



Item: 7

Policy and Resources Committee: 21 April 2026.

Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan.

Report by Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.

1. Overview

- 1.1. This report presents an updated Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan, following a period of public consultation, for members' approval in so far as it relates to the remit of the Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
 - i. Approve The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2026-2036, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, in so far as it relates to the remit of the Council.

3. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS Management Plan

- 3.1. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney (HONO) was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1999 as a Cultural World Heritage Site (WHS). WHS are places that are judged to have Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), transcending national boundaries and of importance for present and future generations.
- 3.2. The HONO WHS comprises the Skara Brae settlement, Maeshowe chambered tomb with the Barnhouse Stone, the Stones of Stenness with the Watch Stone and the Ring of Brodgar and associated mounds and the Comet Stone. Individually, the sites are masterpieces of Neolithic design and stonework construction. Collectively, they represent one of the richest surviving Neolithic landscapes in Western Europe.
- 3.3. UNESCO requires that an appropriate management plan is completed for every WHS, containing an overall vision for the site, long-term aims, shorter term policies and objectives, with the key purpose of maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS, ensuring the protection and conservation of the WHS for now and future generations.

- 3.4. The management plan is not embedded in statutory planning policy or part of the Islands Growth Deal's Orkney WHS Programme, but wherever possible its vision, aims and objectives will be incorporated into the review of the Orkney Local Development Plan and other strategies and programmes.
- 3.5. Partnership WHS Management Plans have been agreed by the formal signatories, Historic Environment Scotland and Orkney Islands Council, for the periods 2008-13, and 2014-19. This new Management Plan is based on the work delivered by these past plans and builds on aspirations expressed by communities and stakeholders through consultation.
- 3.6. The Management Plan attached at Appendix 1 will replace the 2014-19 plan.
- 3.7. The Management Plan identifies the signatory partners, the advisory partners and the steering group. The Steering Group is supported by a WHS Coordinator in HES to help ensure effective coordination between the Partners and to enable the implementation, monitoring and revision of the Management Plan and its Objectives.
- 3.8. Challenges and Themes that affect the management of the WHS have not changed through consultation and are:
 - i. **The Climate Emergency**
 - ii. **Planning for Uncertainty**
 - iii. **Tourism and Access**
 - iv. **Community Involvement**
 - v. **Sustainability**
 - vi. **Research and Learning.**
- 3.9. The Aims and Objectives will be delivered through detailed actions laid out in the Management Plan and monitored by the Management Plan Steering Group, which will meet at least twice per year. Annually, a summary and set of recommendations will be produced to highlight priorities for action and / or funding requirements.
- 3.10. The Plan recognises the vital importance of the Orkney community in safeguarding the WHS. The Plan outlines values to ensure that decisions are the best they can be to increase public awareness, increase public enjoyment and belonging, public involvement and their role in the management and protection of the WHS.

4. The Consultation

- 4.1. On 27 November 2024, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended approval of a consultative draft Heart of Neolithic Orkney (HONO) World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan for public consultation.
- 4.2. The consultation was run by Historic Environment Scotland with support from Orkney Islands Council.
- 4.3. The consultation ran from 18 March to 13 May 2025 and was promoted via a joint HES and Council local and national press release, BBC Radio Orkney, The Orcadian newspaper, social media and flyers. The draft plan was available to download online and in print at the Council Offices and Libraries in Kirkwall and Stromness, and the WHS Visitor Centre in Stenness. On 25 February 2025, a joint community event was held at the Stenness Community School where several community consultations came together including the HONO WHS Management Plan, the Stenness Local Place Plan, the Islands Deal Orkney WHS Programme and the Sustrans Reinstatement of the National Cycle Network. It was estimated that over 100 members of the community and stakeholders attended this event.
- 4.4. A summary of consultation responses is provided in Appendix 2 to this report, including an Executive Summary that summarises the consultation feedback. Generally, respondents agreed with the challenges and themes of the Management Plan; and amendments have been minimal.

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial:** All resources associated with the draft and consultation have been shared by the signatory partners HES and the Council. For the Council these costs are mainly in staff time and are contained within the existing revenue budgets. In terms of the delivery of the actions contained within the Action Plan, the Council's share will also be met from within existing approved budgets or through successful external funding applications.
2. **Legal:** There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
3. **Corporate Governance:** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources:** None.

5. **Equalities:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact:** This work has been assessed as being unlikely to have an effect on other communities (including other island communities) in Orkney, therefore a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.
7. **Links to Council Plan**

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:

 - Growing our economy.
 - Strengthening our Communities.
 - Developing our Infrastructure.
 - Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan**

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:

 - Cost of Living.
 - Sustainable Development.
 - Local Equality.
 - Improving Population Health.
9. **Environmental and Climate Risk:** None. A Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal was undertaken, and it is considered that there are no negative adverse impact of this plan and actions. Further assessment maybe required on individual actions undertaken during the period of the Management Plan.
10. **Risk:** None.
11. **Procurement:** None.
12. **Health and Safety:** None.
13. **Property and Assets:** None.
14. **Information Technology:** None.
15. **Cost of Living:** None.

List of Background Papers

Policy and Resources Committee – 27 November 2024: Item 8 – Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2026-2036.

Appendix 2 – Summary of Consultation Responses.

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment.



HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY



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Heart of Neolithic Orkney
Inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1999

World
Heritage
Site

Management Plan
—
2026—2036



Aerial view of the
Stones of Stenness

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Visitors to Skara Brae taking part in a pottery session with a potter skilled in the making of Neolithic style pots.
(© Ken Amer)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney (HONO) was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1999 as a Cultural World Heritage Site (WHS). WHS are places that are judged to have Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), transcending national boundaries and of importance for present and future generations. This is a partnership WHS Management Plan agreed by Historic Environment Scotland and Orkney Islands Council.

HONO WHS comprises a group of sites on the island of Mainland in Orkney which date from 3000–2000 BC. The sites are Skara Brae settlement, Maeshowe chambered tomb and the Barnhouse Stone, the Stones of Stenness and the Watch Stone, and the Ring of Brodgar and associated monuments. Individually, the sites are masterpieces of Neolithic design and stonework construction. Collectively, they represent one of the richest surviving Neolithic landscapes in Western Europe.

This Management Plan sets out a ten-year framework for the partners to guide the protection and management of HONO. It encapsulates our shared Vision for the Site, sums up our understanding of the OUV and identifies the key issues that are affecting or will affect the Site and our management of it. It builds upon the results of two previous Management Plans and was informed by consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders. The development process was overseen by the HONO WHS Steering Group, which also oversees delivery of the Plan. The Steering Group is made up of representatives of HES and OIC supported by the Advisory Partners: at present these are Highlands & Islands Enterprise, NatureScot, RSPB and UHI Archaeology Institute.

The Plan includes six long-term Aims for the WHS which look beyond this ten-year management plan period to 2050. The Aims reflect the partner's aspirations for protecting and conserving the OUV; inspiring and engaging people with the WHS, benefiting people and communities in Orkney and elsewhere, interpreting and presenting the Site to the highest standard, responsibly, sustainably and equitably enhancing access to and experience of the WHS, and facilitating a diversity of research which can in turn inform our pursuit of the Aims.

In the near term sixteen strategic Objectives have been designed to address the key challenges and themes facing the WHS and its management. The critical challenges and themes identified are the climate emergency, planning for uncertainty, tourism and access, community involvement, sustainability, and research and learning. To deliver the Objectives a flexible and regularly reviewed Action Plan allows the partners to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

Finally, this Plan also sets out Partnership Principles for its delivery. It considers the wider values of the WHS in addition to the OUV, and sets out a programme of monitoring for the delivery of the Plan and of the state of conservation of the WHS.



THE VISION

OUR SHARED ASPIRATIONS FOR THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY 2026-2050

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney and its exceptional testimony to the cultural achievements of the Neolithic peoples of northern Europe will be protected and conserved for present and future generations.

The World Heritage Site will bring social, cultural, environmental, and economic benefits to the wider community.

It will offer an exceptional responsible visitor experience, and inspire and catalyse research and learning, widening engagement through participation and discovery.

It will be managed sustainably in ways that contribute to reducing the causes of climate change and address its threat to the Site.

It will contribute to a thriving, sustainable and equitable future for Orkney residents, visitors, and communities of interest worldwide.



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Heart of Neolithic Orkney
Inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1999



1.0 WORLD HERITAGE AND THE MANAGEMENT PLAN



1.1 What is World Heritage and Why Does it Matter?

1.1.1 WORLD HERITAGE SITES AND THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

World Heritage Sites (WHSs) are exceptional places recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as having such importance that they belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located. Each WHS represents a unique, or the most significant or best, example of the world's cultural and/or natural heritage. This is their Outstanding Universal Value, which transcends national boundaries and is of importance for present and future generations.

World Heritage Status is a high accolade that brings responsibilities and international scrutiny. Once a Site is added to the List, the government of the State where it is located has a duty to protect, conserve and present these Sites for future generations.

The properties on the World Heritage List are assets held in trust to pass on to generations of the future as their rightful inheritance.

Budapest Declaration on World Heritage, 2002



Stones of Stenness

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee decides which Sites to inscribe on the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee also examines reports on the state of conservation of WHSs on the List and can request that State Parties take action to address conservation issues. It can also add Sites to the List of World Heritage in Danger or, in rare cases, remove them from the World Heritage List.

Three international organisations advise the World Heritage Committee. The most relevant for the Heart of Neolithic Orkney (HONO) is ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites). This is an international, non-governmental organisation which works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. ICOMOS evaluates cultural and mixed properties proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List.

“The overarching benefit of ratifying the World Heritage Convention is that of belonging to an international community of appreciation and concern for universally significant properties that embody a world of outstanding examples of cultural diversity and natural wealth.

The States Parties to the Convention, by joining hands to protect and cherish the world’s natural and cultural heritage, express a shared commitment to preserving our legacy for future generations.”

UNESCO

World Heritage United Kingdom
2023 Annual Conference



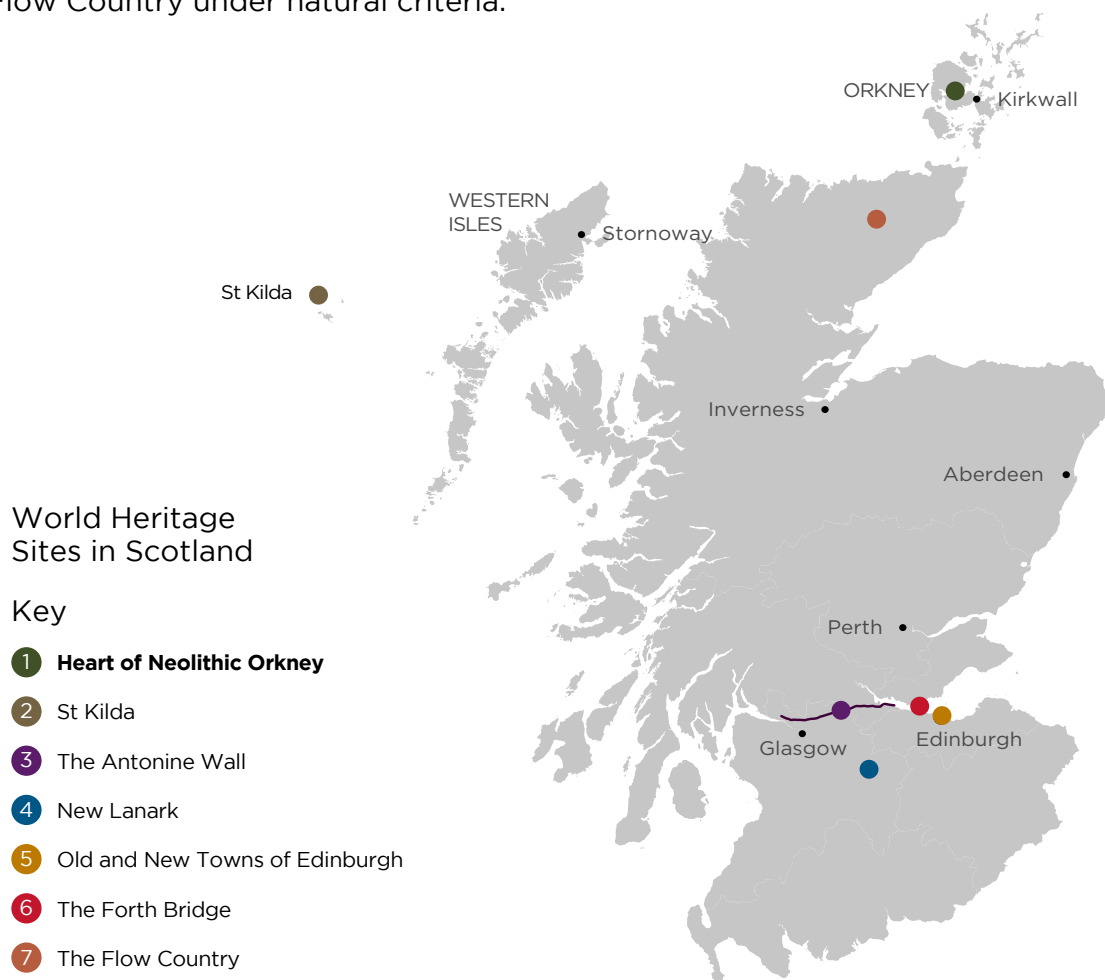
World Heritage United Kingdom
2023 Annual Conference.



1.2 World Heritage in Scotland and UK

The UK currently has 35 WHS of which seven are in Scotland: Heart of Neolithic Orkney; New Lanark; The Forth Bridge; Frontiers of the Roman Empire: The Antonine Wall; The Flow Country; Old and New Towns of Edinburgh; St Kilda.

Five of Scotland's WHSs are inscribed under cultural criteria, while St Kilda is inscribed under both natural and cultural criteria and The Flow Country under natural criteria.



1.2.1 KEY ORGANISATIONS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

UK government and Scottish government: As an international convention, the World Heritage Convention is a reserved matter under the Scotland Act 1998 and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) acts as the UK State Party. Historic England advise them on international heritage issues, including World Heritage. However, heritage legislation, policy and guidance mechanisms are devolved matters and strategic responsibility for World Heritage in Scotland sits with the Culture and Historic Environment Division in the Scottish Government (CHED).

ICOMOS UK: The UK National Committee of ICOMOS is an independent charity with a UK-wide and international mission to promote and support best practice in the conservation, care and understanding of the historic environment. They advise on aspects of World Heritage across the UK.



Heart of Neolithic Orkney (© Katie Logan)



St Kilda



The Antonine Wall (© Rediscovering the Antonine Wall)



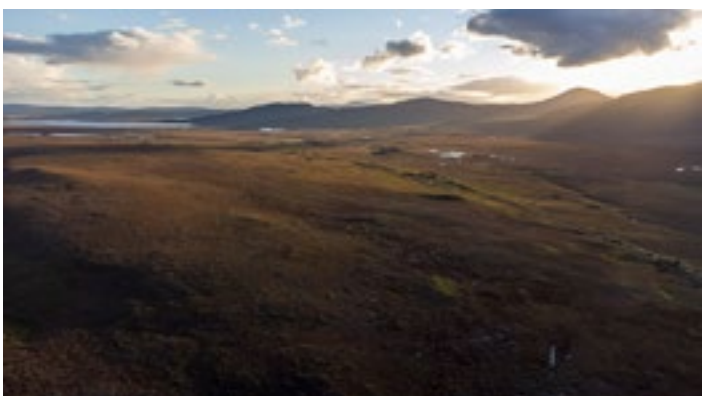
New Lanark



Old and New Towns of Edinburgh (© Laura McRitchie)



Forth Bridge



Flow Country (© Sam Rose)

The formal signatories to the Management Plan are Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Orkney Islands Council (OIC). These signatory Management Partners formally ratify the WHS Management Plan and share accountability for ensuring it is delivered. There are also several Advisory Partners that have important roles in supporting and advising on the development and delivery of the Management Plan where it intersects with their remits. See Section 3.1 for further information about the management and advisory partners for the HONO WHS.

HES is the lead public body for Scotland’s historic environment. HES is a management partner for all six current Scottish WHSs and is also responsible for more than 300 properties in care that are of national importance and internationally significant collections. HES also has statutory functions within the planning system and are responsible for determining consent for works to scheduled monuments, providing advice as a statutory consultee and for designating a range of historic assets and places, including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, and Battlefields.

Orkney Islands Council is the Local Authority. They are a key partner in the protection and management of the WHS, both through the development and implementation of planning policy and through their engagement with the Management Plan.



The Stones of Stenness





A member of Historic Environment Scotland's Technical Conservation team, laser scanning Skara Brae.



Information board with details of mitigations for site protection and biodiversity at the Ring of Brodgar.

1.3 Protecting World Heritage at HONO

World Heritage designation does not result in additional direct legal protections. Instead, HONO is protected through the planning system and the designation of the component sites of the WHS as Scheduled Monuments.

The WHS is protected under the following policies (see Appendix 1 for more detail):

Scotland’s National Planning Framework 4 (2023) requires that Development proposals affecting a WHS or its setting will only be supported where their OUV is protected and preserved.

The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) (2019) sets out a series of principles and policies for the recognition, care, and sustainable management of the historic environment.

Scheduled Monuments Consents Policy (2019) sets out the HES policy for making decisions about consents at scheduled monuments and supports HEPS.

Managing Change in the Historic Environment should be used to inform local planning policies and to help make decisions about planning applications that could affect a WHS.

The Orkney Local Development Plan (2017) and **Scotland’s National Planning Framework 4 (2023)** form the current Local Development Plan for Orkney. Together they establish policy to protect the WHS and its setting from inappropriate development in order to protect and preserve the OUV.

OIC is reviewing the Local Development Plan and by 2028 will have produced a new Local Development Plan to sit alongside **Scotland’s National Planning Framework 4** providing policy to protect the WHS and its OUV. Progress on the review of the Local Development Plan can be found at www.orkney.gov.uk.

1.4 The Management Plan

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre’s Operational Guidelines require every WHS to have effective management structures in place to ensure its preservation and sustainable development and to safeguard the Site’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for present and future generations. A Management Plan is essential to guide decision making.

UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies recommend that World Heritage Site Management Plans should have an overall vision for the Site, long-term aims, and shorter-term policies and objectives. Timetabled action plans can be developed from these policies and objectives, informed by the aims and guided by the vision.

This Management Plan sets out how HONO WHS will be managed over the next ten years. It encapsulates the Partner’s shared vision for the Site, sums up our understanding of the Site’s Outstanding Universal Value (Chapter 2), identifies the key issues that are affecting or will affect the Site and our management of it (Chapter 4), and lays out the Objectives designed to address these issues from 2026-2036 (Chapter 5).

This Plan was developed by the management partners, HES and OIC,

and the wider HONO WHS Steering Group (Chapter 3). Like all WHS Management Plans it depends on consensus and commitment from the different partners and stakeholders in the Site for its effectiveness.

1.4.1 THE ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE PROGRAMME

Islands Growth Deal Orkney Islands Council (OIC) in partnership with Shetland Islands Council and Comhairle nan Eillean Siar received commitment from both UK and Scottish Government to support a range of projects amounting to £100M investment over a period of 10 years across the three island groups. The Orkney World Heritage Site Programme is one of these. Responding to the commitments within the HONO Management Plan, this Programme is led by OIC in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland and is seen by the partners as an important opportunity to secure external funding to help realise the vision and shared aspirations set out in the Management Plan. Subject to an approved Full Business Case, consultation and necessary approvals and consents being in place and working with the community and stakeholders, the Orkney World Heritage Site Programme seeks to improve opportunities for the local community and visitors to get to and between sites, enhance the experience, making a positive contribution that will safeguard the sites for the future.

1.5 Producing the Plan: Consultations and Assessments

In late 2019, independent consultants sought the views of local and wider communities. The results of this were published online in early 2020 as The Community View: Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan Review 2020. The summary report can be downloaded from the HES website. Two “Place Standard” exercises were also carried out at the West Mainland Agricultural Show, Dounby in 2019 and 2022.

Four community priorities emerged strongly from these consultation exercises:

- Communication - Improvements required in the communication between the WHS managers and Orkney residents and businesses.
- Managing Visitors - Increases in visitor numbers raising mixed views towards tourism and visitors, and a more collaborative approach required to manage this.
- Infrastructure and local facilities - Improvements to infrastructure and local facilities.
- Expanding educational opportunities - Limited engagement of young people with the WHS after primary school.

The Place Standard responses also highlighted:

- Community involvement in the WHS
- Climate change

A **Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)** assessment undertaken in 2019 identified of key climate change risks to the OUV of HONO WHS. Download the report here. It also captured a series of significant values associated with the WHS generated by the participants, half of whom were Orkney residents, demonstrating the significance and value of the WHS to local people.

- Intangible
- Heritage Practice
- Biodiversity and Ecological
- Archaeological
- Economic
- Recreational
- Natural Systems
- Scenery/ Landscape and Seascape (Aesthetics and Experience)

A series of impact assessments were carried out as part of the development of the Management Plan. See Appendix 3 for information. One of these, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), was available for public consultation alongside the draft Management Plan. After consultation closed, comments were used to inform the final version of the Management Plan. A SEA Post Adoption Statement was published (see Appendix 3). The Action Plan will be accompanied by a sustainability checklist to guide decisions.

The draft Management Plan was available for consultation for six weeks in spring 2025. A report on the results summarised the responses and was used to inform the final Management Plan. A majority of respondents agreed that the right challenges and themes had been identified for the management plan, and well over half agreed that the Plan addressed the needs the challenges.

The issues raised most frequently were:

- Visitor infrastructure
- Physical impacts of visitors on the WHS
- Community involvement
- Desire to see tangible action addressing these

Some issues raised were outwith the remit of the Management Plan to address, in particular comments about cruise tourism to Orkney as a whole. However, these responses were connected to concerns about environmental sustainability, site preservation, and community involvement and engagement, so remain relevant even while this Plan cannot directly address the wider question of cruise. The consultation report has also been shared with the Orkney World Heritage Site Programme (see Section 1.4.1).

The consultation report is available on the HES website in the closed consultations section.



