic landscape through the introduction of whole-farm management plans tied to annual payments. The scheme was initially run by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), but was latterly transferred to the Rural Payments Division of the Welsh Government. The historic environment of each farm entering the scheme was assessed, using information in the HER and targeted field visits, and specific management recommendations produced for individual monuments and the historic landscape in general. In addition to advice on the management of individual features the scheme also funded landowners to undertake a range of capital works which could include improvements to the

condition of archaeological monuments and historic buildings. The Tir Gofal scheme was closed to new applicants in 2007, although existing management plans were allowed to run until 2013.

In 2012 Tir Gofal was replaced by the [Glastir](#) scheme, a new all-Wales scheme which operates on two levels much like the current English schemes. The scheme is operated by the Welsh Government ([WG](#)) assisted by Natural Resources Wales ([NRW](#)).

In preparation for this scheme the Welsh HERs digitised management polygons which identified those areas containing Historic Environment Features. The Welsh Archaeological Trusts ([WATs](#)) continue to submit polygons to a national data set hosted by the Welsh Government which assists in running the Glastir scheme. In the lower level scheme successful applicants are required not to damage historic features within these polygons. In the advanced scheme there are a number of grant aided management options which can be followed to improve the condition of these areas. Since 2012 the Glastir scheme has expanded to give grant aid for woodland management and new planting, replacing the Forestry Commission's [Better Woodlands for Wales Scheme](#), and also gives out a number of small grants for one off improvement works. The WATs are consulted on applicants applying for the advanced (and other) schemes within Glastir and provide management reports for selected areas and landscapes, for which they receive payment from the Welsh Government.

Education and presentation of sites to the public[#](#)

Alongside their role in informing the planning and management process, HERs make a contribution to education through the use of their information and resources by schools, universities and the general public. HERs provide information for use on display panels at monuments and also for booklets, guides and trails aimed at a 'popular' audience.