Fescue

Aerial view of Skara
Brae Neolithic village
and Skail Bay





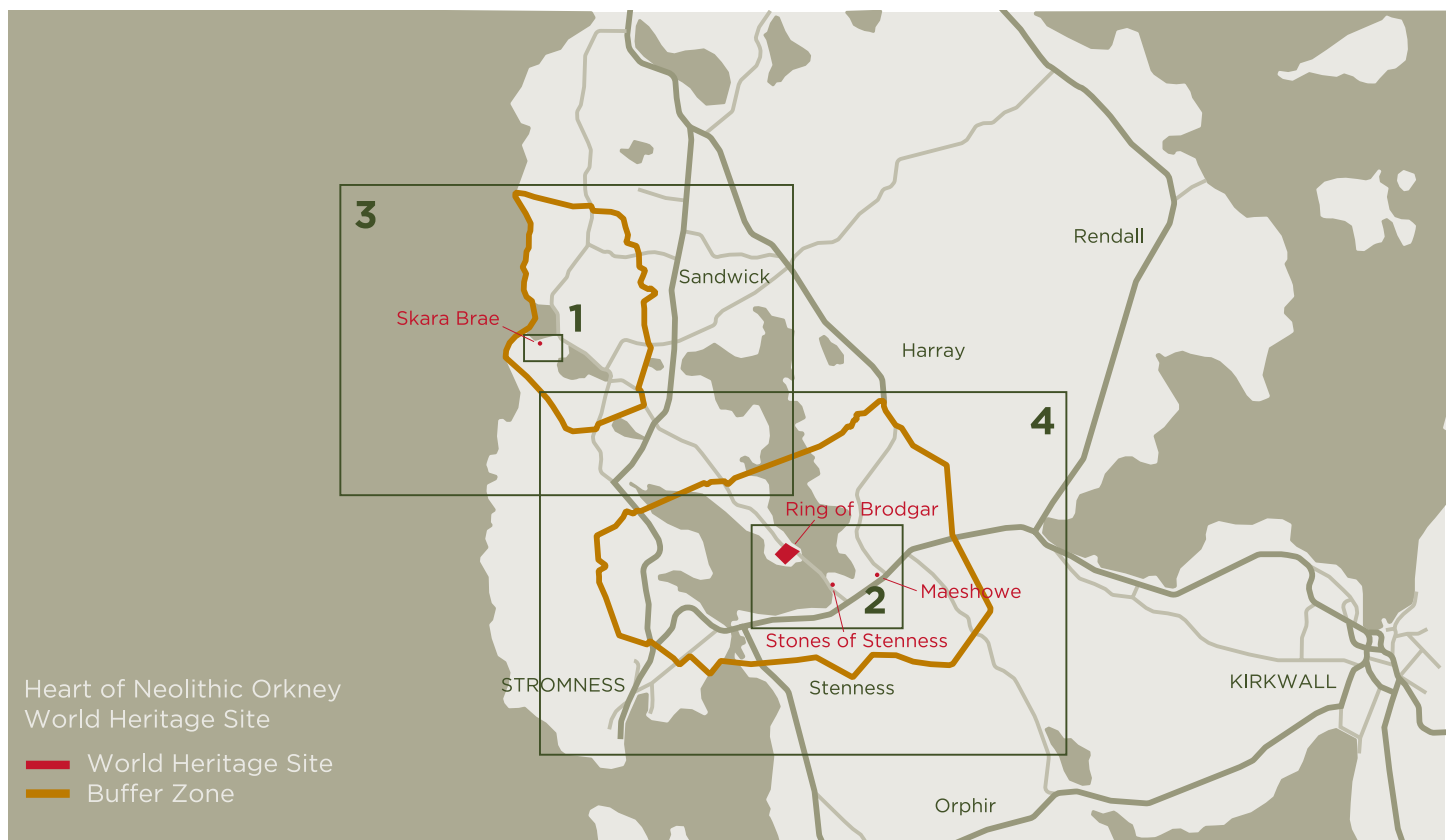
2.0 THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY



2.1 The World Heritage Site

Orkney is an archipelago of over 70 islands lying 15 km off the northeastern extremity of mainland Scotland where the North Atlantic meets the North Sea. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site is in the west of Mainland, the largest island of the archipelago.

Map showing the location of the World Heritage Site and Buffer Zone. The black boxes are the areas shown in more detail in the numbered maps that follow.



Map showing Skara Brae and the boundary of the WHS inscription



Four sites together make up the World Heritage Site:

- The settlement of Skara Brae, located on the Bay of Skail on the north-west coast of the island of Mainland.

The other three monuments and their associated standing stones and mounds in central West Mainland about 7km south east of Skara Brae:

- Maeshowe chambered tomb and the associated Barnhouse Stone lie to the east of the south end of the Loch of Harray.
- The Stones of Stenness and the nearby Watch Stone are located near the shore of the Loch of Stenness just to the south of the Loch of Harray.
- The Ring of Brodgar and a series of associated mounds and a stone setting known as the Comet Stone lie a short distance to the north, on the peninsula that divides the Loch of Harray from the Loch of Stenness. The larger mounds are named Salt Knowe, Fresh Knowe, South Knowe and Plumcake Mound.

Between the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness a causeway bridge links the two peninsulas and divides the lochs of Stenness and Harray.

All four sites are Properties in Care, which means they are managed by HES on behalf of Scottish Ministers. The World Heritage property boundary is the same as the boundary of these Properties in Care. Only these four main monuments and the associated standing stones and mounds described above are included in the Site that is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

More information about the WHS and its monuments, including detailed descriptions, their history, discovery, how to visit and more can be found via Appendix 1.

Map showing the location of the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe, the Watch Stone and Barnhouse Stone, and the boundaries of the WHS inscription.



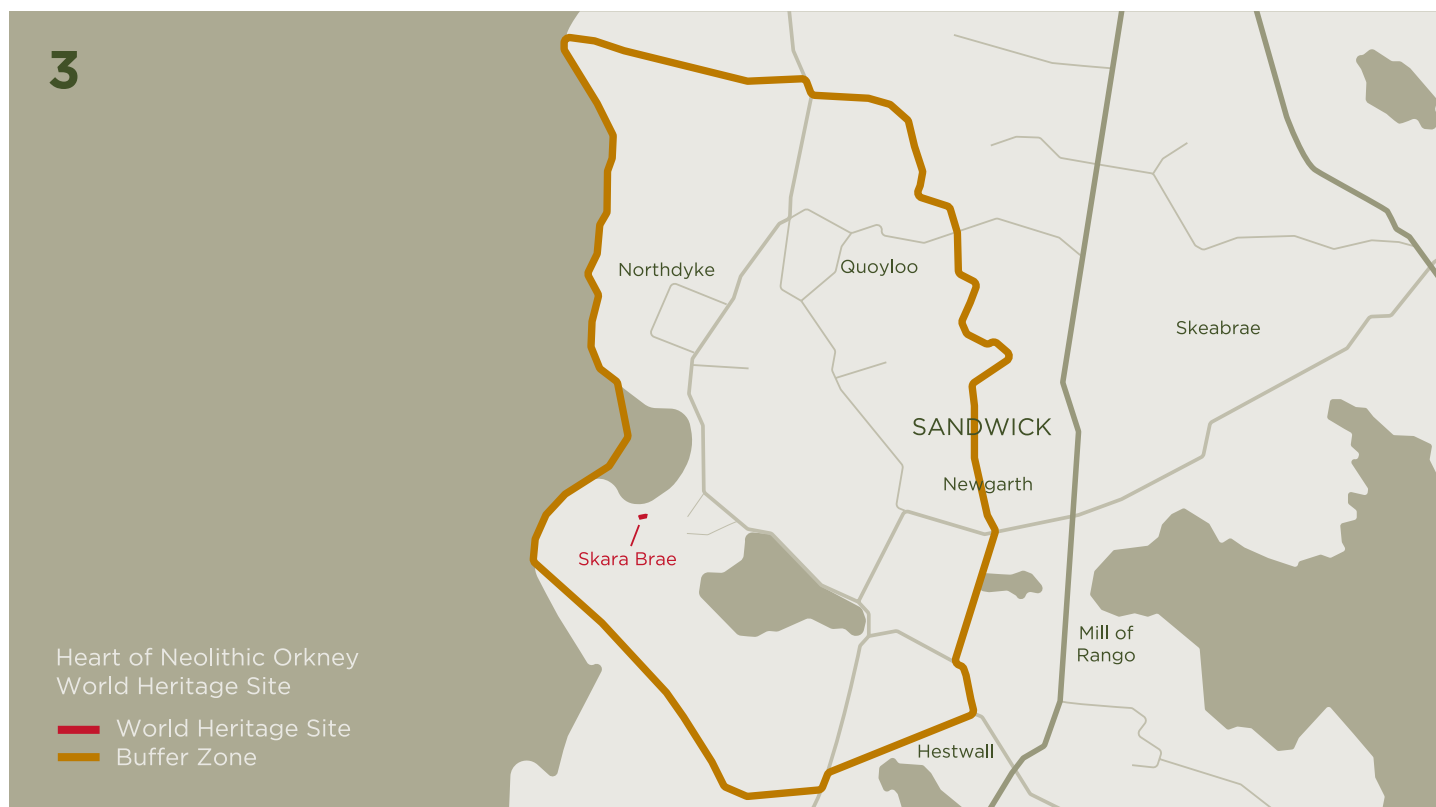
2.2 The Buffer Zone and Wider Context

As defined in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines, a WHS Buffer Zone is “an area surrounding the World Heritage Site which has complementary legal restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the World Heritage Site”

A two-part Buffer Zone surrounds the HONO WHS, one section centred on Skara Brae and the other on the central West Mainland group of monuments (see Figure 2). The Buffer Zone is recognised in the 2017 Orkney Local Development Plan, where it is referred to as the “Inner Sensitive Zone”.

In addition to the Buffer Zone, the Local Development Plan recognises that the monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas were deliberately situated in a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnecting sensitive ridgelines that stretch across to Hoy. These ridgelines extend beyond the boundary of the Buffer Zone. The importance of these ridgelines is recognised in the Local Development Plan (as ‘Sensitive Ridgelines’), and additional protection is provided to them through Policy; hence safeguarding a key aspect of the setting of the WHS. This landscape is one of the most sensitive in Scotland, forming part of the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area (NSA) and comprising the setting for this collection of internationally significant monuments.

Map showing the boundary of the Buffer Zone around Skara Brae



The monuments are also visually linked to other contemporary and later monuments around the lochs, and they are a fundamental part of a wider, highly complex, archaeological landscape. Because of this, large-scale or tall development outside of the Buffer Zone also has the potential to impact the setting of the WHS.

When developments are proposed in the Buffer Zones this should act as a trigger for consultation so that potential effects on the OUV of the WHS can be taken into account by developers and decision-makers, in line with national and local policy.

As part of the review of the Local Development Plan OIC will develop Planning Guidance for the Historic Environment including the WHS.



Illustration of a Neolithic pot

Map showing the boundary of the Buffer Zone around the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, and Maeshowe



2.3 Outstanding Universal Value

WHSs are inscribed on the World Heritage List because UNESCO considers that they have Outstanding Universal Value (OUV): that is, their cultural and/or natural significance is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. OUV is a cornerstone of the protection of WHS for UNESCO and for States Parties, and protection of OUV is now built into guidance for heritage protection across the UK.

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) for HONO WHS can only be amended by UNESCO. This Statement provides a clear understanding of the reasons for the Site's inscription on the World Heritage List, and of what needs to be managed in order to protect and manage the Site to sustain the OUV for the long term.

For the World Heritage Committee and the Advisory Bodies, the SOUV is an essential reference point for monitoring, Periodic Reporting, possible inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger and deletion from the List.

There are ten formal criteria for OUV, six for cultural heritage and four for natural heritage. HONO fulfils criteria (i) to (iv):

- **Criterion (i)** – to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.
- **Criterion (ii)** – to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.
- **Criterion (iii)** – to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.
- **Criterion (iv)** – to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

World Heritage properties must possess integrity which means a Site must be of sufficient size, and its components must be sufficiently complete, to demonstrate OUV. Cultural WHS must also demonstrate authenticity: which relates to the credibility of evidence for meeting the above criteria, and an authentic representation of the historical record of the site's cultural and natural attributes. Effective protection and management measures to safeguard the OUV must be in place. This means implementing legal, regulatory and management frameworks to ensure the sustainable conservation and enjoyment of the WHS for current and future generations.



Eyebright

2.3.1 STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

The following is an extract from the HONO WHS Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV). This was accepted by the WH Committee in 2013. See Appendix 2 for the full Statement.

The Orkney Islands lie 15 km north of the coast of Scotland. The monuments are in two areas, some 6.6 km apart on the island of Mainland, the largest in the archipelago. The group of monuments that make up the Heart of Neolithic Orkney consists of a remarkably well-preserved settlement, a large chambered tomb, and two stone circles with surrounding henges, together with a number of associated burial and ceremonial sites. The group constitutes a major relict cultural landscape graphically depicting life five thousand years ago in this remote archipelago.

The four monuments that make up the Heart of Neolithic Orkney are unquestionably among the most important Neolithic sites in Western Europe. These are the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe and Skara Brae. They provide exceptional evidence of the material and spiritual standards as well as the beliefs and social structures of this dynamic period of prehistory.

The four main monuments, consisting of the four substantial surviving standing stones of the elliptical Stones of Stenness and the surrounding ditch and bank of the henge, the thirty-six surviving stones of the circular Ring of Brodgar with the thirteen Neolithic and Bronze Age mounds that are found around it and the stone setting known as the Comet Stone, the large stone chambered tomb of Maeshowe, whose passage points close to midwinter sunset, and the sophisticated settlement of Skara Brae with its stone built houses connected by narrow roofed passages, together with the Barnhouse Stone and the Watch Stone, serve as a paradigm of the megalithic culture of north-western Europe that is unparalleled. The property is characteristic of the farming culture prevalent from before 4000 BC in northwest Europe. It provides exceptional evidence of, and demonstrates with exceptional completeness, the domestic, ceremonial, and burial practices of a now vanished 5000-year old culture and illustrates the material standards, social structures and ways of life of this dynamic period of prehistory, which gave rise to Avebury and Stonehenge (England), Bend of the Boyne (Ireland) and Carnac (France).

The monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas were deliberately situated within a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnected ridgelines stretching from Hoy to Greeny Hill and back. They are also visually linked to other contemporary and later monuments around the lochs. They thus form a fundamental part of a wider, highly complex archaeological landscape, which stretches over much of Orkney. The current, open and comparatively undeveloped landscape around the monuments allows an understanding of the apparently formal connections between the monuments and their natural settings. The wealth of contemporary burial and occupation sites in the buffer zone constitute an exceptional relict cultural landscape that supports the value of the main sites.

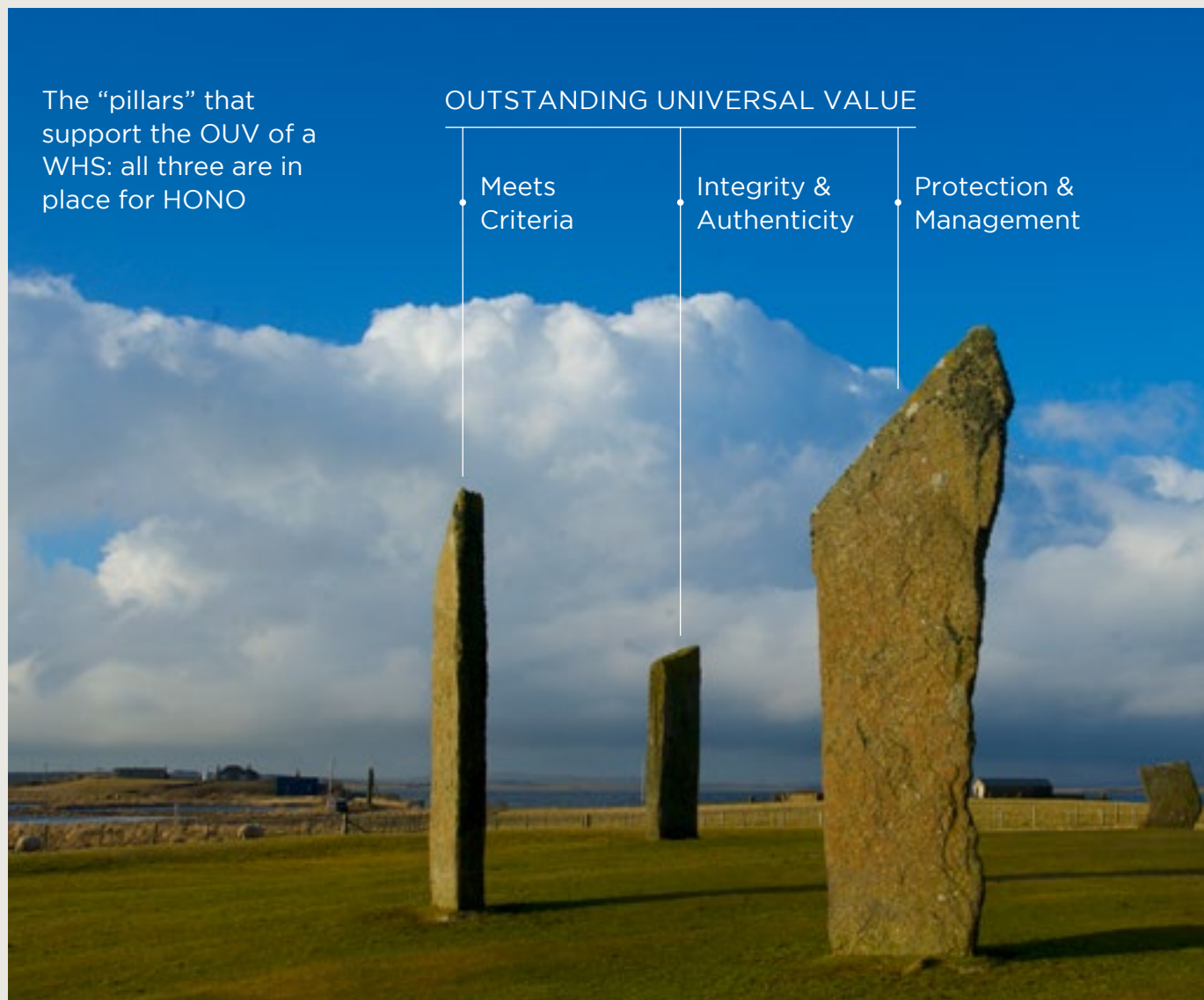


Image: The Stones of Stenness (© Rob McDougall)

Criterion (i): *The major monuments of the Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, the chambered tomb of Maeshowe, and the settlement of Skara Brae display the highest sophistication in architectural accomplishment; they are technologically ingenious and monumental masterpieces.*

Criterion (ii): *The Heart of Neolithic Orkney exhibits an important interchange of human values during the development of the architecture of major ceremonial complexes in the British Isles, Ireland and northwest Europe.*

Criterion (iii): *Through the combination of ceremonial, funerary and domestic sites, the Heart of Neolithic Orkney bears a unique testimony to a cultural tradition that flourished between about 3000 BC and 2000 BC. The state of preservation of Skara Brae is unparalleled amongst Neolithic settlement sites in northern Europe.*

Criterion (iv): *The Heart of Neolithic Orkney is an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble and archaeological landscape that illustrate a significant stage of human history when the first large ceremonial monuments were built.*

2.4 The Attributes of OUV

Attributes are elements, processes or features that convey the OUV. Identifying Attributes and understanding their interrelationships is crucial to understanding OUV and to ensuring it is protected and managed. They can be physical features, relationships, and linkages, and tangible or intangible aspects or processes.

At HONO, the Attributes are derived from the SOUV (see Appendix 2). The Brief Synthesis, Criteria for Inscription and the Statements of Authenticity and Integrity are the foundation of the Attributes.

UNESCO's Operational Guidelines state that Attributes can include:

“form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; other internal and external factors”.

Conservation of the OUV of a WHS is accomplished through the safeguarding, conserving, and effective management of its distinctive and unique Attributes. It is therefore important to identify and describe a Site's Attributes.

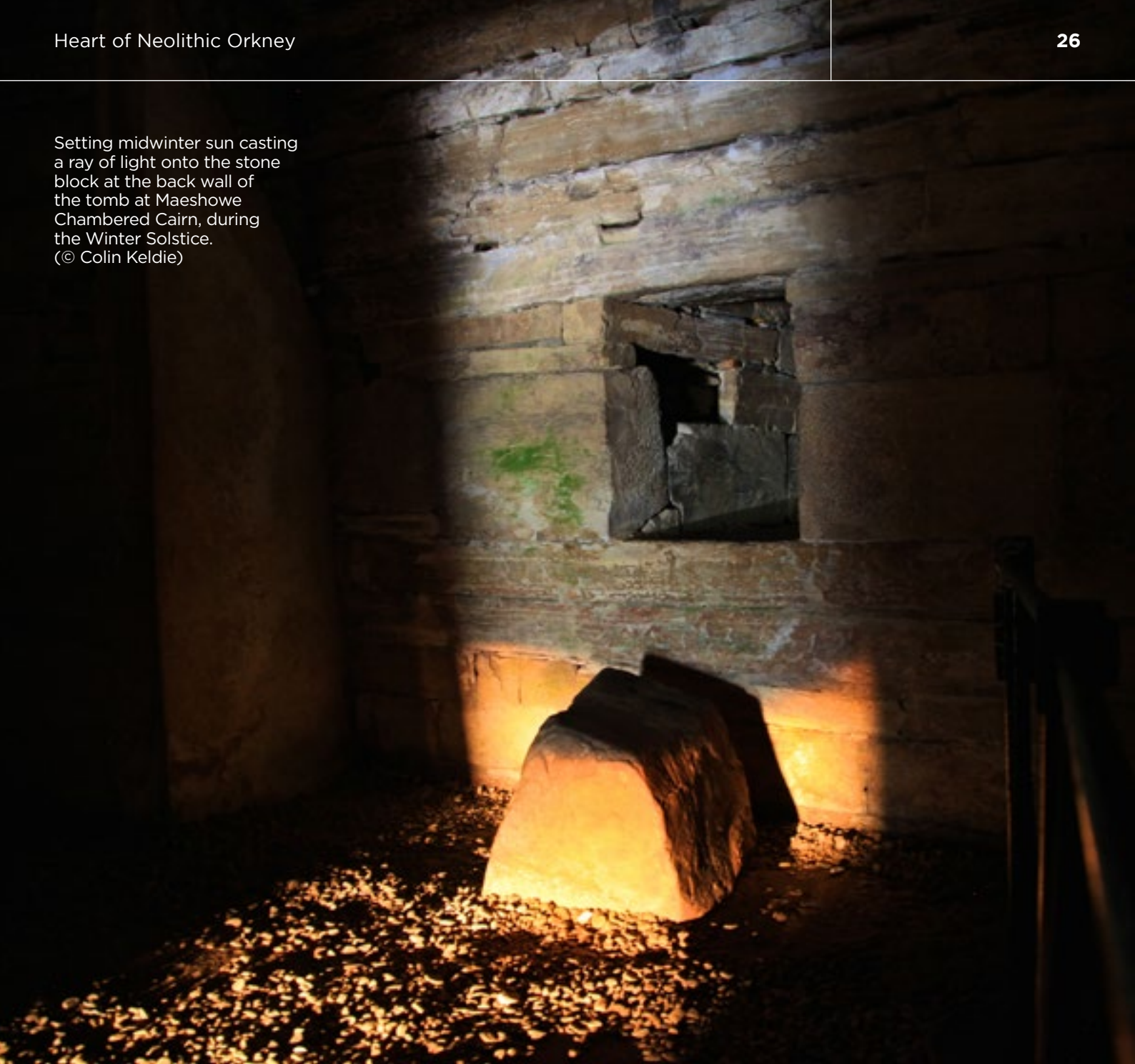


Interpretation panel



Detail of carved
stone incised
dragon, Maeshowe
Chambered Cairn

Setting midwinter sun casting a ray of light onto the stone block at the back wall of the tomb at Maeshowe Chambered Cairn, during the Winter Solstice.
(© Colin Keldie)



Wildflowers at the Ring of Brodgar (© Claire Smith)



Skara Brae



Attribute 1:

The extensive physical remains of the four major monuments and their associated funerary and ceremonial sites.

The OUV lies not only in the individual monuments but also in their collective presence. It is located in the extensive physical remains and interconnected presence of the four major monuments and their associated sites, and in the way the ensemble of monuments represents the breadth of Neolithic life - ceremonial, funerary and domestic - in Orkney during this significant period in human history 5000-4000 years ago.

- The sophisticated Skara Brae settlement site is exceptionally well-preserved. Its features include two distinct, visible periods of construction and use, Neolithic carvings on the walls, as well as preserved remains of stone 'furniture'. The individual buildings are linked by covered passageways, set within a complex midden deposit.
- The great Ring of Brodgar stone circle with its 36 extant stones, two causeways, massive surrounding rock-cut ditch and henge, and the nine Bronze Age barrows and four large mounds that cluster around it: Plumcake Mound, Fresh Knowe, South Knowe, Salt Knowe, and a stone setting, the Comet Stone.
- The elliptical Stones of Stenness stone circle and henge with its four surviving monoliths standing up to six metres in height, single causeway, stone setting and central hearth, and the associated standing stone The Watchstone.
- The monumental Maeshowe chambered cairn with its 10 metre-long entrance passageway aligned on the midwinter sunset and associated standing stone the Barnhouse Stone, and the much later Runic inscriptions left inside by Norse travellers.

Maeshowe



Stones of Stenness





Scheduled monuments around Brodgar and Stenness



Maeshowe entrance passageway. (© Colin Keldie)

Attribute 2:

The intricate interplay between the monuments and between the monuments and the wider archaeological landscape forms a rich visual and archaeological narrative.

The monuments are part of the wider archaeological tapestry. The proximity of monuments and settlements, and what their remains reveal, tell stories of how people lived, and demonstrate the relationships between the domestic and ceremonial architecture. This interconnectedness offers invaluable insights into the social dynamics, cultural practices, and religious beliefs of the Neolithic inhabitants. The land reveals patterns of human activity, and the monuments not only stand as isolated structures but as integral components of a larger narrative.

- The WHS monuments understood at inscription as the best-preserved elements of a complex relict archaeological landscape, carefully located in the cultural/natural landscape by their builders.
- The striking visual interrelationship between the monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas and between these monuments and other contemporary and later monuments around the lochs. This relationship forms a fundamental aspect of their importance without which none of the monuments can be fully understood.
- The relationship between the WHS monuments and an exceptionally rich archaeological landscape in the Buffer Zone and beyond, including the Barnhouse settlement, Ness of Brodgar site, and many contemporary and later archaeological monuments and sites in central West Mainland, including recent findings made via extensive geophysical survey.
- A specific relationship between the Stones of Stenness and the nearby settlement of Barnhouse suggested by similarities in the layout of interior features is evidence of a society whose domestic architecture and ceremonial sites were inextricably linked.
- The location of Skara Brae in the wider Bay of Skail with its variety of archaeological sites, and the geophysical evidence for further areas of contemporary settlement adjoining the excavated settlement site itself.
- The longevity of the central West Mainland sites, which can be seen to exert an influence on archaeologically recorded activity through to the Iron Age and first century CE.





Wildflowers at the Ring of Brodgar



Selfheal, Common Seal & Skylark

Attribute 3:

The relationship of the monuments with the surrounding landscape and environment.

The placement of each monument provides a striking visual relationship between them and the wider landscape, each being pieces of a larger visual picture and wider historical narrative. The three central West Mainland monuments sit within a topographical bowl, surrounded by sensitive ridgelines that offer striking views and evidence the strategic positioning of the monuments, emphasising their importance in the landscape. Amidst the rural countryside and bodies of water, they stand as prominent features, connecting past and present. Despite environmental changes of thousands of years, the open landscape around the monuments remains relatively unchanged, with remaining phenomena such as the solar alignment still providing awe and intrigue.

- The deliberate location of the monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas within a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnecting sensitive ridgelines, including important view to the Hoy hills.
- The central West Mainland monuments as dominant features in the present-day rural landscape.
- The careful positioning of the monumental Ring of Brodgar so as to dominate the skyline from across different directions and over a considerable distance.
- The contribution to the sense that these monuments are situated at the centre of a highly significant cultural landscape informed by the connections to the physical landscape and waterscape.
- The present landscape around the monuments is comparatively undeveloped and open. This setting allows for an understanding of the connections between the monuments and their open landscape or waterscape, despite the extensive environmental and ecological changes since the Neolithic.
- The alignment of the Maeshowe passageway on the Barnhouse stone and beyond to the hills of Hoy and the midwinter sunset is a striking example of a solar alignment. This underscores the significance of seasonal change and corresponding astronomical alignments to the Neolithic builders of the Maeshowe and to their funerary, ritual and ceremonial practices.
- The contemporary sense of place evoked by the interrelationship of the monuments and the surrounding landscape and waterscape and the wider fauna, flora and associated soundscapes.



Barnhouse Stone

Coastal erosion
near Skara Brae







Interior of Maeshowe

House 1 at Skara Brae
(© Colin Keldie)



The Stones of Stenness
(© Claire Smith)

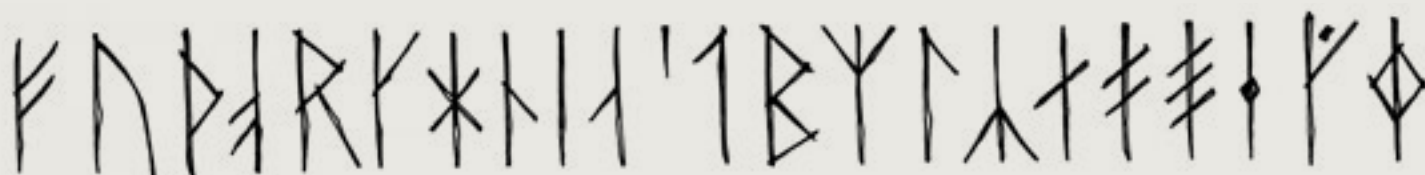
Attribute 4:

The architectural sophistication and exceptional preservation of the monuments.

The monuments and settlements remain as remarkable feats of ancient engineering, demonstrating architectural brilliance and preservation. The archaeological remains are remarkably intact offering insights into ancient materials, craftsmanship and scale, each monument speak to the ingenuity and skill of their builders. Through centuries of change that these elements have endured, they stand preserved, offering a tangible link to past cultures.

- The outstanding preservation of the domestic architecture at Skara Brae due to its construction in stone and the range of artefacts found at excavation enable a unique insight into the realities of living in a Neolithic village.
- The Ring of Brodgar is one of the best preserved and finest truly circular Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age henges known in the British Isles. It represents the architectural culmination of the dense and extended use of this part of Orkney for early prehistoric ceremonial and funerary purposes. Its construction involved considerable manpower and coherent organisation to excavate a massive rock-cut ditch, and quarry, transport and erect up to sixty stones.
- The high degree of preservation of the archaeological remains, including organic materials, below ground at the four sites, none of which have been completely excavated.
- The scale of Maeshowe, the refinement of its design, and the quality of its masonry and the construction of the mound being integral to the internal stone chamber, make it an outstanding architectural achievement.
- The nature and sophistication of the physical remains, including the materials chosen (stone, clay, earth and midden), the craft and skill exhibited, and the scale of undertaking as a testament of the ingenuity of the builders.
- The impressive height and sense of scale of the surviving stones at Stones of Stenness.
- The preservation of the central West Mainland monuments in a form that is attested to by antiquarian views made since the 17th century, and by the records made following the discovery and early excavations at Skara Brae in the 19th century.

Carved runes found within Maeshowe.





Excavations at the
Ness of Brodgar in 2021
(© Laura Mackenzie)



Excavations at House 2
Skara Brae in 1927

Attribute 5:

The role of the WHS monuments in the development of archaeology as a discipline.

The monuments played a pivotal role in the shaping of the field of archaeology over the centuries. From when antiquarians took interest in the 18th and 19th centuries, the emergence of archaeology as a scientific discipline became more well known, and the area defined as the WHS was at the forefront of archaeological thought and discoveries and research here influenced global considerations of ancient civilisations. As archaeology continues to evolve, so does our understanding of the WHS and the broader Neolithic landscape.

- The West Mainland sites served as a focus of antiquarian interest and investigation in the 18th and 19th centuries. The 20th century saw excavations at Skara Brae as archaeology developed as a scientific discipline. The sites thus played an important role in the development of archaeological thought. The Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and Maeshowe were amongst the first archaeological sites in Britain to be protected under the 1882 Ancient Monuments Protection Act.
- Skara Brae occupies an iconic position in popular knowledge, in part as a consequence of the work of the first Abercromby Professor of Archaeology, Professor Gordon Childe at Skara Brae in the early 20th century. Through his work Skara Brae came to occupy a foundational role in many considerations of the development of a farming society at a global level.
- The continuing refinement of understanding of the WHS and its monuments and of the broader Neolithic through research and new discoveries, within the WHS boundaries and in the Buffer Zone and beyond.



Artifacts excavated at Skara Brae

2.5 The Wider Values

2.5.1 COMMUNITY VALUES

In addition to OUV, all WHSs have many other associated values. UNESCO recognises that

“These other values are part of the natural and cultural richness of the property, and the harmonious protection, conservation and management of all values is an objective of good conservation practice. Understanding local values means consulting local people [...] Local people are a primary source of information about local values.”

(UNESCO Resource Manual, [Preparing World Heritage Nominations](#))

Effectively managing the HONO WHS presents the challenge of not only protecting the OUV but considering the wider range of values associated with the Site in a holistic manner. As demonstrated by the results of the community engagement (see Section 1.5), the people of Orkney, as the community inhabiting the landscape, feel a sense of ownership and stewardship over the Site, the presence of which contributes to the islands’ sense of place and identity.

Local communities have clearly indicated that they value the intangible aspects of the WHS including its sense of tranquillity, presence in traditional songs and culture, its inspiration to artists, myths and stories related to the WHS and the memories and identity it inspires. Biodiversity, ecology, the natural environment and the scenery are also of value, as are the ongoing heritage practices such as archaeology, conservation and application of traditional skills. Also valued are the recreational activities including sightseeing, birdwatching, fishing and walking and cycling through the WHS.

Engagement with local communities has also highlighted the need to continue to work to better understand the full range of values associated with the WHS and Buffer Zone, including through encouraging research. This is also important as we make decisions in the context of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Incorporating these values and aspirations into the future management of the site is a priority for the partners.



HONO WHS Community Map



2.5.2 NATURAL HERITAGE VALUES

The World Heritage Centre and advisory bodies increasingly emphasise the integration of cultural and natural heritage. While HONO was inscribed as a cultural WHS it is inextricably connected to the landscapes and habitats that surround it. Orkney has been inhabited for the past 9,000 years, and farming people were changing the landscape from their arrival 6,000 years ago. Management of the WHS must recognise the ways that natural and cultural heritage influence and interconnect with one another. Increasing pressures from climate change (Section 3.3 and 4.1) and nature loss on the landscapes and ecological and natural systems are so interwoven with the past and present of the WHS that it is critical that we do so.

There are multiple natural heritage designations within or partially within the Buffer Zone, recognising key habitats and geological heritage, and the RSPB Brodgar Reserve adjoins the Ring of Brodgar on three sides. Part of the WHS and Buffer Zone falls within the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area. Harray Loch is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) and Stenness Loch is both an SSSI and a Special Area of Conservation (See Appendix 4 for a map showing natural heritage and landscape designations relative to the WHS and Buffer Zone).

Biodiversity action plans have previously been carried out for all the WHS monuments, and management of the meadow at the Ring of Brodgar was developed in consultation with RSPB to encourage biodiversity, but much more

remains to be done to ensure that we manage natural and cultural heritage interests holistically for the benefit of both. As landowners and managers, HES and OIC, plus advisory partners, have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, in line with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. By ensuring any new development proposals are sensitively located, designed and implemented any potential impacts to biodiversity can be reduced, and opportunities to make positive contributions to biodiversity encouraged.

Flat-stalked pondweed



“By regarding heritage as both cultural and natural, the Convention reminds us of the ways in which people interact with nature, and of the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.”

World Heritage Convention

Visitors enjoying a guided tour of the Ring of Brodgar led by a Historic Environment Scotland Ranger



Community members taking part in a Peedie Pottery session at Maeshowe Visitor Centre



Site staff welcoming visitors to Skara Brae at the visitor centre



Learners visiting Maeshowe Chambered Cairn as part of the Historic Environment Scotland Heritage remixed project in Orkney in 2021



A group of visitors on a guided tour of the Ring of Brodgar



Solstice Art workshop with
Stenness Primary School
(© Colin Keldie)



3.0 PEOPLE AND THE PLAN: PARTNERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY



3.1 The Management Plan Partners

As stated in Section 1.2.1, the formal signatories to the Management Plan are HES and OIC who formally ratify the WHS Management Plan. They are supported by a number of Advisory Partners, who bring valuable input and insight in their respective areas.

SIGNATORY PARTNERS



Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is the lead body for Scotland's historic environment; a charity dedicated to the advancement of heritage, culture, education, and environmental protection. All four main monuments and the associated standing stones and mounds that make up the WHS are designated as Scheduled Monuments and are Properties in Care, managed by HES on behalf of Scottish Ministers, under the terms of the 1979 AMAA Act. This includes caring for the physical condition of the sites, managing visitors at the staffed and unstaffed sites, and providing interpretation and engagement. HES has a lead role in all Scotland's World Heritage properties. HES is also responsible for determining applications for scheduled monument consent, providing advice to local planning authorities on listed building and conservation area consent and planning applications, and is a consultee for Environmental Impact Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments.



Orkney Islands Council (OIC) is the Local Authority acting for the good of all Orkney: its people, communities, culture, environment and economy, as set out in the [Council Plan 2023 - 2028 \(orkney.gov.uk\)](#). OIC has responsibility for a diverse range of services relevant to management of the WHS and owns and maintains the car parks at the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness. It oversees various key services that are directly relevant to the management and protection of the WHS, including roads and public transport, marine services (which covers cruise ship access to Orkney), economic development, development management, and coastal protection. OIC also implements a range of statutory development planning and management functions and employs a County Archaeologist to maintain the Sites and Monuments Record for Orkney and provide archaeological advice for development management. OIC manages several museums, including the Orkney Museum which holds a collection of artefacts from Skara Brae, and various visitor centres and sites, one of which is the reconstructed Neolithic settlement at Barnhouse in the WHS Buffer Zone.

ADVISORY PARTNERS



Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is the economic and community development agency for the north and west of Scotland. Their purpose is to help build a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy across the Highlands and Islands, attracting more people to live, work, study, invest and visit here.



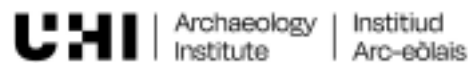
RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) is the UK's largest conservation charity. One of the ways in which they deliver on their mission is to protect, restore and manage habitats for biodiversity. The RSPB has a network of 77 nature reserves in Scotland, of which 12 are in Orkney. This includes the Brodgar Reserve which surrounds the Ring of Brodgar on three sides.



Green Space Dark Skies event at the Ring of Brodgar, led by Walk the Plank, is a joyous visual tribute, bringing together artists, engineers, technical innovation, and citizens to create a special moment, the gathering made by human beings working with light
(© Green Space Dark Skies, Mark Ferguson)



NatureScot (NS) is Scotland's nature agency. They work to enhance our natural environment and inspire the people of Scotland to care for it. NatureScot focuses on connecting people and nature and tackling biodiversity loss and the climate emergency with large and small-scale nature-based solutions. They advise local authorities and work with the Scottish Parliament and with public, private and voluntary organisations towards shared aims.



University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Archaeology Institute is part of UHI Orkney, which is part of OIC and an affiliated college in the University of the Highlands and Islands. As a teaching and research organisation the Archaeology Institute is dedicated to advancing understanding of the historic environment through the creation, interpretation and dissemination of archaeological knowledge. The Archaeology Institute combines teaching, academic research, and commercial applied research and consultancy. The UHI Archaeology Institute has extensive research expertise in the HONO WHS, and with WHSs worldwide.



A celebration of the 20th anniversary of inscription at the Maeshowe visitor centre with site staff and pupils from Stenness Primary School.

3.2 The Management Plan Steering Group

The Management Plan Steering Group provides strategic direction and oversight for the management of the WHS and is accountable for development and implementation of the Management Plan. The Steering Group monitors progress of the Action Plan and keeps both the Objectives and the overall Plan under review. It provides a forum to draw on, and share, the members' range of experience and expertise.

The core Steering Group is made up of representatives from OIC and HES. In addition, the Advisory partners are invited to join the Steering Group as Advisory members, with the aim of ensuring a coordinated approach to management for the WHS. Advisory members may attend only when necessary and relevant to their organisational remit.

The members are the links between the Steering Group and their organisations and relevant and senior departments.

The Steering Group is supported by a WHS Coordinator to help ensure effective coordination between the Partners and to enable the implementation, monitoring and revision of the Management Plan and its Objectives. The coordinator also promotes awareness and understanding of the OUV and public benefit of HONO, and the value of World Heritage status more widely, to Partners, stakeholders and the public, serves as a central point for information and advice about the Site and represents the Steering Group at meetings and event

The Steering Group will meet at least twice annually to review progress on the Management Plan and Action Plan, set priorities for the next six to 12 months, and discuss emerging issues and challenges.

An annual summary and set of recommendations will be produced by the Steering Group to inform their respective organisations and highlight any priorities for action and / or funding (see Section 6. Monitoring and Delivery).

3.3 Community and Stakeholders

WHSs have a role in the life of the community, contributing to quality of life and wellbeing. UNESCO recognises the importance of associated communities in understanding and management of WHSs. At the same time, as part of the inheritance of all humanity, a WHS can have stakeholders and communities of interest that are located far from the Site, so some consideration should also be given to their role. Individuals are often members of multiple groups and communities and so can be stakeholders in more than one way. It is important not to oversimplify “community” and ignore the different interests in and connections to a WHS that different individuals and groups may have.

Local Resident Community are made up of multiple types and their stake in the WHS may be personal, professional, or both. They include:

- Immediate residents around the WHS and Buffer Zones.
- The wider population of West Mainland.
- Residents of all Orkney Mainland and isles.
- Community Councils represent immediate geographical communities.

Organisations like the Orkney Disability Forum represent the interests of parts of the community with specific needs. Orkney also has a rich range of membership organisations representing members with interests in heritage, local history and archaeology, culture, art, craft, natural heritage and outdoor recreation.

The local community also includes people who work at, in or in connection with, the WHS. This includes HES site and conservation staff; volunteers; members of Orkney's large community of archaeologists; OIC staff who manage and maintain key infrastructure; RSPB reserve wardens.

Landowners and Land Managers both public and private, own and manage much of the Buffer Zone. The agricultural community is a vital component in rural stewardship and managing change around the WHS.

Tourism Stakeholders are important given the role that the WHS plays in Orkney's tourism economy, and the positive and negative impacts that tourism can have on the WHS. Stakeholders include VisitScotland, Orkney Tourist Guides Association, accommodation providers, restaurants, local tour guiding companies, coach operators, cruise liaison staff, transport providers, craftspeople and leisure activity providers.

Researchers, students and academics in archaeology and a wide range of related disciplines, both residents and visiting form a community of interest and are stakeholders in the WHS monuments and wider archaeological and historic landscape, both as individuals and as representatives of their institutions. The UHI and the Ness of Brodgar Trust have brought large numbers of archaeologists and volunteers into the heart of the Stenness and Brodgar Buffer Zone every summer for the past fifteen years to excavate at the Ness of Brodgar site.

Wider connections People with family connections to Orkney form one of the non-local, often international communities of interest. This also encompasses people who have no specific connection to Orkney but have a deep interest in and concern for the sites. Visitors, both regional, national and international are often part of this group, or become part of it after visiting Orkney.

The sites are spiritually important to many people, both residents and visitors. This includes practicing Pagans, people of other faiths and people of no formal faith. Marriage and other ceremonies are held at Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness. Finally, the WHS and its landscape act as inspiration, influence or subject to artists, writers and poets both resident and visiting.



The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan consultation (© K4 Graphics)

3.4 The Partnership Principles

These are the Partners' agreed ways of working that guide decision-making at every level.

Cooperation and Collaboration

To protect and conserve the unique qualities of the WHS it is vital that different organisations and individuals come together with a common goal. Working together we are greater than the sum of our parts. We will collaborate and cooperate to safeguard the OUV of the Site and deliver our shared Vision. We will look for constructive solutions to our challenges and work with other organisations wherever possible to achieve shared goals, seeking to understand and to celebrate the full range of contributions that a diversity of people and groups can make.

World Heritage Values

As custodians of a WHS, the Partners have committed to the values that underpin the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. The World Heritage Committee has adopted "Five Cs" to guide the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. These are: Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-Building, Communication, and Communities. Of these Conservation, Communication, and Communities are the most relevant to HONO, and we will strive to ensure our decisions are the best they can be to increase public awareness, increase public enjoyment and belonging, public involvement and their role in the management and protection of the WHS.

Climate Action and Sustainability

Climate change is a global emergency that transcends national borders. It is an issue that requires international cooperation and coordinated solutions at all levels. Not only does it threaten HONO WHS it also threatens the people of Orkney, Scotland, the UK, and the international community. It is critical that in all our management decisions and actions we seek to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, and to ensure that we are pursuing sustainable solutions for the future. We will be guided by the World Heritage Convention recognition of the way that people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.



Learners taking part in the HES Heritage remixed project at the Maeshowe Visitor Centre.



Solstice Art workshop with Stenness Primary School
(© Colin Keldie)

4.0 CHALLENGES AND THEMES



4.1 Climate Emergency

UNESCO recognises climate change as one of the most significant and increasing threats to WHSs worldwide and to their potential for contributing to economic and social development at the local level. In recognition of the severity of the climate emergency a commitment to Climate Action and Sustainability has been adopted by the Partners as one of our three guiding principles (Section 3.3. The Partnership Principles). In 2019 OIC declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to making progress towards Net Zero and decarbonisation (see Orkney Council Plan 2023-2028). HES is committed to supporting a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and has a range of roles in understanding and addressing climate change and heritage for Scotland.

HES published a baseline Climate Change Risk Assessment in 2018 for all Scotland's Properties in Care, including the HONO monuments. In 2019 a Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) assessment for HONO WHS was carried out (see Appendix 1 for the report). This assessment identified that HONO was extremely vulnerable to the impacts of three key climate drivers: Sea Level Change, Precipitation Change, and Storm Intensity and Frequency and that there is potential for major loss or substantial alteration to the OUV of the Site by 2050. The process also identified that Air Temperature Change was likely to be an important driver of change in the future. The results of the CVI assessment informed this Management Plan and underlined the need for further research to better understand current and future impacts.

HES 2020 Climate Action Plan 2020-2025 outlines HES' approach, setting out a programme of work and includes topics relevant to the Management of the WHS including Adaptation, Sustainable Tourism, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Travel.

All management of the WHS should consider the climate resilience planning already in place by HES including Climate Ready HES 2021, Climate Action Plan 2020-2025 and the Climate Change Risk Assessment 2018.

In recent years, the Ring of Brodgar has experienced increased footfall along with changes to precipitation patterns. This has consisted of increased rainfall, changes to rainfall patterns and periods of dry weather, all of which have led to increasing footfall erosion. Cumulatively, these factors threaten the fabric of the site and degrade the experience for all visitors. In response, an extensive programme of works has been carried out to create more resilient surfaces. Despite this, periodic closures of parts of the site have been necessary. In the past, the Stones of

Entrance passage to Maeshowe Chambered Cairn. Note puddles of water and damp on the roof of the passage.



Erosion at the
Ring of Brodgar



Stenness have proved more resilient, but climate impacts combined with changes in visitation patterns could potentially see increased footfall pressure cause similar issues.

At Maeshowe monitoring reveals that the Viking runic inscriptions on the interior stonework appear stable. However, there are potential impacts to the structure of the monument from changes to wetting/drying cycles and groundwater flooding that are not well understood at present.

At Skara Brae coastal erosion and sea level rise remain the predominant threat to the survival of the site in the longer term. This is being addressed in the short and medium-term by periodic monitoring and ongoing sea wall maintenance and repair, but in the longer term the threat will increase. There is also clear evidence of extensive further archaeological remains beyond the site as it is visible today, and these are also at risk. Finally, there is some potential for a single extreme coastal weather event to seriously damage the site. One of the essential actions identified for the Management Plan is to develop and implement a long-term strategy to address the threat to Skara Brae from climate change, sea level rise and associated coastal erosion.

There may also be changes over time to the landscape of the Buffer Zones driven by changes to the climate. For example, loss of some species, increases in invasive species, changes to vegetation cover and changes to farming practice in response to climate factors could eventually alter local ecosystems/habitat and landscape and affect the sense of place. Changes to flora and fauna on the monuments themselves could also be damaging.



Addressing the climate emergency at HONO must include both adaptation and mitigation:

Climate Adaptation: measures taken to adjust to changing climate conditions, reduce vulnerability, and increase resilience of heritage assets to climate-related risks.

Climate mitigation: these are actions taken to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

Waves breaking against the seawall at Skara Brae.

4.2 Planning and Uncertainty

The approach taken in this Management Plan is intended to allow for more flexibility in pursuing our shared Vision and Aims in the face of uncertainty, a key lesson learnt following the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing us to better respond to challenges and opportunities whether foreseen or unforeseen. We can anticipate some likely changes and trends, for example:

- Climate change, natural disasters, extreme weather and environmental degradation impacting the WHS, its infrastructure and preservation and conservation efforts.
- Increasing visitor numbers and the physical impacts on the WHS.
- Economic pressures and changing departmental budgets potentially impacting the running of the WHS.
- Changes in community needs changing who visits the WHS and how.
- Cultural shifts and changing tourism patterns impacting visitor demographics and behaviour.
- Political change impacting high-level management decisions and the running of the WHS.

On an immediate level, resource uncertainty can often be an issue. While baseline resourcing to ensure protection and preservation of OUV is not at issue, delivery of individual objectives and actions can be affected if staff or financial resources are lost when organisations restructure, or if wider pressures on partners and stakeholders create conflicting priorities for action. To limit the chances of this happening, agreed Management Plan commitments should be realistic, measurable and embedded at all levels in Partner priorities.

Flexibility will be required to shape our decisions and actions as we navigate anticipated change and when unpredicted events or new trends emerge and to lead or join with complex or multi-level responses.

4.3 Tourism and Access

HONO plays a key role in Orkney's tourism economy being a major driver for visitation to the Islands. Many Orkney residents work in the sector, and make a significant contribution to the local economy, with OIC's Island Visitor Survey 2019 calculating that tourism was worth £67 million per year to Orkney, with 394,000 visitors to Orkney. This includes cruise passengers (132,000), and crew (50,000) as well as 28,000 other day visitors. The most visited sites were the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae and Skail House (Orkney Tourism Strategy 2020-2030).

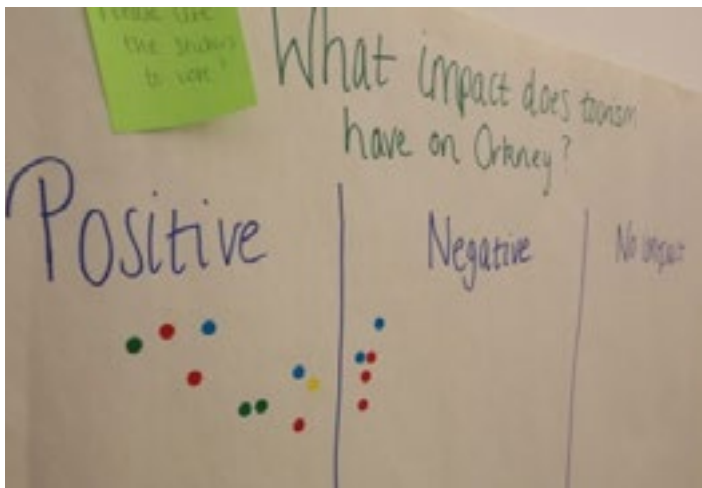
Finding the right balance between enabling access to the HONO for tourists and residents while preserving the OUV of the Site and managing the other values associated with it is a key issue for the long-term management of the Site.

Challenges to be addressed largely result from increasing numbers of visitors to the WHS, particularly to the open access sites at the Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness. In 2022 it is estimated that 269,000 visits were made to the

WHS monuments. This was less than the estimated 2019 high of 327,000 but numbers of visits are projected to increase again for the coming years as the trend continues upwards.

These visits are not spread evenly across the year, and the majority are concentrated into the summer season and within that to specific periods of the day. This reflects the significant role that cruise passengers play in driving levels of visitation, as well as the highly seasonal nature of independent tourism in Orkney. As noted above, the combined impact of this pattern of footfall with climate change impacts has required increasingly major interventions, including periodic closures of parts of the Ring of Brodgar. It also creates visitor management issues at Skara Brae. It is therefore critical that measures are developed to address peak time footfall at the sites to prevent erosion and maintain the visitor experience.

This must be achieved in a manner that reflects the fact that access to the WHS in the widest sense is a fundamental principle for the future management of the Site. This means not only physical access for residents and visitors but also includes intellectual access through interpretation and research, and remote access to information and digital experiences for those who are unable to visit in person.



Feedback provided by the community taking part on the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan consultation. (© K4 Graphics)



Visitors at the Stones of Stenness



SIRFA - Visiting the Ring of Brodgar as part of the SIRFA symposium (© ScARF)

Responsible and sustainable tourism is not only about numbers: it is also about positive and negative impacts on the sites, on infrastructure, on local residents, and on the experience of the WHS for both residents and visitors. At present, high season peak day numbers can cause issues for residents and put pressure on existing facilities, infrastructure and the natural and historic environment. New approaches therefore need to be found to deliver benefits from tourism, while minimising any threats. This is a key driver for this Management Plan, the Partners, and the Orkney WHS Programme.

4.4 Community Involvement

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre recognises the importance of ensuring that the communities local to WHSs are engaged in the management of the Site. They recommend an inclusive and participatory approach to planning and stakeholder consultation. Consultation with Orkney residents strongly supported community involvement to ensure sustainable management of the Site. The Steering Group will also invite an elected member for the West Mainland to join. Good communication is a challenge that persists at the WHS and is thus a particularly crucial step in bridging the gap between the organisations protecting and managing the WHS and the surrounding community.

The community consultation work carried out as part of the Plan process (Section 1.5) was one way to understand how the Orkney community views the current management of the WHS, what their priorities are, and whether, and how, they would like to be further informed about and involved in future management planning and delivery. One of the most important findings was a strong desire for better communication between the organisations that manage the WHS and the surrounding area and the wider community, as well as the active involvement in planning and decision making. People were keen to have better understanding of what decisions are being made and why, as well as the assurance that future activity will involve them.

Some voices in the local communities are heard less often than others. Sometimes called “less heard voices” it is often the case that they are “less listened to”. There are opportunities to increase participation, inclusion and intellectual and physical access to the WHS through thinking about how our communication choices affect different groups. To do this well it is important to listen to what people need, through engaging with organisations like Disability Action Orkney, The Blide Trust and Voluntary Action Orkney. Young people are also often missing from these conversations and new ways of ensuring their voices are heard and their views are taken into account are important, not least as they will be the future custodians of the WHS.

Communication should be a two-way process: written reports and social media updates have an important role to play but the Partners should seek a wider variety of ways to communicate, led by community desires and best practice examples at other WHSs, to foster conversations about the management and values of HONO. An accessible plain-English summary of this Management Plan will be published along with the full plan, and the Partners will commit to providing more regular updates – both formal and informal – via local media, holding at least one community meeting event per year, and to exploring a better online presence for the WHS.

The Heart of Neolithic
Orkney World Heritage Site
Management Plan consultation
(© K4 Graphics)





The sea wall protecting Skara Brae during a storm
(© Colin Keldie)

4.5 Sustainability

Sustainable management decisions take into account the environment (natural and cultural), the economy, and present requirements in ways that consider the needs of future generations. Decision-makers should consider if choices made now might damage, deplete or degrade the WHS and its environment for future generations. In line with our shared Principles (Section 3.3) we should also consider the impacts of our decisions on sustainability more broadly – for example, when planning infrastructure changes we should be mindful of the climate impacts and try to avoid choices that constrain the choices of future generations through our actions today. Much of this will be guided by the existing organisational strategies and policies of Partners and stakeholders, and we should be mindful that the Actions we design to deliver this Plan align with these.

In line with responses to the SEA Environmental Report the Steering Group will draft and agree a sustainability checklist to sit alongside the Action Plan and as part of ongoing mitigation and monitoring commitments in delivering the Management Plan (see Appendices 3 and 4).

UNESCO's Operational Guidelines emphasise the importance of sustainability at WHSs which, so long as the OUV is respected, "may sustain biological and cultural diversity and provide ecosystem services and other benefits, which may contribute to environmental and cultural sustainability. Properties may support a variety of ongoing and proposed uses that are ecologically and culturally sustainable and which may enhance the quality of life and well-being of communities concerned."

THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

There are 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), part of the of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all member states. These interconnected goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity and cover areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice. The crucial importance of heritage to societies and its great potential to contribute to social, economic and environmental goals are now recognised as an enabler of sustainable development. We are encouraged to harness the potential of World Heritage properties to contribute to sustainable development and increase the effectiveness and relevance of the World Heritage Convention.



Detailed image of the sea wall constructed at Skara Brae to help protect the site from the damaging effects of coastal erosion.

Scotland's National Performance Framework National Outcomes



Culture



Environment



Education



Communities



Fair work & business



International

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Sustainable Cities & Communities



Climate Action



Good health & Wellbeing



Sustainable Cities & Communities



Quality Education



Partnership for the Goals



Quality Education



Decent Work & Economic Growth

Management Plan: Long Term Aims

Aim
1, 2, 4, 5

Aim
1, 5

Aim
2, 4, 5, 6

Aim
1, 3

Aim
3, 6

Aim
1, 2, 3, 6

Table showing the connections between Scotland's National Performance Framework National Outcomes, the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Management Plan Long Term Aims.



Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF) and the Sustainable Development Goals share the same aims. The NPF localises the SDGs. For this Management Plan the key NPF Outcomes and the most relevant of the SDGs they link to are shown below. They also connect through to the long-term Aims of this Management Plan (see Section 5.1 for the full Aims).

4.6 Research and Learning

4.6.1 RESEARCH

Most of the current research relating to the WHS is focused on archaeology and climate change. There is therefore an opportunity to broaden research into other fields.

The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Research Agenda 2005 continues to serve as a key resource for guiding research linked to the HONO WHS. However, The HONO Research Strategy 2013-2018 is currently due for renewal. Scotland's Islands Research Framework for Archaeology (SIRFA) presents an opportunity to ensure the research needs of the WHS are embedded into a wider, more comprehensive framework. SIRFA is a project to develop and disseminate a regional research framework for the Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney, set within a broader, island-wide archaeological research framework for Scotland. The third and final SIRFA was held in Orkney in March 2023. The completed Framework will inform future research at and around the WHS.

Opportunities exist to continue wider research on social context, community value, wellbeing, natural environment, and longer-term climatic factors to both deepen knowledge and improve the management of the WHS. This should include research into visitor motivations, experience and satisfaction, given the importance of the WHS to the Orkney economy.

Involving local communities in the research process can incorporate traditional knowledge, oral histories, and cultural perspectives, enriching interpretations and fostering collaborative relationships which can be addressed through Aims 2, 3 and 4 (see Section [5.1](#)).

4.6.2 LEARNING

The WHS has the potential to be developed further as an exceptional resource for educational institutions. Schools, universities and further education organisations could include HONO as part of their learning programmes, as many of those in Orkney already do. To further a broad range of learning and research, there is a need for improved and better access to the associated collections and archive material, and to accurate information about the WHS. It is crucial to raise awareness with learning institutions about the research and learning opportunities made possible through the WHS.

The existing education and outreach programme delivered in the community by the HES Ranger Service is highly valued by the community and it is worth investigating ways to expand engagement with school pupils and young people, particularly secondary schools and youth groups. There is potential to increase engagement with young people and increase their involvement with the WHS and its future management, for example through partnerships with educational institutions.

5.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



5.1 Long-Term Aims

To deliver the agreed Vision the management partners agreed six long-term Aims. These are a revised version of the Aims that form the past two management plans (2008 and 2014). These Aims expand on the shared aspirations for the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site and look beyond this ten-year management plan period to 2050.

Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site
Management Plan consultation at the Dounby Show



Aim 1

Protect and conserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site for present and future generations.

**Aim 2**

Inspire and engage people with the Heart of Neolithic Orkney and deepen their understanding of the Site's values.

© Ken Amer

**Aim 3**

Benefit people and communities in Orkney and elsewhere.

© K4 Graphics

**Aim 4**

Interpret and present the Heart of Neolithic Orkney to the highest standard.

**Aim 5**

Enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site responsibly, sustainably and equitably.

**Aim 6**

Facilitate a diversity of research connected to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney and draw on the results to pursue the Long Term Aims.

© Laura Mackenzie



5.2 Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives outlined below are intended to achieve the long-term aims throughout the ten-year duration of this Management Plan. Further details on how these objectives will be accomplished can be found in Chapter 6 Monitoring and Delivery.

The Objectives will be delivered through an Action Plan agreed, reviewed, and updated every year by the management partners. This will allow us to respond to new opportunities and issues as they come up and to focus our resources where they can have the greatest effect.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 01 | The WHS is protected, conserved, and maintained in accordance with national guidance and legislation, and international conservation charters; including both historic environment and natural environment considerations. |
| 02 | The boundaries of the Buffer Zone are suitable for purpose and included in future iterations of the Local Development Plan. |
| 03 | Policy and guidance produced by the partners that affects the protection and management of the WHS, Buffer Zone and wider setting is up to date and fit for purpose. |
| 04 | Governance of the WHS is robust and transparent and is periodically reviewed (see Section 6. Monitoring and Delivery). |
| 05 | The Management Plan remains relevant, is fit for purpose, and allows the partners to respond to new understandings and challenges. |
| 06 | Decision makers and communities can access what they need to know about the WHS and Buffer Zone, understand the opportunities and obligations that come with WH status, and are engaged with the management of the WHS. |
| 07 | Management of the WHS prioritises adaption to the effects of the Climate Emergency on the WHS and Buffer Zone, and mitigation of climate impacts by reducing emissions and contributing to a sustainable low-carbon society. |
| 08 | A programme of monitoring is in place for both the state of conservation and the implementation of actions for the WHS and Buffer Zone and the results are used by the Partners to inform decision making and future management. |



Short-eared owl

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 09 | The Partners are collaborating to identify and access new sources of funding to support new projects and programmes to deliver shared Objectives. |
| 10 | Management and interpretation (onsite and offsite, including digitally) enhance awareness and understanding of the archaeological and historical heritage, the natural environment, the Buffer Zone and the WHS in its wider context, geographically and through time. All based on robust research and understanding. |
| 11 | The WHS and its associated sites and assets, materials and records (physical and digital) are easily accessible for use in research, education and training and are used by a range of community and special interest groups and projects. |
| 12 | Key stakeholders are involved in, informed about, and engaged with the decision-making process for managing the WHS and its associated infrastructure. |
| 13 | Tourism at and around HONO offers a world class responsible visitor experience while benefitting Orkney communities. |
| 14 | Strong connections between HONO and other WHSs and UNESCO designations are maintained and developed enabling development of shared solutions to common issues. |
| 15 | Research needs for the understanding, interpretation, protection and management of HONO WHS are identified and integrated with relevant research frameworks at a regional, nation and international level. |
| 16 | The WHS delivers a wide range of measurable benefits – social, economic, cultural, environmental, wellbeing – to Orkney's communities. |

6.0 MONITORING AND DELIVERY



6.1 Governance

A Management Plan Steering Group has been established to guide the future management of HONO WHS (see Section 3.2 for details).

The Steering Group meets at least twice per year, and an annual summary and set of recommendations will be produced to highlight priorities for action and / or funding requirements (see Section 6.2.2). The terms of reference, membership, governance and code of conduct will be set out in the HONO WHS Steering Group Governance Agreement.

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is a responsibility that comes with the inscription on the World Heritage List and to ensure continued management and partnerships are upheld. It includes the monitoring of the condition of the WHS and its OUV (see Section 6.2.1), the monitoring of the implementation of the Management Plan and associated Action Plan (Section 6.2.2) and a mid-point Management Plan evaluation (Section 6.2.4).

6.2.1 MONITORING THE CONDITION OF THE WHS

UNESCO monitors the condition of World Heritage Sites through the Periodic Reporting Process. Every eight years all WHSs participate. The 3rd Cycle of Periodic Reporting for Europe and North America took place in 2022-23. Periodic Reporting is one of the core conservation monitoring mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention. Each State Party reports on the application of the World Heritage Convention in their territory. As part of this process each individual WHS submits a detailed Periodic report. The HONO report gives us a baseline to ensure the OUV of the Site is being properly protected and conserved.



Crested dog's tail grass.

Monitoring of key aspects of the physical Site and processes that affect it, and other related information. This includes the outcome of ongoing and one-off conservation actions, environmental and climate change impacts, proposed and active development proposals, and collection of data about visitor numbers, behaviour, impacts. The below provides an overview of what is monitored as part of the Periodic report:

- Physical site conditions: monitoring the structural integrity of buildings, monuments, and natural features. It involves assessing any signs of deterioration and damage due to environmental factors or human activities. Special attention is given to critical elements that contribute to the OUV.
- Environmental and climate change impacts: focused on understanding how environmental factors, including climate change, affect the components of the WHS and its OUV as well as assessing changes in biodiversity, habitat quality, water and air quality.
- Proposed and active development proposals: reviewing proposed development projects within or near the WHS boundaries to assess their potential impact on its OUV.
- Conservation related actions: monitoring the progress and effectiveness of ongoing conservation related actions (see Action Plan) and their impact on the WHS.
- Visitor data including visitor numbers, behaviours, and associated impacts: monitoring to understand the impacts of changes in visitor movements and behaviour, including tracking visitor demographics, patterns of visitation, visitor satisfaction levels, and the potential impact of tourism activities on the WHS.

Every four years a monitoring report will be produced by the Steering Group, addressing the above and informing the longer-cycle of Periodic Reporting and the mid-point evaluation of the Management Plan.



Visible signs of erosion at the Ring of Brodgar and the interpretation panel explaining to visitors why access to the interior of the site is prevented to protect it against erosion.

6.2.2 MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ACTION PLAN

Monitoring the progress of the Management Plan and associated Action Plan is a core function of the Steering Group. The following standing actions in the Action Plan will address this:

| Action | Outcome / Measure | Timetable | Frequency |
|--|--|-------------|------------|
| <p>1.1 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REVIEW: Dedicated session to assess and drive forward progress of the Action Plan and to review governance approach. Short report from each responsible party required before commencement of the review by way of update.</p> | <p>Memo and actions document and updated Action Plan.</p> <p>Annual bulletin</p> <p>Updated memo when new actions area added and agreed.</p> | March 2026 | Annually |
| <p>1.2 BIENNIAL ACTION PLAN DELIVERY REPORT: Summary report on progress including key updates, Action Plan progress etc for wider interest and for transparency.</p> | <p>Action Plan Delivery Report and Revised Action Plan</p> <p>Event for Elected Members and public.</p> <p>Social and local media updates.</p> | March 2028 | Two-yearly |
| <p>1.3 CAPACITY AND RESOURCING REVIEW: To identify any gaps in capacity that might impact the delivery of the Management Plan and fulfilment of UNESCO obligations.</p> | <p>Gap Analysis and action document.</p> | Spring 2026 | Annually |
| <p>1.7 MID-POINT EVALUATION: Evaluation at the mid-point of the Management Plan cycle to formally review the Management Plan, review and respond to challenges and changes in conservation and management practices.</p> | <p>Reviewed and updated Management Plan in place.</p> | Autumn 2031 | Once |



Aerial view of Skara Brae Neolithic village and Skail Bay

The Steering Group will meet annually to carry out an Action Plan Progress Review (Action 1.1) to discuss the progress of actions, including a progress overview, action responsibility, successes and challenges. As part of this process the Steering Group will confirm and agree any changes to the Action Plan, and agree new actions as needed. A Capacity and Resourcing Review (Action 1.3) will identify gaps in resources and capacity available to enable the delivery of Management Plan Action and UNESCO obligations.

- Annual summary and Recommendations Report will be provided to the organisations represented on the Steering Group, with a focus on key recommendations for funding and action.
- Every second year an Action Plan Delivery Report will be published online with key updates for local residents, the wider public and other stakeholders. This report will include a summary of conservation works, visitor management updates, and highlight upcoming plans, projects and events.

This ongoing review process will allow the Partners to react to changing circumstances and priorities over the ten-year period of the Plan.

6.2.3 MID-POINT EVALUATION OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A mid-point evaluation of the plan will be carried out in 2031. This will be a formal review and reflection of the overall progress of the Management Plan progress to date, though stopping short of a full renewal of the Plan. Considering the progress on the Action Plan and State of Conservation reporting, this will review the validity of the Objectives and update them if appropriate, responding to the results of new research and changes to our understanding of the WHS, and to any changes in conservation and management practices. It will also identify any new challenges in need of a high-level response.

6.2.4 REACTIVE MONITORING

In addition to the above programmed monitoring, there is a World Heritage Convention obligation to report to the World Heritage Committee whenever a major restoration or new construction project is proposed that could affect the OUV of the WHS. This process of Reactive Monitoring is required so that the Committee may assist in seeking appropriate solutions to ensure that the OUV of the property is fully preserved.

This reporting is the responsibility of the State Party (see Section 1.2.1), advised by HES and the Culture and Historic Environment Division in the Scottish Government.



Neolithic pottery vessel.

Bay of Skail below the Skara Brae sea wall
(© Colin Keldie)



Stone of Stenness WHS Ranger tour
(© Orkney.com)



Curlew can be seen and heard around the WHS.

Setting midwinter sun casting a ray of light onto the stone block at the back wall of the tomb at Maeshowe Chambered Cairn, during the Winter Solstice.



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

| | |
|-----------|---|
| CHED | Culture and Historic Environment Division (Scottish Government) |
| DCMS | Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (UK Government) |
| HES | Historic Environment Scotland |
| HIE | Highlands and Islands Enterprise |
| HONO | Heart of Neolithic Orkney |
| ICOMOS | The International Council on Monuments and Sites |
| ICOMOS UK | The International Council on Monuments and Sites: UK National Committee |
| NS | NatureScot |
| OIC | Orkney Islands Council |
| OUV | Outstanding Universal Value |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| SDGs | The UN Sustainable Development Goals |
| SEA | Strategic Environmental Assessment |
| SIRFA | Scottish Islands Research Framework for Archaeology |
| SOUV | Statement of Outstanding Universal Value |
| UHI | University of the Highlands and Islands |
| UNESCO | United Nations Environmental and Scientific Organisation |
| WHS | World Heritage Site(s) |

APPENDIX 1: KEY DOCUMENTS AND LINKS

Key Policy and Guidance

Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (2023) is Scotland's national spatial strategy and sets out spatial principles, regional priorities national developments and national planning policy. The policy requires that Development proposals affecting a WHS or its setting will only be supported where their OUV is protected and preserved.

The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) (2019) sets out a series of principles and policies for the recognition, care, and sustainable management of the historic environment.

Scheduled Monuments Consents Policy (2019) sets out the HES policy for making decisions about consents at scheduled monuments and supports HEPS.

Managing Change in the Historic Environment is a series of guidance notes produced by HES give best practice advice to help guide changes to the historic environment. One of these focuses on World Heritage and should be used to inform local planning policies and to help make decisions about planning applications that could affect a WHS.

The Orkney Local Development Plan (2017) and Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (2023) form the current Local Development Plan for Orkney. Together they establish policy to protect the WHS and its setting from inappropriate development in order to protect and preserve the OUV.

Presently Orkney Islands Council is reviewing the Local Development Plan and by 2028 will have produced a new Local Development Plan to sit alongside **Scotland's National Planning Framework 4**, that will include policy to protect the WHS and its OUV. Progress on the review of the Local Development Plan can be found at www.orkney.gov.uk.



Great yellow bumblebees are found at the Ring of Brodgar

OTHER RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICY, AND GUIDANCE:

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, and the Town and Country Planning (Neighbouring planning authorities and Historic Environment) (Scotland) Direction 2015

Historic Environment (Amendment) Scotland Act 2011

Our Past, Our Future – Scotland’s Strategy for the Historic Environment (2023)

Key Supporting Management Documents

Climate Vulnerability Index Assessment for Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Property (2019)

Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2014-2019

Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Research Strategy 2013-18

SIRFA participants at the Neolithic Dwarfie Stane on Hoy



APPENDIX 2: STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is a formal document written for each WHS as a key reference for effective protection and management. This Statement was submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and approved in 2013, and it can only be updated through a formal mechanism. As a result the text contains some references to policy and guidance that have since been superseded..

HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE: STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

Adopted by UNESCO World Heritage Committee Thirty-seventh session,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia, June 2013

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Property | Heart of Neolithic Orkney |
| State Party | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| Id. N° | 514rev |
| Date of inscription | 1999 |

BRIEF SYNTHESIS

The Orkney Islands lie 15km north of the coast of Scotland. The monuments are in two areas, some 6.6 km apart on the island of Mainland, the largest in the archipelago.

The group of monuments that make up the Heart of Neolithic Orkney consists of a remarkably well-preserved settlement, a large chambered tomb, and two stone circles with surrounding henges, together with a number of associated burial and ceremonial sites. The group constitutes a major relict cultural landscape graphically depicting life five thousand years ago in this remote archipelago.

The four monuments that make up the Heart of Neolithic Orkney are unquestionably among the most important Neolithic sites in Western Europe. These are the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe and Skara Brae. They provide exceptional evidence of the material and spiritual standards as well as the beliefs and social structures of this dynamic period of prehistory.

The four main monuments, consisting of the four substantial surviving standing stones of the elliptical Stones of Stenness and the surrounding ditch and bank of the henge, the thirty-six surviving stones of the circular Ring of Brodgar with the

thirteen Neolithic and Bronze Age mounds that are found around it and the stone setting known as the Comet Stone, the large stone chambered tomb of Maeshowe, whose passage points close to midwinter sunset, and the sophisticated settlement of Skara Brae with its stone built houses connected by narrow roofed passages, together with the Barnhouse Stone and the Watch Stone, serve as a paradigm of the megalithic culture of north-western Europe that is unparalleled.

The property is characteristic of the farming culture prevalent from before 4000 BC in northwest Europe. It provides exceptional evidence of, and demonstrates with exceptional completeness, the domestic, ceremonial, and burial practices of a now vanished 5000-year-old culture and illustrates the material standards, social structures and ways of life of this dynamic period of prehistory, which gave rise to Avebury and Stonehenge (England), Bend of the Boyne (Ireland) and Carnac (France).

The monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas were deliberately situated within a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnected ridgelines stretching from Hoy to Greeny Hill and back. They are also visually linked to other contemporary and later monuments around the lochs. They thus form a fundamental part of a wider, highly complex archaeological landscape, which stretches over much of Orkney. The current, open and comparatively undeveloped landscape around the monuments allows an understanding of the apparently formal connections between the monuments and their natural settings. The wealth of contemporary burial and occupation sites in the buffer zone constitute an exceptional relict cultural landscape that supports the value of the main sites.

Criterion (i): The major monuments of the Stones of Stenness, the Ring of Brodgar, the chambered tomb of Maeshowe, and the settlement of Skara Brae display the highest sophistication in architectural accomplishment; they are technologically ingenious and monumental masterpieces.

Criterion (ii): The Heart of Neolithic Orkney exhibits an important interchange of human values during the development of the architecture of major ceremonial complexes in the British Isles, Ireland and northwest Europe.

Criterion (iii): Through the combination of ceremonial, funerary and domestic sites, the Heart of Neolithic Orkney bears a unique testimony to a cultural tradition that flourished between about 3000 BC and 2000 BC. The state of preservation of Skara Brae is unparalleled amongst Neolithic settlement sites in northern Europe.

Criterion (iv): The Heart of Neolithic Orkney is an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble and archaeological landscape that illustrate a significant stage of human history when the first large ceremonial monuments were built.

INTEGRITY

All the monuments lie within the designated boundaries of the property. However, the boundaries are tightly drawn and do not encompass the wider landscape setting of the monuments that provides their essential context, nor other monuments that can be seen to support the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Part of the landscape is covered by a two part buffer zone, centred on Skara Brae in the west and on the Mainland monuments in the central west.

This fragile landscape is vulnerable to incremental change. Physical threats to the monuments include visitor footfall and coastal erosion.

AUTHENTICITY

The level of authenticity in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney is high. The state of preservation at Skara Brae is unparalleled for a prehistoric settlement in northern Europe. Where parts of the site have been lost or reconstructed during early excavations, there is sufficient information to identify and interpret the extent of such works.

Interventions at Maeshowe have been antiquarian and archaeological in nature; the monument is mostly in-situ and the passageway retains its alignment on the winter solstice sunset. Re-erection of some fallen stones at Stones of Stenness and Ring of Brodgar took place in the 19th and early 20th century, and works at Stenness also involved the erection of a 'dolmen', now reconfigured. There are, however, many antiquarian views of the monuments attesting to their prior appearance, and it is clear that they remain largely in-situ.

The central west Mainland monuments remain dominant features in the rural landscape. Their form and design are well-preserved and visitors are easily able to appreciate their location, setting and interrelationships with one another, with contemporary monuments situated outside the designated property, and with their geographical setting. This relationship with the wider topographic landscape helps define the modern experience of the property and seems to have been inextricably linked to the reasons for its development and use in prehistory.

PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

World Heritage properties in Scotland are protected through the following pieces of legislation. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 provide a framework for local and regional planning policy and act as the principal pieces of primary legislation guiding planning and development in Scotland. Additionally, individual buildings, monuments and areas of special archaeological or historical interest are designated and protected under The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) is the primary policy guidance on the protection and management of the historic environment in Scotland. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sits alongside the SHEP and is the Government's national planning policy on the historic environment. It provides for the protection of World Heritage properties by considering the impact of development on their Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and integrity.

Orkney Islands Council prepared the Local Development Plan that sets out the Council's policy for assessing planning applications and proposals for the allocation of land for development. The Plan contains policies that address the need to put an appropriate level of protection in place for the property and its setting. Supplementary Planning Guidance for the World Heritage Site has also been produced. These policies and guidance establish a general commitment to preserving the integrity and authenticity of the property. They also seek to manage the impact of development on the wider landscape setting, and to prevent development that would have an adverse impact on its Outstanding Universal Value through the designation of Inner Sensitive Zones, aligned with the two parts of the buffer zone and the identification of sensitive ridgelines outside this area. The Rural Conservation Area at Brodgar includes Maeshowe, the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar, and it is envisaged to establish a Rural Conservation Area at the Bay of Skail.

The property is in the care of Historic Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. A Management Plan has been prepared by Historic Scotland in consultation with the Partners who share responsibility for managing the sites and access to them: Orkney Islands Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Management Plan is a framework document, and sets out how the Partners will manage the property for the five years of the Plan period, together with longer-term aims and the Vision to protect, conserve, enhance and enjoy the property to support its Outstanding Universal Value. It does so by identifying a series of key issues and devising specific objectives or actions to address these issues. The Steering Group responsible for implementing the Management Plan comprises representatives of the Partners. Stakeholders drawn from the tourist industry, local landowners and the archaeological community participate in Delivery Groups reporting to the Steering Group with responsibilities for access and interpretation, research and education, conservation and protection, and tourism and marketing.

Condition surveys have been completed for each of the monuments. These documents record previous interventions and include a strategy for future maintenance and conservation. Conservation and maintenance programmes require detailed knowledge of the sites and are managed and monitored by suitably experienced and qualified professionals. Conservation work undertaken at the sites follows national and international policy and seeks to balance minimum intervention with public accessibility to the monuments. Any intervention is given careful consideration and will only occur following detailed and rigorous analysis of potential consequences. In conservation work, local materials have been used where appropriate.

Management of tourism in and around the World Heritage property seeks to recognise its value to the local economy, and to develop sustainable approaches to tourism. Key approaches include improved dispersal of visitors around the monuments that comprise the property and other sites in the wider area. A World Heritage Ranger Service supports this approach and allows for on-the-ground education about the issues affecting the site. The relationships and linkages between the monuments and the wider open, almost treeless landscape, and between the monuments that comprise the property and those in the area outside it that support the Outstanding Universal Value are potentially at risk from change and development in the countryside. The long-term need to protect the key relationships between the monuments and their landscape settings and between the property and other related monuments is kept under review by the Steering Group. Policy HE1 as well as the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site in the Local Development Plan and the associated Supplementary Guidance require that developments have no significant negative impact on either the Outstanding Universal Value or the setting of the World Heritage property.



APPENDIX 3: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND OTHER ASSESSMENTS

Strategic Environmental Assessment

In Scotland, public bodies are required to assess, consult on, and monitor the likely impacts their plans, programmes and strategies will have on the environment. This process is known as Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) carried out by HES found that the Plan's vision and long-term aims were overall positive or neutral for environmental factors. No negative issues were identified, though some uncertain effects were identified for landscape.

The SEA makes these recommendations:

- Consider how people can have an increased awareness and understanding of the effects of climate change on the WHS to allow them to have a deeper understanding of the Site's values.
- Consider the way that the World Heritage status could benefit the landscape which the WHS sits in, especially the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area.
- Consider if clearer recognition of landscape interests and their role in interpreting and presenting the WHS should also be included within this aim.
- Consider whether the presentation and interpretation of the WHS could be affected by or used to better understand, climate change.
- Look into possibility of including a research objective specifically around sustainable tourism effects on climate change.

An SEA Post-Adoption Statement is published on the HES website. This explains how the environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan; how the Environmental Report has been taken into account; how the opinions expressed by consultees have been taken into account; the reasons for choosing the plan, programme or strategy as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives considered; and measures to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan, programme or strategy.

The Schedule of Commitments lays out how we will take the SEA into account when we are carrying out the Management Plan.

| SEA Schedule of Commitments | Relevant environmental topic |
|--|---|
| Any proposals to alter the WHS Buffer Zone boundary will be developed in consultation with Partners and a public consultation exercise undertaken. | Population, human health, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna |
| Environmental assessment will be integrated into the development of options for both short- and long-term large scale physical measures to identify in detail the potential environmental effects on environmental parameters. | Climatic factors, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna |
| Steps taken to address carrying capacity issues should be sustainable in the long term and include natural heritage interests. | Population, human health, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna |
| The sustainability checklist should be applied to actions from all objectives within the detailed assessment, to ensure that a holistic environmental approach is taken in their delivery. | Climatic factors, population, human health, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna |
| Ensure careful consideration in proposals for any potential development or improvements to facilities at sites which may impact the sensitive heritage, landscape and natural environment. | Landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna |
| Suggest actions to encourage landowners or managers to contribute to the monitoring and management of the WHS Buffer Zone. | Cultural heritage |
| Integrate environmental assessment and archaeological investigation of any new interpretive, digital or management services or infrastructure. | Population, human health, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna. |
| Any new physical measures for digital, interpretive or management infrastructure should be sensitively located and designed to avoid effecting environmental parameters. | Landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna. |
| Active operational monitoring of the active travel and path networks is required to allow areas to be temporarily closed off if sensitive habitats shift in the future (bird nesting, seasonal growth etc). | Biodiversity, flora and fauna |
| Wider environmental issues will be included in interpretation plans. | Climatic factors, population, human health, landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, flora and fauna |

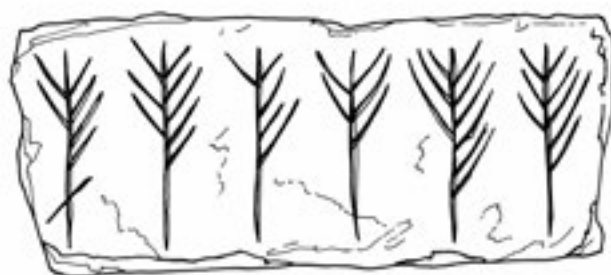
Other Assessments

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is required when a new or updated policy, project or decision is likely to impact on people. It checks whether there is likely to be a disproportionate impact on people protected under the Equality Act 2010. HES carried out a formal screening for the draft Management Plan. The result was that the plan is unlikely have a significant negative impact on any of the groups who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act. This means that a full Assessment of the Plan was not required. It is possible that future projects associated with the Plan might need their own Equalities Impact Assessments.

An Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) is required by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 to consider how a planned or revised policy, strategy or service might affect islands communities. OIC carried out an ICIA screening which concluded that a full ICIA was not required. As the plan-making process evolves, the need for an ICIA will be reviewed, as outlined in Step 4. Once the Management Plan is completed, ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review will include reviewing the assessment status.

Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA): This is a legal obligation protecting natural heritage sites with a European-level designation. The process considers whether any plan or project could affect one of these sites. This process is known as Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA); and uses the technical language associated with the regulations.

The HRA concluded that the Management Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of the Loch of Stenness Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and its “qualifying interests and conservation objectives”. This means that the Plan will not negatively impact the important natural heritage of the Loch of Stenness SAC. It is possible that future projects associated with the Plan might need an individual HRA.



Twig runes found carved inside Maeshowe

The Watchstone



APPENDIX 4: SUMMARY ACTION PLAN 2026-2028

The Action Plan is the working delivery document that will be used and updated by the Steering Group over the life of the Management Plan. Actions will be revised, added and retired as necessary. All the Actions should aid the delivery of the Management Plan, and external projects that are included here should contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan and the achievement of its Vision, Aims and Objectives. The Steering Group will draft and agree a sustainability checklist to sit alongside the Action Plan to form part of the ongoing mitigation and monitoring commitments.

This first Action Plan covers the next two years, but it included actions that are always required or that repeat on a multi-year timetable. Timeframe. The Management Plan outlines a 10-year cycle of Action Plan updates.

Progress reports for individual actions will be presented to the Steering Group for an Annual Action Plan Progress Review (Action 1.1) and a two-yearly Action Plan Progress Report will be produced (Action 1.2).

The Actions are organised into three categories, linking to the long-term Aims below:

1. **Monitoring** Actions: Repeated actions that will drive forward the Management Plan. Primarily supporting Aim 1
2. **Essential** Projects/Actions: One-off actions to will improve the WHS over time. Supporting Aims 2-6.
3. **Opportunities**: Desirable projects should resourcing and funding be identified. Supporting Aims 2-6.



Action Plan Section 1: Monitoring Actions

Repeated actions that will drive forward the Management Plan.

| Action | Timetable | Cycle | Linked Aim |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|------------|
| <p>Annual Action Plan Progress Review: Dedicated session to assess and drive forward progress of the Action Plan and to review governance approach. Short report from each responsible party required before commencement of the review by way of update.</p> | March 2027 | Annually | 1 |
| <p>Biennial Action Plan Delivery Report: Summary report on progress including key updates, Action Plan progress etc for wider interest and for transparency.</p> | March 2028 | Two-yearly | 1 |
| <p>Capacity and Resourcing Review: To identify any gaps in capacity that might impact the delivery of the Management Plan and fulfilment of UNESCO obligations.</p> | Spring 2026 | Annually | 1 |
| <p>Guidance Review: Review local, national and international guidance in relation to the protection and management of the WHS.</p> | Autumn 2026 | Two-yearly | 1 |
| <p>Participate in World Heritage related activities: Team members/partners to attend conferences, workshops and meetings including WHUK, UK National Commission for UNESCO, Scottish WH Coordinators Forum and other opportunities as appropriate and if funding is available.</p> | Ongoing | At least twice a year | 1 |
| <p>State of Conservation Monitoring: Mid-point State of Conservation review addressing changes in physical site conditions, environmental/ climate impacts, proposed/ active development proposals, and informing the formal Periodic Reporting cycle and Mid-point Evaluation.</p> | Winter 2030 | N/A | 1 |
| <p>Mid-point Evaluation: Evaluation at the mid-point of the Management Plan cycle to formally review the Management Plan, review and respond to challenges and changes in conservation and management practices.</p> | Autumn 2031 | N/A | 1 |

Action Plan Section 2: Essential Projects and Actions

One-off actions to improve and enhance the WHS over time

| Action | Timetable | Cycle | Linked Aim |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|------------|
| <p>Accessibility Audit: Accessibility audit to identify physical and intellectual barriers and identify actions to improve access for all. To include both Ring of Brodgar/ Stones of Stenness/Maeshowe and Skara Brae and connections between the component sites and to local communities and infrastructure.</p> | Summer 2026 | Two-yearly | 3,5 |
| <p>Community Involvement Options Appraisal: Options Appraisal to review and identify how the community could be more directly involved in the management of and engaged with the WHS, with a particular focus on landowners/managers and residents within the Buffer Zone.</p> | Winter 2026 | Five-yearly | 3,5 |
| <p>Maximise the opportunities provided through Orkney World Heritage Site Programme: Steering Group to establish formal terms and communications protocol with the Orkney World Heritage Site Programme to maximise opportunities for the HONO.</p> | Spring 2026 / Ongoing | As agreed | 1 |
| <p>Skara Brae Climate Change Strategy: Development and implementation of long-term strategy to address the threat to Skara Brae from climate change / sea level rise and associated coastal erosion.</p> | Spring 2027 | N/A | 1,5 |
| <p>Buffer Zone boundary review: Review of the Buffer Zone boundaries in parallel with the development of the new Local Development Plan. Any proposed changes agreed by Signatory Partners and a formal Minor Modification request submitted to UNESCO.</p> | Summer 2027 | N/A | 1 |

Action Plan Section 3: Opportunities

Projects that depend on identifying resourcing and funding.

| Action | Timetable | Cycle | Linked Aim |
|--|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| <p>Messaging and Interpretation Strategy: Development and implementation of a Strategy (including events, collections, online presence) to establish storytelling approaches and site cohesion and increase awareness of archaeology, geography, natural heritage and biodiversity through onsite and online material</p> | From autumn 2026 | Ten-yearly with five-year review | 2, 3, 4, 5 |
| <p>Digital Media Strategy: Building on Messaging and Interpretation Strategy and enhancing web presence and offer online access to information, news, interpretation and events.</p> | From autumn 2026 | Ten-yearly with five-year review | 2, 3, 4, 5 |
| <p>Research Group and Guidelines: Establishment of a research-focused steering group to develop and promote robust research guidelines, and to encourage and promote research projects across wide range of relevant fields.</p> | From 2027 | N/A | 2, 3, 4, 6 |
| <p>Biodiversity Strategy: Assessment of biodiversity and integration with existing strategies, for safeguarding biodiversity and the environment, for the WHS and immediately associated land and water.</p> | Early 2026 onwards | Five-yearly | 1 |



Orkney vole



Aerial view of Maeshowe
chambered cairn



FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

CONTACT HES

www.historicenvironment.scot

Email: worldheritage@hes.scot

CONTACT OIC

www.orkney.gov.uk

KEY LINKS

UNESCO World Heritage Centre
– World Heritage List: HONO WHS:
whc.unesco.org/en/list/514

Find out more about HONO
on the HES website:
www.historicenvironment.scot

For planning policies and guidance related
to the WHS see the relevant Orkney Islands
Council web pages: www.orkney.gov.uk



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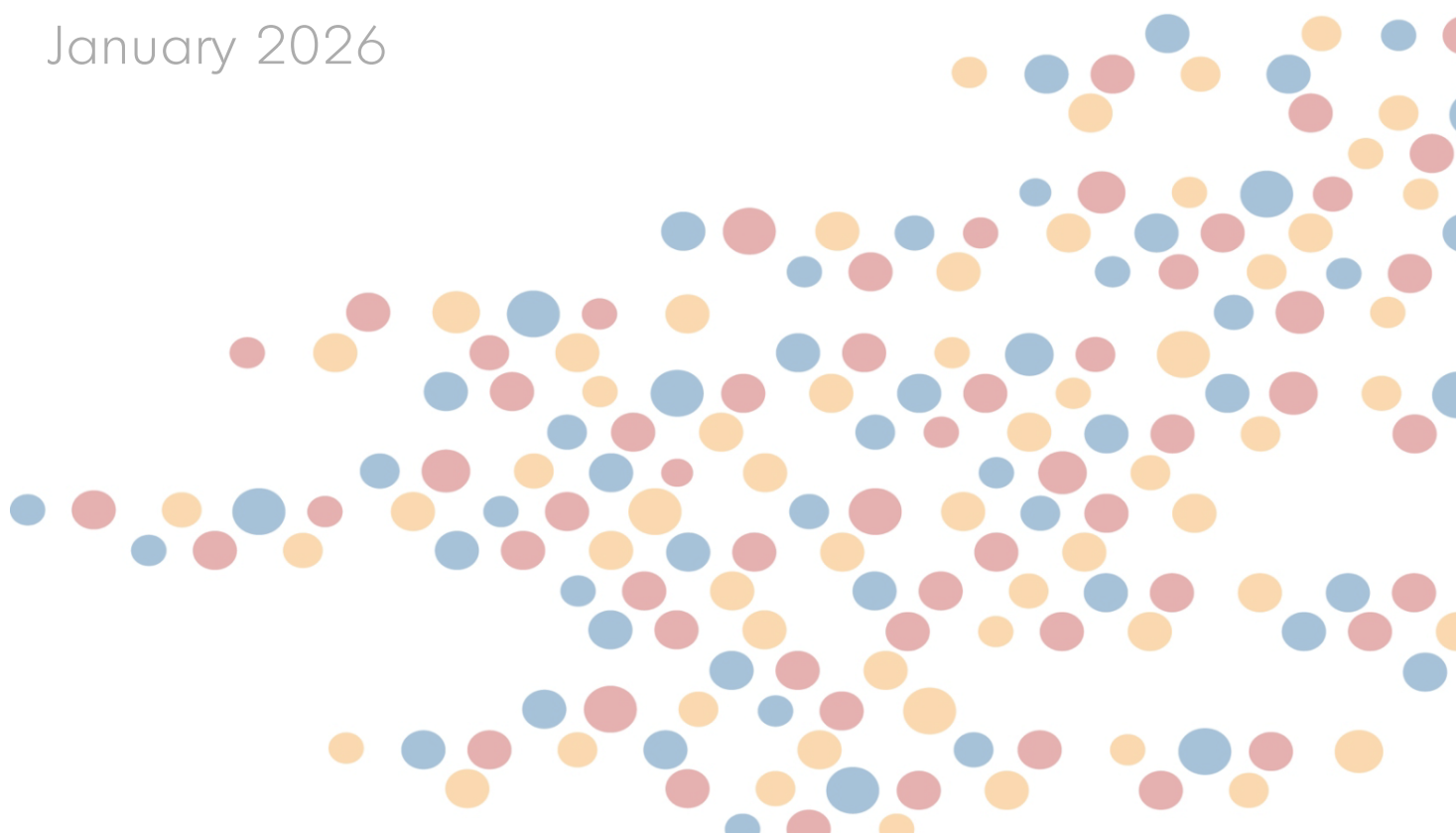
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HES World Heritage
Management Plan for the
Heart of Neolithic Orkney:
Summary of Consultation
Responses

Historic Environment Scotland

Final Report
January 2026



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) recently carried out a consultation on the draft World Heritage Management Plan for the Heart of Neolithic Orkney (HONO) on behalf of the World Heritage Site Management Partners, HES and Orkney Islands Council (OIC). The consultation sought to gather views of interested stakeholders, community groups, and individuals on the draft Management Plan, to allow for this to be revised. The consultation period ran from 18th March to 13th May 2025.

HES designed and managed the consultation on behalf of the Management Partners. Independent research consortium JRS were later commissioned to conduct a systematic analysis of responses and report on the consultation findings.

This report summarises responses to the consultation to inform the development of the final revised Management Plan.

Summary of overall feedback on challenges:

Overall, feedback on the draft management plan was positive:

- Most respondents (two thirds) agreed that the right challenges and themes have been identified for the management plan.
- Well over half of respondents agreed that the draft content accurately addresses the needs relating to each of the six challenges.
 - The challenge with the highest level of agreement was 3 (Tourism and Access), with over three quarters (77%) of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the draft content accurately addressed the relevant needs. Close behind was Challenge 4 (Community Involvement), with 74% of respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing.
 - The challenges that were least actively agreed with were 2 (Planning for Uncertainty), 5 (Sustainability) and 6 (Research and Learning), but most respondents still agreed/strongly agreed that the draft content accurately addressed the relevant needs (60%; 63% and 63% respectively).
 - That said, Challenge 5 (Sustainability) had the lowest level of active disagreement, with only 9% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the draft content addressed the relevant needs; neutrality was higher for this challenge than for others, with over a quarter (26%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
- The lowest level of positive response related to whether the Objectives identified within the draft Management Plan are the right Objectives to address the aims and challenges, with just under half of respondents (46%) agreeing with this and a high level of neutrality (43%).

As might perhaps be expected in consultations of this nature, most respondents who took the time to add open comments in relation to their answers to the 'closed' questions tended to offer constructive/negative feedback. However, this should not detract from the overall picture that the majority of respondents indicated through their responses to the closed questions that they were in agreement with the content.

Challenge 1: Climate Emergency

- General agreement that climate change is a serious threat, though views were mixed on labelling it an "emergency".
- A prominent theme linked high visitor numbers, particularly from cruise ships, to environmental degradation and a significant carbon footprint.
- Specific physical threats were highlighted, especially coastal erosion and sea-level rise at Skara Brae, alongside erosion from increased rainfall and footfall.
- Feedback requested more concrete action plans, including strategies for managed retreat and updated risk assessments.

Challenge 2: Planning for Uncertainty

- While many agreed with the need to plan for uncertainty, a significant number of respondents found the concept too vague and lacking specific definition.
- Requests were made to clarify what uncertainties were being planned for, such as funding, visitor numbers, or political change.
- Some scepticism was expressed, with the view that planning for unknowns is a standard organisational function rather than a unique strategic theme.
- Others interpreted the focus on uncertainty as a potential excuse for a lack of firm commitments or decisive planning, given unknown future resources.

Challenge 3: Tourism and Access

- An overwhelming concern was the severe lack of visitor infrastructure, especially the absence of toilets at the Ring of Brodgar, described as a public health issue and environmental hazard.
- High visitor footfall was consistently identified as a primary cause of physical degradation to the monuments and landscape, with soil erosion and trampling key worries.
- Local respondents reported feeling alienated from their own heritage due to access restrictions implemented for tourist management.
- Suggestions included better visitor flow management, studies of site carrying capacity, and improved facilities and signage to protect the site while maintaining access.

Challenge 4: Community Involvement

- Community involvement was strongly supported as essential for sustainable management.
- Emphasis was placed on the need for local ownership and for Orcadians to have a decisive voice in management decisions.
- There was criticism of current engagement, with a perception that past community concerns had been ignored, leading to some distrust.
- Calls were made for better educational integration and guaranteed access for local people, as well as better partnerships with local schools.
- Engaging young people through education was seen as vital for building long-term community connection.

Challenge 5: Sustainability

- Respondents found the term "sustainability" poorly defined within the plan, leading to confusion over its precise meaning and proposed actions.
- Suggestions included promoting active travel, stricter regulation of cruise ships, and better alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Views varied, with some seeing the ancient sites as inherently sustainable and others stressing the need for proactive environmental management.
- A disconnect was noted by some between what they felt was sustainability rhetoric and the reality of promoting high-volume tourism, highlighting a need for more integrated and transparent planning.

Challenge 6: Research and Learning

- Many respondents argued that research and learning should be a higher management priority, and there should be a focus on advancing knowledge and understanding of the sites and not just revenue.
- Stronger partnerships with educational institutions, particularly secondary schools, were requested.
- Feedback called for a clearer, updated research agenda and more transparency on ongoing projects.

Additional Challenges

- The most cited additional challenges reiterated the need for improved infrastructure, e.g. toilets, and more effective management of over-tourism.
- Frustration was expressed over perceived bureaucracy, with calls for decisive action over further planning and strategy documents.

Objectives, Monitoring, and Future Actions

- The strategic objectives were generally agreed upon but criticised for being too process-oriented and lacking an outcome-focused direction.
- The proposed frameworks for monitoring and essential projects were seen as sensible, but views were heavily dependent on there being genuine implementation and transparent communication to avoid being perceived as "box-ticking" exercises.
- Future opportunities, particularly around messaging, digital strategy, and biodiversity, were considered too important to be left as unfunded aspirations; respondents argued that they require committed resourcing and proactive funding strategies.

General Consultation Feedback

- A recurring sentiment was scepticism that the plan would translate into tangible action, based on perceptions of past delays and a lack of visible results.
- Core issues like toilet provision, tourist pressure, and community alienation were repeatedly emphasised across all sections of the consultation.
- Feedback was mixed about the consultation process itself, with less than half finding it clear and easy to understand, suggesting room for improvement in future engagement design.

Most frequently raised points

The following issues were mentioned with greatest frequency across multiple questions. These have been found to be the areas respondents would most like HES and OIC to address as a top priority for the revised Management Plan.

1. Visitor Infrastructure

This was the single most frequently cited practical concern. The lack of toilets, particularly at the Ring of Brodgar, was described as an urgent public health hazard, an environmental contamination risk, and a fundamental failure that undermines the credibility of a "world class visitor experience." It was raised not only in the dedicated Tourism and Access section but repeatedly in comments on Additional Challenges, Essential Projects, and General Feedback.

2. Physical Degradation from Over-Tourism

Closely linked to infrastructure, the damaging impact of high visitor numbers on the sites' fabric was a dominant theme. Respondents cited soil erosion, trampling, and general wear at key sites like the Ring of Brodgar. This concern was cited within feedback on **Climate Emergency** (where footfall was cited as a major exacerbating factor) and **Tourism and Access**, indicating a widespread perception that visitor volume is an immediate, tangible threat to site preservation.

3. A Lack of Meaningful Community Involvement

The feeling that local Orcadians are being sidelined in favour of tourists was a strong and consistent theme. Respondents spoke of lost access to their own heritage (e.g. losing direct access to the stones at the Ring of Brodgar), a lack of local ownership in decision-making, and distrust stemming from perceived inaction on community-raised issues (like the toilet problem and traffic safety). This sentiment was central to the **Community Involvement** challenge and also to Challenge 3: **Tourism and Access** and the **Objectives**, where tourism was often felt to be prioritised over local benefit.

4. Need for Concrete Action Over Further Planning

Issues regarding the consultation and draft plan itself were commonly raised. Across comments on **Planning for Uncertainty, Sustainability, Monitoring Actions, and Essential Projects**, respondents expressed frustration with what they perceived as vague language, bureaucratic processes, and a cycle of planning without delivery. There were frequent calls for action, which highlight a demand for the revised plan to commit to clear, measurable, and timely interventions.

5. The Cruise Ship Dilemma

The role of cruise ships acted as a focal point for several interconnected criticisms. Though not directly related to the Management Plan, this was a repeated area of concern. It was consistently highlighted as:

- A primary driver of the damaging volume tourism.
- A major contributor to the site's carbon footprint, creating a contradiction with climate goals.
- A symbol of externally driven tourism that offers limited local economic benefit.

Cruise ship tourism is therefore not an isolated issue but is related to points highlighted within the Management Plan and concerns about environmental sustainability, site preservation, and community involvement and engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) recently carried out a consultation on the draft World Heritage Management Plan for the Heart of Neolithic Orkney (HONO) on behalf of both Management Partners, HES and Orkney Islands Council (OIC). The consultation sought to gather views of interested stakeholders, community groups, and individuals on the draft Management Plan, to allow for this to be revised. The consultation period ran from 18th March to 13th May 2025.

Independent research consortium JRS were commissioned to conduct a systematic analysis of responses and report on the consultation findings.

This report summarises responses to the consultation to inform the development of the final revised Management Plan.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample

35 responses to the consultation were received. All respondents indicated that they were answering on an individual basis, as opposed to answering on behalf of an organisation. However, three respondents provided the name of their organisation in response to the subsequent question 'If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please provide the organisation's name'. It was agreed with HES that these subsequent responses were most likely errors as a result of respondents misreading the follow-on question; these responses were therefore also classed as 'individual' responses. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents (77%) lived in Orkney, while equal proportions lived elsewhere in the UK (9%) and elsewhere in the World (9%). A smaller sample lived elsewhere in Scotland (6%).

Table 1. Area of residence

| Area of residence | Total % and no. of respondents |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Orkney (Mainland) | 77% (27) |
| I live elsewhere in the UK | 9% (3) |
| I live elsewhere in the World | 9% (3) |
| I live elsewhere in Scotland | 6% (2) |
| Base | 100% (35) |

2.2 Analysis

The consultation included 23 questions, 12 of which invited 'open' responses, providing qualitative data, and the remaining 11 questions being 'closed' with answer options provided for respondents to choose from, providing quantitative data. A systematic approach was taken

based on qualitative analysis of the open question data and quantitative analysis of closed questions.

For the quantitative questions, data was reviewed and charts produced. Qualitative responses were reviewed and coded based on key themes, allowing for unifying/differentiating themes to be distinguished and findings to be written up thematically.

All 35 responses were analysed to inform this report, and direct quotes from respondents are provided for context. Cross-tabulation analysis was conducted based on respondent location, i.e. those who live in Orkney and those who live elsewhere. Where specific issues were raised by Orkney residents, or where they were particularly vocal, this is highlighted within the narrative. These comments mainly concerned issues directly affecting local people or were around community engagement.

For each Challenge, where feedback was provided that is not of direct relevance to the Management Plan but may be of wider use, this has been highlighted at the end of the analysis for the Challenge, and then also included collectively in Appendix 2.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Challenge identification

Questions:

Respondents were asked whether they think the right challenges and themes are identified within the draft Management Plan for managing the Heart of Neolithic Orkney. Respondents were asked the following closed question:

- Do you think that we have identified the right challenges and themes for managing the Heart of Neolithic Orkney over the next ten years?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree

Responses:

Figure 1. Identification of the challenges and themes for managing HONO over the next ten years

Do you think that we have identified the right challenges and themes for managing the Heart of Neolithic Orkney over the next ten years?



■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Base: 35

Most respondents agreed that the Management Partners had identified the right challenges and themes for managing HONO over the next 10 years, with 43% of respondents agreeing and 23% strongly agreeing. While a fifth of respondents (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed, a smaller proportion disagreed (11%) or strongly disagreed (3%).

3.2 Challenge 1: Climate Emergency

Questions:

Respondents were asked to comment on Challenge 1: Climate Emergency, as included in the draft Management Plan 2025-35. The Management Partners' summary of Challenge 1 is included in the box below and respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the impact of the climate emergency in the World Heritage Site?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don't know
- Do you have any comments on this theme?
 - Open field for comments

Challenge 1: The Climate Emergency (Summary)

Climate change is one of the most significant and increasing threats to WHS worldwide and to their potential for contributing to economic and social development at the local level.

Higher footfall and changes to rainfall patterns has increased erosion at the Ring of Brodgar. Similar issues could affect the Stones of Stenness. At Skara Brae coastal erosion and sea level rise are a threat to the long-term survival of the site. There may also be changes to the landscape of the Buffer Zones driven by changes to the climate.

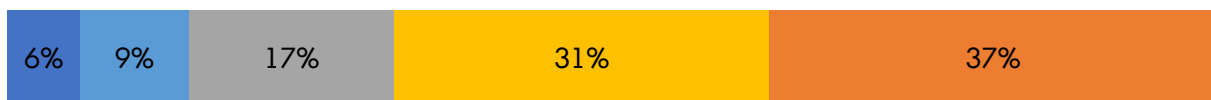
A rise in renewable energy schemes will contribute to climate adaptation but may also lead to added pressures on the wider landscape and setting of the WHS.

Orkney Island Council (OIC) declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and is committed to working towards a carbon neutral economy. HES is committed to supporting the ongoing green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and has a range of roles connected to understanding and addressing climate change and heritage.

Responses:

Figure 2. Agreement with Challenge 1: Climate Emergency

Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the impact of the climate emergency in the World Heritage Site?



■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Base: 35

The majority of respondents agreed that the Management Plan rightly identifies climate change as a serious and growing issue for the World Heritage Site (WHS). Of the 35 respondents, most either agreed (31%) or strongly agreed (37%) that the Management Plan accurately addresses this challenge. A small proportion of people did say they disagreed (9%) or strongly disagreed (6%), and 17% remained neutral. 16 people left comments to explain their answer.

The relationship between tourism volumes and climate impact emerged as a prominent and recurring theme amongst respondents, with several commenters drawing explicit connections between visitors and environmental degradation. Some respondents argued

that the sheer volume of people walking around the sites during the summer months poses a greater threat than climate change itself, whilst others highlighted the carbon footprint generated by the travel required to bring tourists to Orkney. Cruise ship traffic was a particular focus for some respondents, arguing that the environmental toll from cruise ship passengers visiting the WHS is extraordinarily high and that any other sustainability measures will be rendered insignificant unless cruise ship emissions are drastically reduced. One respondent also commented that the higher footfall from visitors causes damage to the sites, which is further exacerbated by climate change, highlighting the interaction between the two factors.

“The damage caused by the exponential growth in visitors needs to be a priority. While this is exacerbated by climate change, it is a major issue in its own right.”

“It seems to me that volume tourism is a greater threat to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney than the climate emergency, simply through the number of people who walk around the various parts of the site throughout the summer months, but also in the negative effect of the act of travel by volume tourists on climate change.”

“While on the one hand various bodies bleat on about the “climate emergency” on the other those same bodies are working hard to promote tourism, particularly volume tourism in the form of cruise liners and coach tours, that are causing serious direct and indirect environmental and societal damage to communities.”

“The WHS, if you took into account its role as an attractor for Cruise passengers would have an insanely high carbon footprint. Unless the impact of cruise ships is massively reduced this will continue. Any other changes to the WHS such as introducing better public transport links or active travel will be completely insignificant.”

A notable proportion of respondents expressed concern about the visible and potential effects of a changing climate on the monuments and surrounding landscape. Some drew attention to specific threats mentioned in the plan, such as the rise in sea levels, coastal erosion and water-related degradation. Linked to the previous point around the growing number of tourists and the impact this has on the sites, one comment highlighted the need to strike a difficult balance between avoiding degradation from human presence whilst still allowing access and appreciation of the sites. Respondents generally agree that these changes are already observable in places and require strategic management. Comments also mentioned the importance of protecting the sites from climate change into the future. Others stressed the difficult balance between protecting fragile sites and maintaining access for visitors.

“Particular care needs taken to avoid degradation of sites by sea water, salt, and human presence, whilst still allowing access and appreciation. A tough balance to strike.”

“I think it’s right to recognise the potentially less considered, maybe less dramatic, impacts of climate change, e.g. wetter weather means wetter ground means more erosion.”

On the other hand, a substantial number of respondents expressed scepticism – either about the concept of a “climate emergency” or the level of threat to Orkney posed by climate change. One respondent objected specifically to the use of the term ‘climate emergency’, arguing that it has political connotations. This respondent suggested that whilst most people would agree the WHS faces challenges from climate change in the coming decades, whether this constitutes an emergency is open to debate, and choosing to describe it as such may prevent some people from engaging with the draft Management Plan. Additionally, a small number of respondents do not believe climate change poses significant near-term risk to the site, while some feel that too much emphasis is placed on climate change overall.

“Climate emergency has political connotations. Climate change would be more objective. I would understand the World Heritage Site to face a challenge from climate change in the next decade. The majority of people would agree with this. Whether the extent of the climate change constitutes a climate emergency is open to debate - and choosing to describe it as such will stop some people engaging with this document and management plan.”

“Aside from transport to/from the site, I don’t see how this (climate change) impacts it.”

“Water level will not be an issue for a very very long time. No other impact from global warming has any relevance.”

Several respondents expressed concern that the Management Plan lacks sufficient clarity on the practical measures required to address climate-related risks. One person suggested that the plan should include a “managed retreat” at vulnerable places like Skara Brae, in order to protect the site from the impact of climate change, suggesting that hard engineering may harm the site more than allowing the coastline to shift. Another respondent commented that the plan does not state how it intends to respond to worse-case scenarios. This suggests some respondents require further detail within the Management Plan when it addresses these challenges.

“I do wonder for the more dramatic impacts, such as coastal erosion at Skara Brae that there needs to be an acknowledgement that there may need to be a case made for managed

retreat - where the hard engineering required to hold back the sea would have an unacceptable impact on the OUV."

"You don't really say anything about the choices you might face or what your responses might be."

A specific concern was voiced by one respondent, who questioned the age of the World Heritage Site's climate risk assessment, noting that it is outdated – taking place five years ago and highlighting that other climate risk assessments are not particularly recent either. They questioned when this would be updated, and how this would influence the Management Plan. A separate respondent highlighted that they had not seen any significant changes in light of Orkney Island Council's declaration of a climate emergency and noted that it feels inconsistent with Orkney's reliance on the cruise industry. These comments stand alone amongst the responses, however, are also worth consideration.

"The climate change risk assessment for HONO took place five years ago, and other climate risk assessments are not very recent either. What plans are there for updating these, and what is the mechanism for updated assessments to be reflected in the management plan?"

"OIC's declaration of a climate emergency has resulted in zero change that I've seen and is laughable in the face of Orkney's massive cruise industry."

Additional feedback:

The following feedback, whilst not directly relevant to the Management Plan itself, was also provided in responses to Challenge 1.

The importance of community engagement and inclusion was emphasised by one respondent in relation to Challenge 1. Utilising social media, more local storytelling and citizen science (similar approaches to those used by other organisations) were suggested as strategies for climate monitoring and raising awareness of climate change – sharing local stories about climate impacts.

"It is important that issues of the Anthropocene are addressed, and we all need to be ecological citizens...I have read about the Internet of Things which is used by citizen science projects to monitor air quality. I know the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) have sites where you can post pictures of birds. It would be good if the World Heritage site had something similar...I think social media is very important for sharing experience of climate change."

One person offered specific suggestions regarding strategies which could be used to reduce the impact of cruise ships on climate change. This included having policies to regulate cruise emissions, provide shore power, and incentivise low-emission travel, suggesting that climate change and visitor management should be closely aligned.

"HES and OIC should jointly lobby for tighter regulation of cruise emissions. OIC must make it a priority to provide shore power to cruise ships, make it a policy to exclude the most polluting, and insist Shore-Ex companies pay their fair share for access, and reduce their direct emissions."

A suggestion was also offered regarding learning from the management of comparable sites elsewhere threatened by climate change.

"Think globally - how do other sites (like Calanais in Lewis, Outer Hebrides) manage?"

3.3 Challenge 2: Planning for Uncertainty

Questions:

Respondents were asked for their views on Challenge 2: Planning for Uncertainty, as outlined in the draft Management Plan 2025-35. The Management Partners' summary of this draft challenge is included in the box below. Respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need to plan for uncertainty in the World Heritage Site?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don't know
- Do you have any comments on this theme?
 - Open field for comments

Challenge 2: Planning for Uncertainty (Summary)

This Management Plan is intended to allow for more flexibility in the face of uncertainty to help us respond to change and unexpected events. The key resources to ensure protection and preservation of the WHS in the medium term are secure, but individual objectives and actions can be affected if staff or financial resources are not available. To limit the chances of this happening, we agreed Management Plan commitments should be realistic, measurable and embedded in HES and OIC's organisational priorities.

Responses:

Figure 3. Agreement with Challenge 2: Planning for Uncertainty

Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need to plan for uncertainty in the World Heritage Site?



■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Base: 35

The majority of respondents agreed that the challenge of planning for uncertainty was accurately addressed in the Management Plan. Of the 35 respondents, 34% agreed and 26% strongly agreed with the way the Management Plan outlined this challenge. A small proportion expressed the opposite view though, with 14% saying they disagreed and 3% (one respondent) saying they strongly disagreed. 23% neither agreed nor disagreed with this challenge. 14 people left comments to give their support, raise questions, and offer suggestions.

A vagueness and lack of clarity in the phrase ‘planning for uncertainty’ caused concern for a number of respondents, with many feeling it needs further explanation for this challenge. Frustration was expressed by those who did not understand what specific uncertainties were being addressed. They noted that this could relate to a number of different issues such as political changes, losing funding, increases or decreases in visitor numbers, the availability of suitable staff, damage being done to the site from tourism, or something else entirely, but felt that the plan did not explain this. The frustration was compounded by a sense that the phrase serves as code for unknown funding levels, with one commenter suggesting the document is “determined to say nothing”. Overall, there was a strong view that this challenge needs to be more clearly defined in order for people to fully understand it and have an opinion on it.

“Uncertainty about what?”

“What’s the uncertainty? Whether visitor numbers will increase or decrease?”

"I don't believe there's enough clarity in the phrase "planning for uncertainty" to enable an informed judgement to be made. Is it uncertainty over future visitor numbers? Is it uncertainty over the availability of informed staff? Is it uncertainty over the damage done to the fabric of the sites due to excessive visitor numbers?"

"You don't really say anything, uncertainty is really code for we don't know what our funding level is going to be, so we are determined to say nothing"

Several respondents went further and were dismissive of the concept of 'uncertainty', with the fundamental challenge of planning for unknowns being questioned by some. One thought planning for uncertainty was a necessary part of risk identification in any organisation and therefore did not need to be specified in the Management Plan. Two people highlighted the resilience of the World Heritage Site, with one saying it had survived extreme world events such as financial collapse and war in the past without being impacted, and the other saying they had not noticed any significant negative changes to the site in their lifetime. Concerns were also raised around the lack of a specific action plan outlined for this challenge.

"Does this need to be a specific aim? It is immeasurably vague. Is it not the role of every risk register in every organisation to plan for uncertainty?"

"The uncertainty could be planning for financial collapse, a rejection of the value of our heritage and war. The World Heritage Site has survived all of these until now."

"What is the uncertainty that is mentioned in the headline? I was born around the heart of Neolithic Orkney and do not see that there has been any particular degradation to the environment which by some indicators have improved."

"How exactly do you plan for something you don't know about?"

"This section of the document, like most of it, is just words, neither any kind of genuine plan nor an actual action."

While the majority of comments were more negative and questioned the vagueness of the Challenge, wanting further clarification, a small proportion of respondents felt that the inclusion of this challenge in the Management Plan was appropriate, saying that not only is uncertainty inherent in the world, but it is also likely to continue or even grow in the future – highlighting big infrastructure projects in Orkney as sources of risk or uncertainty. This suggests that for some, planning for uncertainty feels important to include in the Management Plan but perhaps needs more explanation. One respondent suggested that the very premise of this challenge

must have been tricky to write, i.e. planning for uncertainty is an uncertain process in itself, and ultimately felt the approach is right and well-considered.

"We live in uncertain times. With big infrastructure being constructed in Orkney the world seems more dangerous than ever."

"Uncertainty is likely to continue in the future, if not become even more acute. I agree with the focus on resource uncertainties."

"This must have been a tricky one to write! Planning for Uncertainty is an uncertain process. I feel it's right and well-considered."

A minority of responses called for a need for stronger, more concrete commitments to mitigate political and resource-related constraints. Respondents highlighted that while the challenge acknowledges uncertainty, it does not fully address specific external pressures, such as political upheaval or the potential withdrawal of government funding for essential services, which could directly affect the management of the HONO. One respondent suggested that references to "political change impacting management decisions" be made more explicit by linking them directly to the site's ability to be managed in line with the plan. A further respondent called for the plan's statement about mitigating uncertainty to be strengthened. This ties in with a previous comment which suggests the management plan lacks explicit plans for action.

"I do wonder whether you might need to think about more impacts associated with potential political upheaval that might (or might not) occur? I'm thinking impacts associated with the removal of government funding to cover defence/health and similar? I note you've added political change impacting management decisions - I wonder whether this could also say, "political change impacting the ability to manage HONO in line with the management plan"?"

"Please consider strengthening the statement "To limit the chances of this happening, agreed Management Plan commitments should be realistic, measurable and embedded in Partner and departmental priorities." perhaps by replacing 'should' with 'will.' I understand the very real - and increasingly challenging - resource constraints and uncertainties, but the management plan must include measures to mitigate these."

One person also raised concerns around their perceived implications of planning for uncertainty as a challenge. They felt it was an indication that the Heart of Neolithic Orkney is being valued more as a visitor attraction rather than an internationally significant World

Heritage Site. They asked that it be treated first and foremost as a cultural and archaeological resource, rather than a tourist attraction.

“Planning for uncertainty concentrates on managing the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS as a visitor attraction rather than the precious and internationally significant archaeological and historic resource that it is... Maintain it as a site of academic interest, and not as a tourist attraction.”

3.4 Challenge 3: Tourism and Access

Questions:

Respondents were asked to comment on Challenge 3: Tourism and Access, as included in the draft Management Plan 2025-35. The Management Partners’ summary of the challenge is included in the box below. Respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the impact of tourism and access in the World Heritage Site?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don’t know
- Do you have any comments on this theme?
 - Open field for comments

Challenge 3: Tourism and Access (Summary)

HONO plays a key role in Orkney’s tourism economy and is a major driver for visits. Two of the three most visited sites across Orkney are the Ring of Brodgar and Skara Brae. We need to find the right balance between enabling access to the HONO for residents and visitors while preserving the OUV of the Site and its other important values. Access includes interpretation and research, remote access to information and digital experiences for those who cannot visit in person.

Responsible and sustainable tourism is not only about numbers: it is also about positive and negative impacts on the sites, infrastructure, local residents, and the experience of the WHS for all.

Responses:

Figure 4. Agreement with Challenge 3: Tourism and Access

Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the impact of tourism and access in the World Heritage Site?



■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Base: 35

More than three-quarters of respondents agreed that the challenge of tourism and access was accurately addressed in the Management Plan. Most either agreed (31%) or strongly agreed (46%) with the way the Management Plan outlined this challenge. Less than a fifth disagreed (11%) or strongly disagreed (3%) and 9% neither agreed nor disagreed. 25 people left comments to share their concerns and offer suggestions around managing tourism and access. Across all six challenges, this topic attracted both the highest level of agreement (77%) and the greatest volume of comments. This indicates that issues relating to tourism and access are a dominant concern for respondents.

Comments show an overwhelming concern about the lack of facilities at particular sites to support the large number of visitors to the WHS and a desire for more infrastructure. This theme was often discussed in tandem with concern around the sheer number of tourists visiting Orkney and HONO. The need for toilets was repeatedly mentioned, particularly at the Ring of Brodgar. The absence of toilets was described as a public health risk, a cause of environmental contamination, and a source of distress for visitors. It was noted that this issue undermines confidence in site management and the credibility of any “world class visitor experience”. Respondents argued that more infrastructure and facilities must accompany the rise in tourist numbers. Beyond toilets, improved visitor infrastructure was called for to support effective visitor management, such as more parking, a caf, a visitors’ centre, and a cycle track from Stromness to Finstown with charging points.

“Toilets please!!!”

"There is no reference to the necessary resolution of the lack of toilet provision at the Ring of Brodgar car park. There are human health issues there now and are likely to be degraded water quality issues."

"There needs to be access to toilets at the Ring of Brodgar. Temporary toilet blocks like those found at festivals could be brought in from April - October to deal with the increasing amount of visitors. The edge of the loch behind the car park is disgusting in the summer months with human faeces and waste."

"They (tourists) have also been defecating in the area which must be stopped. A new toilet block is an easy, common-sense solution."

"When a company has to be employed to remove human waste from a swathe of the World Heritage Area because there are no toilets close by Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness, the objective of creating a "world class visitor experience" looks like it will take most of the time money and focus of the people and partners involved in managing the World Heritage site. I have heard from a ranger employed at Brodgar of the deep embarrassment of elderly cruise passengers soiling themselves in the car park. This is inhumane. It is difficult to have confidence in the management of the site and the partners involved if the most pressing problem of temporary toilet provision is proving insurmountable."

"Where large numbers visit there needs to be adequate parking and toilet facilities."

"I think there needs to be toilets and a cafe. There needs to be a cycle track from Stromness to Finstown with bike charging points. I also think there needs to be a visitor centre."

"Additional facilities are required as a matter of urgency, to manage the continual rise in visitor footfall, in and around the WHS. For example, toilet facilities near or at the Ring of Brodgar."

In line with the previous points, a large proportion of respondents expressed concern that the sheer number of visitors visiting the Heart of Neolithic Orkney is causing physical degradation to key sites. These points echo those discussed previously in relation to Challenge 1. Commenters felt that tourism is a significant challenge to the sites, and measures need to be taken to protect the world heritage site into the future. Particular concerns were raised by several people around the effect of heavy footfall on soil erosion at key sites. Several shared personal observations of erosion and trampling, with some arguing that intervention is long overdue.

"It has been ruined by the sheer number of tourists."

"I feel this is long overdue and needed to be addressed much sooner, so I welcome its inclusion now."

"This is very important and needs a sustainable solution for now and in the future."

"Orkney is not set up to sustain such numbers over concentrated periods of time. Lots needs to be done, and you know that - and it needs to be done in a way that sustains the OUV. Not easy!"

"The heavy footfall is eroding the site."

"As an example a few years back, I was regularly at the Ring of Brodgar and saw people letting their children run up and down the mounds, clearly knocking earth down each time. This was not dealt with by fencing off until a significant time later. I feel strongly that this needs to be of major focus given the amount of tourists visiting every year for longer seasons."

Respondents emphasised the importance of managing visitor numbers and behaviour in order to balance access with protecting the site. Suggestions for responsible and sustainable tourism included managing visitor flow, clear signage, ranger presence, spreading visitors across multiple sites, and studies of site carrying capacity. There was particular concern about the visual and physical impact of large tour buses, with smaller vehicles suggested to reduce both congestion and intrusion on the landscape.

"As a visitor it was important to me to be up close to the sites. It would be a good thing if you can figure out how to keep close access without doing damage to the site."

"Visitor flow management will be key to ensuring the sites are well preserved."

"Most tourists will understand and support the need to protect the very sites they come to see, such as by staying on paths, and taking and leaving nothing (e.g., no plant removal, no trash dumping), etc. Signage and public facilities (water, toilets, trash bins) are crucial at the larger sites. Ranger presence is both informative and helps improve tourist behaviour. The emphasis on not building large structures in the buffer areas could usefully be applied to large buses that dwarf the neolithic landmarks. While it restricts the passenger number per vehicle, smaller vans would have a reduced visual impact at sites where they must park nearby, such as at the Stones of Stenness in particular."

"What happened to the plan to spread visitors around by creating a gateway centre elsewhere, or even one close to the HONO which could provide exhibitions and facilities capable of absorbing large numbers of cruise passengers? When other sites like Gurness and Yesnaby and Orphir that could take pressure off Skara Brae are under exploited and receive

zero investment (there aren't even toilets at Gurness or Yesnaby nor any plan to insist coach companies utilise their vehicle's built in toilets) there seems to be a lack of vision."

A minority of comments spoke about the need for a more nuanced and evidence-based approach to understanding different types of visitors and their impacts on the World Heritage Site.

"I would strongly welcome a commitment to studies of the carrying capacity of the sites comprising the HONO."

"The management plan might usefully develop the distinction between volume tourism and independent visitors further. They have different needs and impacts, and those needs and impacts are specific to the sites being visited."

"Is there something to be maybe added around the types of visits people make? In terms of quality, time spent, motivation etc (e.g. Cohen's typology). And encouraging other forms of tourism."

The experience of the local community was a point of concern for several people. A few local respondents living in Orkney felt that limiting access, although necessary, has penalised local people who can no longer approach the stones at the Ring of Brodgar as they once did, impacting their ability to feel connected to their heritage. Others acknowledged the balance between the desire for close visitor access and the need to prevent harm, expressing hope that solutions could be found. There were calls for more off-peak activities and events to encourage community participation.

"Limiting access to reduce this (the heavy footfall) has restricted the indigenous population from accessing their monument and heritage."

"The monument has become a cheap tourist attraction and descendants of the people who built it can no longer access and reflect on it in peace."

"I'm really sad as locals we can no longer access the stones at Brodgar, it was one of the things that made it so special. If these issues had been dealt with sooner perhaps it could have been managed in a way that would still allow access. I feel like we've lost something very precious, just for the sake of tourism."

"I do think that those of us who live in Orkney could benefit from being more in touch with the WHS - and I'd love to see more events during off-peak times. I think this could go beyond the

normal (excellent) events that are held, maybe something more dramatic and inclusive. Lots of ideas!"

A small number of respondents raised concerns about the way the World Heritage Site is managed. They felt that HONO has been managed primarily as a tourist attraction, negatively impacting its value as the site of historical and cultural significance. One person challenged assertions that tourism to the site is of benefit to Orkney, saying profits are likely to end up in other countries, and employment figures are for low-paid, low-skilled, seasonal positions. Perceived lack of action between HES, OIC and the central government in managing access to the site was also mentioned by one person, as was the lack of specific actions mentioned to address tourism and access issues in the Management Plan.

"Over the past few decades, it is evident that HES has been driven by financial returns from visitors to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney sites. It is also evident that this has not optimised access to the site for independent travellers or locals. It also seems likely this has impacted negatively on research throughout the sites. The commercial value to HES of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney sites has definitely taken precedence over the archaeological and cultural value."

"As is increasingly common among the proponents of tourism, unsubstantiated figures are quoted for visitor numbers and spend in this section, and references are made to a "significant contribution" made by tourism to Orkney's economy. There would not appear to be much doubt that individual businesses may benefit from tourism, but almost certainly not to the degree that is claimed by many... The employment that is continually quoted is seasonal, insecure, low-skilled and low-paid. How does that benefit Orkney's economy? It is a myth that the tourism inflicted on Orkney benefits the local economy, and it is high time that the bodies inculcating that myth put an end to that particular piece of dishonesty."

"Given OIC manages the cruise ship docking and HES manages site access and central government procurement controls the ferry traffic to and from Orkney you would think that collectively they could do something concrete to solve overuse and access issues and the immense carbon footprint of the WHS, but it seems they lack the imagination to do so."

"You don't really say anything; what are the appropriate levels of access and use, what measure might need to be taken to reduce parking pressure, provide access to adequate toilet facilities, or restrict pedestrian access within monuments?"

Additional feedback:

The following feedback, whilst not directly relevant to the Management Plan itself, was also provided in response to Challenge 3 and is worthy of wider consideration.

One person offered some recommendations around artistic expression of the site. They suggested a possible collaboration with the Pier Arts Centre, as well as widening the scope of the history shared about the site to include Childe, the Battle of Summerdale and the mapper Murdo Mackenzie.

“Artistic expression around the Neolithic sometimes feels jaded or lacking. I know the Pier Arts Centre is in the middle of a major redevelopment. Is there room for link up here? The telling of the history of the heritage zone feels limited e.g. we never here about Childe in any great depth and there is little about the Battle of Summerdale or e.g. the mapper Murdo Mackenzie”

3.5 Challenge 4: Community involvement

Questions:

Respondents were asked to comment on Challenge 4, Community Involvement, as included in the draft Management Plan 2025-35. The Management Partners’ summary of this is included in the box below. Respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need for community involvement in the World Heritage Site?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don’t know
- Do you have any comments on this theme?
 - Open field for comments

Challenge 4: Community Involvement (Summary)

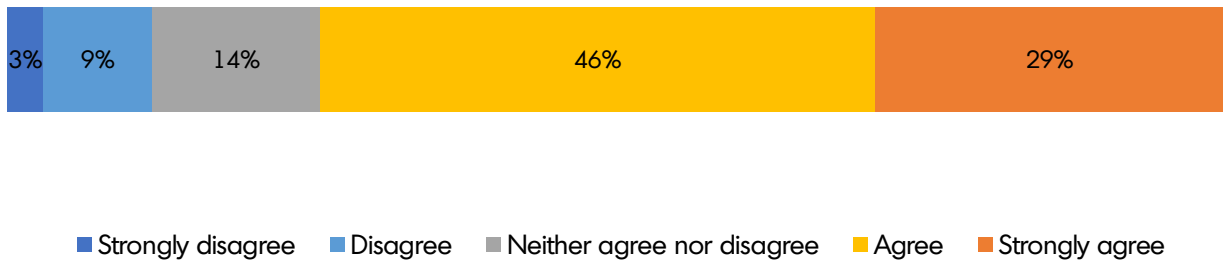
The community have told us they want better communication between HES and OIC and the wider community about the management of the WHS and its surroundings. People wanted to have understand what decisions are being made and why, and to have a voice in future decisions. We plan more regular updates in local media, an annual community event, and to look at how the online presence of the WHS could be improved.

There should be opportunities for communication, and participation, inclusion and intellectual and physical access to the WHS by different social groups, including for young people. To bridge the gap between the management of the WHS and the community an elected member for the West Mainland will be invited to join the Steering Group.

Responses:

Figure 5. Agreement with Challenge 4: Community Involvement

Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need for community involvement in the World Heritage Site?



Base: 35

The majority of respondents agreed that the challenge of community involvement was accurately addressed in the Management Plan. Of the 35 respondents, three quarters either agreed (46%) or strongly agreed (29%) with the way the Management Plan outlined this challenge. Only a handful disagreed (9%) or strongly disagreed (3%), and 14% neither agreed nor disagreed. A total of 20 people left comments to underscore their support for community involvement with the site, offer opinions around local access and ownership, critique the existing management of HONO, and encourage education and youth involvement with the site. This challenge attracted the second highest number of comments, again highlighting the importance of this issue to respondents.

Feedback in this section showed a strong view that community involvement is essential for management of the World Heritage Site. They felt that as descendants of the people who built Heart of Neolithic Orkney, as well as being the people who staff the sites, conduct research and are directly affected by the popularity of the site, their involvement is important. Respondents suggested a need for HES and OIC to work with the community to address issues, identify opportunities and work together towards shared goals. One person suggested putting community involvement higher up the list of challenges identified in the Management Plan, saying that residents of Orkney should be above tourists in the considerations of HES and OIC. Another person suggested that there are a lot of opportunities for engagement, however the review cycles around communication strategies need to be more frequent, with five- or ten-year cycles seeming inadequate for assessing options for community involvement and digital media strategies.

"Locals should be involved".

"Community involvement is essential."

"Without community involvement, what is the point? The community are the descendants of those who built HONO, and the ones who staff the sites and do the research and benefit from the tourism, and have to deal with the pressure of tourism, etc."

"The first step in securing meaningful community involvement is listening to the community and acting to resolve issues, working in partnership to address concerns, identify opportunities and realise shared goals."

"This should be in your list further up! Above tourists. As we live on the island and community involvement and respect/preservation is so important."

"There seems to be a lot of scope here for engagement. I don't quite understand why it's on the review cycle it is in the document. Five years seems like a long stretch and the other aspects (messaging and interpretation and digital media) seem like they'd need more frequent reviews than every 10 years."

The importance of local access and ownership was a dominant theme among the survey responses. Several people stressed that while being a site of international significance, it is first and foremost an integral part of Orkney, and Orcadians therefore have a strong sense of ownership around the World Heritage site. Those who lived in Orkney asked for this to continue into the future by enabling the community to be involved in management decisions related to the site. Another person expanded on this idea by saying the needs of local residents can be overlooked by large organisations, and more attention should be given to fostering local partnerships. There was a view that locals are often sidelined in favour of tourists. Several calls were made for designated times or systems to ensure local residents can regularly access the sites within HONO, with possibilities suggested to enable this including free or low-priced access for locals, regular days where visits can only be made by locals, or open access to the sites during low peak times. It was also noted that HES-managed sites are expensive for locals to use, that sites being closed at Christmas excludes residents from being able to share them with loved ones, and that the lack of toilets or seating excludes older residents from being able to visit their heritage.

"[There is a] strong sense of responsibility for these sites in those who live locally."

"There has always been a strong sense of community ownership in the area."

"Whereas HONO has universal values relevant to the world, it is home to people. The host communities in Orkney must be helped to feel a sense of ownership of the heritage amongst which people live."

"The community needs to deeply feel that its people are stewards of the site and are an integral part of management decisions."

"It is crucial that HES and OIC maintain strong partnerships with other local, interested, parties. This should include working with local people who live in Orkney, in order to improve and sustain "local ownership". It is all too easy, for large organisations to overlook the interests of people who live in the area, and to focus instead on links with partnership bodies. Don't forget ordinary, local citizens, most of whom will not be connected to these bodies!"

"The monument is an Orcadian monument and this should be at the forefront of any ideas that are generated. Locals must have free access to their heritage in perpetuity and must come first. 1 day a week should be set aside when locals can access the monument for peace and reflection. In terms of local significance, think of it as Uluru of a smaller magnitude."

"I suspect that very large number of visitors alienates the local community. Possibly there should be free days for residents of Orkney and school groups encouraged."

"I do think (mainly for Brodgar) that there should be an arrangement/agreement that off-season those of us that live here are allowed to access the interior of the site. Whether this is a managed process or not is up for discussion. There is an awkwardness about going into and around the stones - it's not allowed/ you'll get shouted at etc....and in smaller numbers at off-peak times I think there could be an agreement that access is made more open."

"HES excludes locals from visiting sites rather than enabling them, and that is how local people predominantly feel about HES. A low-priced local membership scheme or regular free access to sites for locals would go a long way to solving this. (It's) very hard to make back the cost of a HES membership by visiting just local sites. Many locals have never in their life visited Maeshowe or Gurness. Why isn't every schoolchild brought to these sites at least once in their school career? Why are sites like Bishop's and Earl's Palaces closed around Christmas when people's relatives are visiting? Why does HES make it so difficult and expensive for local organisations to use their sites? The Peedie Performances for example based at B&E are not happening this year, I heard because of the difficulty in arranging them with HES. Lack of toilet facilities and seating at many HES sites including the HONO make it impossible for older Orkney residents to visit."

A number of people expressed criticism of the way the World Heritage Site has been managed in recent years, citing perceptions of centralised or external control. Several comments reflected frustration with what they perceived to be slow or inadequate action on community priorities, such as the need for toilets, adequate coach parking, and a way to manage the flow of tourists between the Brodgar Road and Stenness Village. Respondents felt these needs have been clearly communicated by locals, but the lack of action in these areas made them feel they were not being listened to. As such, respondents feel that community involvement cannot be achieved without more active communication, sincere listening and partnerships that reflect local priorities. Two respondents expressed a belief that management decisions for the site are shaped by people without sufficient knowledge of, or connection to, Orkney - with those responsible for decision-making distant from the site, or new to Orkney and lacking a depth of understanding of the site. They felt changes in the ways visitors experience the site through recordings in the visitors' centre and via guides in coaches was a poor substitute for previous experiences such as visitors being guided through Maeshowe by family members at the Tormiston Farm. One person expressed the concern that communication around the site is unclear, interfering with the public's ability to understand the decisions being made, and another felt the community is excluded from the management of the World Heritage Site.

"The community has stated on many occasions that there needs to be toilet blocks at the Ring of Brodgar but nothing has happened so better communication and understanding is needed."

"The letdown has been from the responsible authorities in the late response to requirements such as coach parking, access and public toilet provision."

"The community has raised the issue of large numbers of tourists gathering at the end of the Brodgar Road and walking between there and Stenness village on the main road as a significant safety hazard. Nothing appears to have been done about this. It is difficult to believe the community is being adequately listened to and involved when the experience of local people at peak periods is not being taken into account in the way the site is managed and visitor access is facilitated.... I do not see any identifiable meaningful actions in this management plan which indicates the community is being listened to in anything other than a generic way."

"The Orcadian community is precluded from any meaningful input to the management of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney sites."

"HES Managers are predominantly either Edinburgh-based, or else recent immigrants to Orkney with little appreciation for or understanding of the sites beyond their use as "visitor

attractions". Not too long ago, visitors to Maeshowe could knock on the door at Tormiston farm and one of the family would come across and give them an interesting tour of the site. Now they are forced into a "visitor centre" in Stenness to listen to recorded "visitor experiences" and then on to a coach to be regaled by guides who have no depth of knowledge. Not an Orcadian way of doing things at all."

"The statements made in this section are laughable. Tourism is driven by external bodies, transnational companies, and recent migrants to Orkney. For centuries what is now the Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS was capably managed by Orcadians who lived in close proximity to the sites. Then in the 1980s the sites were expropriated by HES and its predecessors. This was not an improvement."

"If you pursue a policy of deliberate obfuscation of the issues faced how can the public understand and engage with your decision-making process?"

Two people highlighted the importance of children having a connection with the World Heritage Site – arguing that a sense of ownership must start young. Both thought local schoolchildren should be brought to the site as part of their schooling, with one suggesting that this would enable a sense of community ownership for future generations and calls for more educational provisions for local children.

"Why isn't every schoolchild brought to these sites at least once in their school career?"

"A sense of community ownership starts young. But OIC and HES barely have any educational provision for local children. The HES Ranger service are not educational professionals. This 'plan' has no explicit education provision. A physical gateway centre could provide an education offer."

3.6 Challenge 5: Sustainability

Questions:

Respondents were asked to comment on Challenge 5, Sustainability, as included in the draft Management Plan 2025-35. The Management Partners' summary of this is included in the box below. Respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need for sustainability in the World Heritage Site?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don't know
- Do you have any comments on this theme?
 - Open field for comments

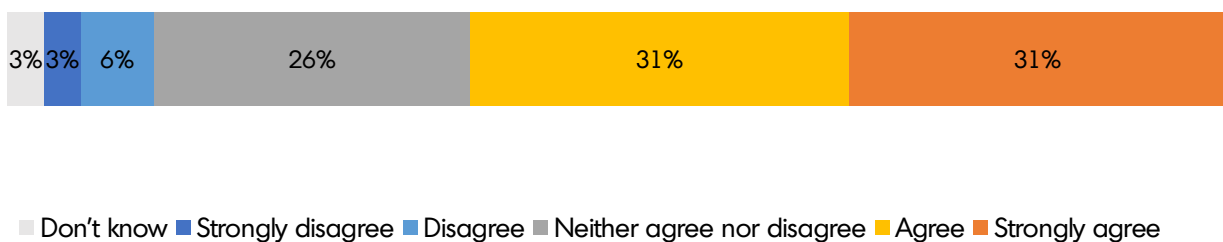
Challenge 5: Sustainability (Summary)

Sustainable management decisions consider the natural and cultural environment, the economy, and the needs of the present in ways that also consider the needs of future generations. Decisions should take into account if they might damage, deplete or degrade the WHS and its environment for future generations.

Responses:

Figure 6. Agreement with Challenge 5: Sustainability

Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need for sustainable management in the World Heritage Site?



Base: 35

The majority of respondents agreed that the challenge of sustainability was accurately addressed in the Management Plan. Overall, 31% of respondents agreed and the same proportion strongly agreed with the way the Management Plan outlined this challenge. Less than 1 in 10 respondents either disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (3%), while just over a quarter (26%) indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% said they did not know. 15 people left comments explaining their answers, with some underscoring their support for the theme, others sceptical, and many offering suggestions around sustainability for the site in the future.

A common theme in relation to this challenge was the belief that the Management Plan lacked clarity around the definition of sustainability and the actions that might be taken in the coming years. Questions were raised about what sustainability refers to, with one respondent asking whether it related to erosion, loss of knowledge over time, or the popularity of the site. Another person felt unable to comment due to lack of definition. This suggests a fundamental lack of clarity in the Management Plan which should be addressed to facilitate

understanding going forward. The frustration is compounded by a perceived lack of concrete solutions to address the challenge. Several respondents indicated that this section did not provide enough detail on what choices would be faced, or how decisions would be made. There was also some confusion about how the sustainability goals expressed in the Management Plan align with the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. Overall, further clarification was felt to be needed to fully comprehend the details of this challenge and more concrete plans on how this challenge will be addressed were called for.

"I don't believe there's enough clarity in "sustainability" to enable an informed judgement to be made. Is it sustainability in relation to erosion due to excessive visitor numbers? Is it sustainability in relation to loss of site knowledge through the lack of informed staff? Is it sustainability in relation to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney going out of favour with visitors?"

"I don't know what this means so cannot comment."

"You don't really say anything about the choices you might face or what your responses might be."

"Where is the plan to meet this challenge?"

"It is not clear to me how this section addresses any one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

Several respondents offered suggestions on how sustainability could be more actively promoted within the management of the World Heritage Site and also highlighted the larger impacts on the environment that they feel should be addressed. Ideas focused on reducing environmental impact while enhancing visitor experience, referencing methods of active travel such as walking or cycling paths to travel to sites. Concerns were also raised about the broader environmental consequences of visitor access, with two people suggesting banning cruise ships as a method of reducing pollution and decreasing pressure on the site. The contradiction between sustainability goals and cruise ship tourism highlights what one respondent perceives as hypocrisy within the Management Plan. Air quality was also specified as a priority by one person, who wanted to see more emphasis given to this in the Management Plan.

"There are (also) unstated opportunities to ensure 'active travel' is maximised."

"Walking / cycling paths from the main Kirkwall to Stromness Road junction to Standing Stones of Stenness & on to Ring of Brodgar. Longer term aim could be to extend this path to Skara Brae."

"Sustainable management can be achieved by banning cruise ship busses so only good tourists can go."

"The essence of what it means to visit the Ring of Brodgar has been lost since the pressure of increased visitor numbers has led to the introduction of restrictions to limit damage to the site. It is hard to reconcile the stated goals of 'climate emergency' and 'sustainability' and 'world class visitor experience' unless the first action in this management plan was to ban cruise ship passengers from ships with a negative emissions rating visiting the World Heritage site. That would achieve the objective of removing the worst polluting ships from our waters and the single biggest pressure on our fragile Neolithic sites."

"There seemed little reference to the impact of allowing/enabling access on air quality from traffic."

"It is very difficult to take this management plan document seriously when most of it is talking about history and definition, and very little is linked to the most obvious problems and the difficult solutions which will be required to respond to them."

In contrast, some responses reveal scepticism about sustainability in relation to ancient monuments, with some emphasising the durability of the sites and suggesting that they hardly need to take sustainability into account considering these monuments have already demonstrated sustainability through thousands of years of existence. The observation that sustainability has not been an issue to date because sites have coped with increased footfall suggests either genuine disagreement about whether problems exist or a belief that concerns are premature or exaggerated – both views have previously been expressed in relation to other challenges.

"Standing stones hardly need to take this into account."

"To date sustainability has not been an issue as the sites and surrounds have been able to cope with the increased foot fall."

A small proportion of respondents offered positive comments to underline their agreement with sustainability as a challenge in the Management Plan. They said protecting the World Heritage Site into the future is of utmost importance, and sustainability is a key part of that.

"Very important - no use making unsustainable changes."

"The protection of the sites is of paramount importance and this must be done in a sustainable way."

One person perceived a disconnect between policy and local benefit. They felt that the construction of windfarms in the area were not of benefit to locals in Orkney.

"The only sustainable development that seems to be happening is the construction of windfarms. I am at a loss to see how the people of Orkney will benefit"

3.7 Challenge 6: Research and Learning

Questions:

Respondents were asked to comment on Challenge 6, Research and Learning, as included in the draft Management Plan 2025-35. The Management Partners' summary of this is included in the box below. Respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need for research and learning in the World Heritage Site?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don't know
- Do you have any comments on this theme?
 - Open field for comments

Challenge 6: Research and Learning (Summary)

Research relating to the WHS is focused on archaeology and climate change. Scotland's Islands Research Framework for Archaeology can help to ensure the research needs of the WHS are embedded into a wider comprehensive framework.

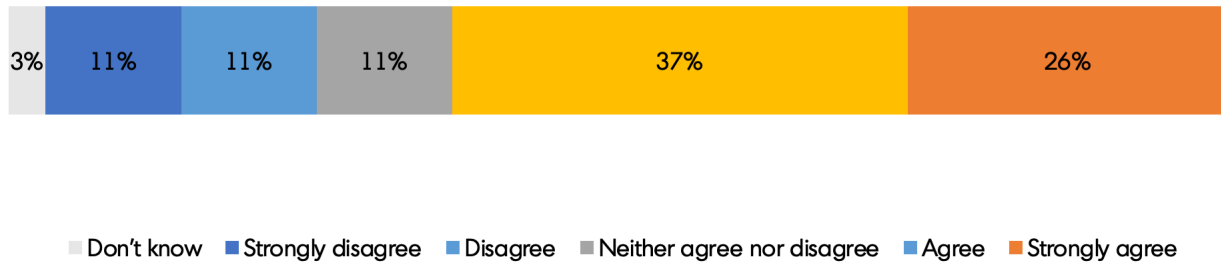
Opportunities exist to expand research on social context, community value, wellbeing, natural environment, and longer-term climatic factors to deepen knowledge and improve the management of the WHS and involve local communities in the research process. This should include research into visitor motivations, experience and satisfaction,

The WHS has the potential to be developed further as an exceptional resource for educational institutions, and we should investigate ways to expand engagement with school pupils and young people, particularly secondary schools and youth groups.

Responses:

Figure 7. Agreement with Challenge 6: Research and Learning

Do you agree that this challenge accurately addresses the need for research and learning in the World Heritage Site?



Base: 35

The majority of respondents agreed that the challenge of research and learning was accurately addressed in the Management Plan – 37% agreed and 26% strongly agreed. Equal proportions of respondents (11%) disagreed, strongly disagreed, or remained neutral. One person (3%) chose the answer option 'don't know'. 15 people left comments explaining their answers, with most either expressing support for research and learning, or requesting clarity and specific direction.

A strong and consistent theme across responses was the need for a greater emphasis on learning, research, and education engagement at the World Heritage Site. Many respondents felt that the current management approach does not prioritise knowledge-building highly enough, with several calling for research and learning to be placed much further up HES and OIC's agenda. Respondents stressed that understanding the past is essential for interpreting the present and preparing for the future, and that the sites within HONO should be more focussed on advancing knowledge rather than predominantly generating income. Strengthening partnerships with schools and educational institutions was seen as particularly important. Respondents highlighted the need for deeper collaboration with key education partners, noting that while primary-aged children are well engaged, opportunities at secondary level appear far more limited. Others reflected on gaps in their own educational experiences and emphasised the value of accessible archives and research resources, praising the excellent facilities at Orkney Library and Stromness Library but expressing concern about potential threats to these due to wider resource cuts. One respondent identified sites for potential research and development, and another felt that the

success of the excavation of the Ness of Brodgar could provide an opportunity to learn from and apply to other aspects of the World Heritage Site.

"There should be an emphasis on learning and research."

"Research and learning needs to be higher in your priorities."

"Understanding the past helps us understand the present and can help us deal with whatever is on its way."

"There should be much more effort concentrated on research into the sites and much less effort directed into making money for HES."

"This should be further up with Community engagement and linking with key education partners."

"I definitely agree that post-primary more could be done with KGS and Stromness Academy. My kids (primary) are always learning about HONO - my friend's teenage kids are definitely less engaged."

"As an art history graduate from the University of Edinburgh (YEAR redacted) I have always felt let down by my education and lack of understanding about government organisations such as UNESCO and Historic Environment Scotland. I think the research environment has changed enormously. The archive rooms in Orkney Library and Stromness Library are excellent. My only fear is that the council is on a major efficiency drive and leaders are completely cut off from their environment and things that give value to life. It could all be lost.... Living in Stromness I have heard the story of the broch at Bu in the Orkney Museum. There is scope for research here. Development of the site as a visitor attraction with traditional planting etc would enhance the visitor experience and local story telling alike."

"The Ness of Brodgar has captured the imagination of people across the world, and inspired many many people to engage with the dig on a sustainable way and donate their time volunteering. The World Heritage Site must learn from this. People are inspired by what they can do in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding rather than being told where they can and cannot stand."

Several respondents expressed a clear desire for stronger direction and transparency around the World Heritage Site's future research and learning ambitions. A number of people noted that the current draft Management Plan does not set out what the key research questions are, how priorities are determined, or how learning opportunities will be delivered in

practice. Concerns were again raised about the limited education provision for local children. One comment emphasised a desire for clearer reporting on what has already been achieved in relation to research and learning, including long-term work such as that undertaken by the Ness of Brodgar Trust, which continues to make major contributions to understanding the Orcadian Neolithic. More specific issues were highlighted, such as the separation of 'core' and 'buffer' in the Management Plan which was perceived as an unhelpful distinction for research, as it risked suggesting the buffer zone was of lesser importance. Overall, there was a strong sense from these comments that respondents feel the research agenda needs updating and to be more clearly articulated.

"There is no indication of what you want / need to know or how you propose to pursue it."

"A sense of community ownership starts young. But OIC and HES barely have any educational provision for local children. The HES Ranger service are not educational professionals. This 'plan' has no explicit education provision. A physical gateway centre could provide an education offer. Many locals have never in their life visited Maeshowe or Gurness. Why isn't every schoolchild brought to these sites at least once in their school career?"

"I would have liked to see more discussion of what has been achieved regarding research and learning, and what is ongoing. The Ness of Brodgar Trust has led long-term research at the heart of HONO, and has embarked on long term post-excavation activities which will make significant contributions to knowledge about the Orcadian Neolithic."

"It would be useful to make it clear in this section that the research and learning is about the whole WHS i.e. core and buffer area. The language of 'core and buffer' in conceiving the WHS risks the buffer being treated as secondary, whereas all of the WHS is of value. Furthermore, it is worth reminding ourselves that HONO is a modern concept, which had no meaning for the Neolithic inhabitants of Orkney. HONO should be seen as a catalyst for research and learning into/about the Neolithic in Orkney."

"A 20-year-old research agenda is not appropriate. Is this implying that the research strategy 2013-18 will also not be renewed and will instead rely on SIRFA? A specific WHS renewed research agenda and strategy should be considered, following release of SIRFA, as there are specific research questions relating to the WHS that would also impact interpretation and presentation. A specific research agenda and strategy could also incorporate wider research aims (beyond archaeology)."

Two people expressed frustration over what they perceived to be lost opportunities and site decisions at the Ness of Brodgar. One questioned why it was not preserved and kept open for the public to visit, taking pressure off the rest of the site, and the other felt more

should be said about the research done at the site and information given about any related publications to be released in the future.

"When the Ness was buried OIC and HES lost any credibility they may have had for supporting learning or research. Why was this site not preserved and kept open? As a massive draw for visitors it would have relieved pressure on SB and HONO. If Jorvik can keep Viking age wooden timbers preserved beneath the floor of their visitor's centre why can't stones be preserved in a structure that rests on the ground without unnecessarily disturbing the archaeology?"

"A major programme of excavation has just ended at Ness of Brodgar, but you have almost nothing to say about its implications, expectation for publication, or presentation of the site (it's going to be reburied)!"

Two people expressed scepticism around continued research and learning at the site. One believed it to be a waste of time and money which should be spent on facilities and tourist management, and the other felt there was nothing new to be learned and that continued research was an insult to the previous custodians of the site.

"Waste of time and money. Spend it on limiting tourists and providing toilets."

"What has been learned in the last ten or 20 years that was not learned in the last 50 or 100 years other than that to which logical updates and methodology can be applied? The current generation of people degrade themselves by inferring that the custodians of the sites were somehow illiterate and have poor management skills."

Additional feedback:

The following feedback, whilst not directly relevant to the Management Plan itself, was also provided in responses to Challenge 6, and is again worthy of wider consideration:

One person raised a concern around the direction of research and learning being decided by organisations located outside of Orkney. They reinforced the view that the World Heritage Site belongs to Orkney, not to any external parties.

"Once again, this section appears to indicate that research and learning is to be driven by external bodies with external agendas. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS belongs to Orkney and to Orcadians, not to the external bodies that have expropriated it."

One person also highlighted the value of international collaboration regarding the site, which they believed would add a level of depth to the community.

“There is also scope for much more international interaction which would give a richness and depth to our community.”

3.8 Additional challenges

Questions:

Respondents were asked if there were any other additional high-level and long-term challenges or themes for managing the World Heritage Site that should be considered.

Respondents were asked the following two questions:

- Are there any additional high-level and long-term challenges or themes for managing the World Heritage Site that you think should be considered?
 - Yes or No
- If yes, please indicate what these are
 - Open field for comments

Responses:

Figure 8. Additional challenges

Are there any additional high-level and long-term challenges or themes for managing the World Heritage Site that you think should be considered?



Base: 35

Almost two-thirds of respondents think there are additional high-level and long-term challenges or themes for managing the World Heritage Site that should be considered. For those who answered ‘yes’ to this question, additional comments explaining their answers were invited. 25 comments were left and many reiterated points made in relation to earlier questions.

A common theme was the need for better infrastructure and visitor facilities, especially toilets, pathways, and access management. Several respondents emphasised that

infrastructure is either insufficient or failing, reiterating issues previously highlighted such as toilets, waste bins, seating, improved paths, and redesigned access routes at the Brodgar. People again highlighted that poor infrastructure not only harms visitor experience, but drives behaviours that damage sites, and harm the landscape. This was framed not as a minor improvement, but as a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable tourism.

"Toilets at the Ring of Brodgar. If you are considering it an historic Scotland site, then you are responsible for providing facilities."

"The level of facilities at sites is either poor or non-existent. By facilities I mean, toilets, waste disposal, seating"

"Infrastructure in and around the WHS is critical and I would suggest that it deserves to be acknowledged as such. Key improvements such as any new visitor centre, upgraded foot paths / ways, cycle routes and car / bus parking & lay-bys should arguably be a distinct category due to their potential impact and importance. Such a category could cover new infrastructure and adaptive management of the current network to respond to any identified pressures."

Closely linked to this is concerns around tourism pressure and the need to better manage footfall, site access, and visitor numbers. Respondents used this section to stress the continued strain from high tourist numbers, particularly around the Ring of Brodgar. Many felt that over-tourism is already damaging the integrity of the monuments and that stronger protective measures will be required in the future. There were calls to limit visitor access and to control movement through fragile areas, as respondents see this as a long-term threat to site preservation, one that should remain a central challenge in future management.

"The WHO site, particularly Ring of Brodgar, needs far more protection from over-tourism than currently exists."

"Reduce number of Liners visiting Orkney, and thereby reduce footfall at, for example, the Ring of Brodgar."

A notable theme involves a desire for stronger, more decisive action rather than continued planning and consultation. There was some frustration from respondents that challenges are repeatedly recognised but not acted on. Some concern was expressed over strategies, audits, and reviews being performative rather than being turned into concrete plans and solutions. Several argued for more progress – such as clear decisions on visitor centres and rethinking bus arrangements – rather than further discussion.

"A plan is only worth its salt if it generates meaningful action. A risk register is only valuable if it leads to mitigation. I worry that this consultation exercise and plan will not address quickly enough the very real challenges that have existed for the last few years. Reputationally, the World Heritage Site and the islands too may pay a heavy price for continued obfuscation and inaction."

"The risk from bureaucratic interference and inefficient management structures wasting money, putting blockers in the way of solutions and keeping indigenous out of decision making."

"The hilarious 'actions' in your document, an audit, an appraisal, an engagement, a strategy and a review, are not actions! They are just kicking the ball further down the road!"

Site protection and natural erosion were also raised as important long-term threats that may be under-acknowledged. Some respondents mentioned natural wear and tear, soil management, grazing, and the impact of both visitor erosion and erosion-control interventions. Some warned that measures meant to protect the monuments could alter their character, and that environmental changes will continue regardless of management choices.

"Stop commercialising and commodifying the site. Preserve it for future generations as the precious and internationally significant archaeological and historic resource that it is."

"Management of the soil in and around the sites, conservation grazing, bees etc ..."

"I definitely think you've covered everything, but I do think more needs to be said about the impacts of erosion controls (large- and small-scale interventions) will hurt the integrity of the sites."

Two respondents raised economic and funding-related suggestions, including entry fees. These points were mostly around generating revenue for preservation of historic sites.

"I wonder if entrance fees would ultimately be the way to go for bringing in income to care for the sites"

"Benefits of tourist levy."

3.9 Objectives

Questions:

Respondents were asked to comment on whether the Objectives identified within the draft Management Plan are the right Objectives to address the aims and challenges. The sixteen

strategic objectives are detailed in the box below. Respondents were asked the following questions:

- Do you think that these are the right Objectives to work towards the long-term aims and address the challenges and themes over the next ten years?
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Don't know
- Do you have any other comments on these Objectives?
 - Open field for comments

Objectives

1. The WHS is protected, conserved, and maintained in accordance with national guidance and legislation, and international conservation charters; including both historic environment and natural environment considerations.
2. The boundaries of the Buffer Zone are suitable for purpose and included in future iterations of the Local Development Plan.
3. Policy and guidance produced by the partners that affects the protection and management of the WHS, Buffer Zone and wider setting is up to date and fit for purpose.
4. Governance of the WHS is robust and transparent and is periodically reviewed (see Section 6. Monitoring and Delivery).
5. The Management Plan remains relevant, is fit for purpose, and allows the partners to respond to new understandings and challenges.
6. Decision makers and communities can access what they need to know about the WHS and Buffer Zone, understand the opportunities and obligations that come with WH status, and are engaged with the management of the WHS.
7. Management of the WHS prioritises adaption to the effects of the Climate Emergency on the WHS and Buffer Zone, and mitigation of climate impacts by reducing emissions and contributing to a sustainable low-carbon society.
8. A programme of monitoring is in place for both the state of conservation and the implementation of actions for the WHS and Buffer Zone and the results are used by the
9. Partners to inform decision making and future management. The Partners are collaborating to identify and access new sources of funding to support new projects and programmes to deliver shared Objectives.
10. Management and interpretation (onsite and offsite, including digitally) enhance awareness and understanding of the archaeological and historical heritage, the natural environment, the Buffer Zone and the WHS in its wider context, geographically and through time. All based on robust research and understanding.

11. The WHS and its associated sites and assets, materials and records (physical and digital) are easily accessible for use in research, education and training and are used by a range of community and special interest groups and projects.
12. Key stakeholders are involved in, informed about, and engaged with the decision-making process for managing the WHS and its associated infrastructure.
13. Tourism at and around HONO offers a world class responsible visitor experience while benefitting Orkney communities.
14. Strong connections between HONO and other WHSs and UNESCO designations are maintained and developed enabling development of shared solutions to common issues.
15. Research needs for the understanding, interpretation, protection and management of HONO WHS are identified and integrated with relevant research frameworks at a regional, nation and international level.
16. The WHS delivers a wide range of measurable benefits – social, economic, cultural, environmental, wellbeing – to Orkney’s communities.

Responses:

Figure 9. Identification of objectives to work towards

Do you think that these are the right Objectives to work towards the long-term aims and address the challenges and themes over the next ten years?



■ Don't know ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Base: 35

Responses were mixed in relation to whether the objectives identified within the draft Management Plan are the right objectives to work towards the long-term aims and address the challenges and themes over the next ten years. Less than half (46%) agreed or strongly agreed with this, and a similar proportion of respondents (43%) were neutral, responding 'neither agree nor disagree' to this question, perhaps reflecting concerns expressed within previous comments. Only one person (3%) disagreed with this, and two (6%) strongly disagreed. Eight people left a comment to explain their answer.

Across the small number of open responses, a common theme is a sense of dissatisfaction or frustration with the current objectives, particularly the feeling that they lack clarity, substance and meaningful strategic direction. Comments expressed doubt that the objectives will lead to real, practical action over the next decade. Some call for more decisive implementation rather than continued discussion.

"I have no faith that anything will be done in the next decade except more consultations and the writing of more flashy looking documents. I don't care about setting objectives, I care about solving problems. We all know what the problems are, they are self evident to anyone who lives and works in Orkney or who visits the HONO."

"You are communicating concern about the right subjects but no substance as to what management decisions are actually being faced. If you don't have the resources or the leadership initiative to attempt anything beyond "steady as she goes" then say that! At least that would be an honest engagement with the public, but obviously such candour might provoke actual calls to action, and we don't want that I presume?"

Other comments highlighted that the objectives feel overly process-based rather than truly strategic, with participants stating that only a small portion of them reflect long-term, visionary aims. One respondent argues that most of the objectives relate to management processes and compliance rather than measurable outcomes. Another believes the list of objectives are too long and could be condensed into a smaller number of core priorities. Respondents want sharper, more focussed strategic direction rather than broad statements.

"There are too many objectives. Most of them are not strategic. They are about process, organisation and compliance. A strategic objective is defined as "a long-term, measurable goal that an organisation aims to achieve, typically within a defined timeframe, to support its overall vision and mission." By that definition, only objectives 13 and 16 give a sense of vision and mission. Perhaps these objectives could be revisited, collapsed into 3 or 5 points, sufficient to be printed on the back of a Rangers ID card."

Two respondents are concerned that the objectives – specifically Objective 13 – places tourism above local or cultural benefits. These respondents believe tourism should not be prioritised over preservation and that Orcadian interests should not be secondary to commercial aims. There is a desire to see heritage values and local community prioritised over tourism.

"Stop prioritising tourism over historic, cultural and archaeological value. Orcadians don't want "visitor attractions" that are commercialised for the benefit of transnationals and centralised bodies. We want our heritage preserved."

“At present, the balance referred to at strategic objective 13 is heavily weighted in favour of volume tourism and against community benefit. This has to be redressed.”

One respondent noted that although site care is good overall, capacity and quality of experience will become increasingly important, implying that objectives must acknowledge and plan for future pressures rather than maintain the status quo.

“The sites are on balance well maintained and looked after. Updates to accommodate and manage an increased foot fall would need to be considered...the visitor experience must be considered to be worthwhile”

3.10 Monitoring Actions

Question:

Respondents were asked their thoughts on the Monitoring actions – repeated actions that will drive forward the Management Plan – specified within the draft Management Plan. These actions are displayed within the box below. Respondents were asked the following question:

- What do you think about the Monitoring actions, the repeat actions that will drive forward the Management Plan?
 - Open field for comments

Monitoring Actions

Annual Action Plan Progress Review:

Dedicated session to assess and drive forward progress of the Action Plan and to review governance approach. Short report from each responsible party required before commencement of the review by way of update.

Biennial Action Plan Delivery Report:

Summary report on progress including key updates, Action Plan progress etc for wider interest and for transparency.

Capacity and Resourcing Review:

To identify any gaps in capacity that might impact the delivery of the Management Plan and fulfilment of UNESCO obligations.

Guidance Review:

Review local, national and international guidance in relation to the protection and management of the WHS.

Participate in World Heritage related activities:

Team members/partners to attend conferences, workshops and meetings including WHUK, UK National Commission for UNESCO, Scottish WH Coordinators Forum and other opportunities as appropriate and if funding is available.

State of Conservation Monitoring:

Mid-point State of Conservation review addressing changes in physical site conditions, environmental/ climate impacts, proposed/ active development proposals, and informing the formal Periodic Reporting cycle and Mid-point Evaluation.

Mid-point Evaluation:

Evaluation at the mid-point of the Management Plan cycle to formally review the Management Plan, review and respond to challenges and changes in conservation and management practices.

Responses:

A total of 24 comments were left in relation to this question.

The most frequent theme across the responses was a mixture of cautious approval paired with the concern that monitoring must lead to meaningful action and not become a token or bureaucratic exercise. A notable proportion of respondents agreed that the monitoring actions appear sound and that reviews and ongoing assessments are necessary, but many emphasised that success depends on implementation, follow-through and visible results. Several comments expressed support for the plan – describing it as good, sensible, or appropriate – while simultaneously warning that reviews must be genuine rather than procedural.

"A good plan --- just need to keep to its timetable and make the reviews meaningful"

"The actions are well conceived and make sense. Having a commitment to review regularly outwith the management plan cycle is very welcome."

"As long as these are not simply box-ticking operations."

"I worry that these initiatives generate only bumf and an account code for office workers and consultants to attach hours to. Endlessly going round in circles with every bright spark that someone sitting in an office in Edinburgh comes up with to look like the smartest person in the room."

While many of the comments are positive, there is also widespread scepticism about action actually being taken and progress made. There was also a request for the language to be simplified and made more accessible. These views reflect those of a number of respondents, showing a concern that clarity, plain language and actionable intent need to be strengthened.

"I think they are a load of "report speak" when required initiatives can be described and delivered in a much simpler way"

"You don't really say anything beyond eat sleep repeat."

"Hilarious obfuscation and pointless wordsmithery."

The need for transparent communication of monitoring outcomes and clearer reporting was highlighted. It was emphasised that results must be shared in accessible formats and that there should be evidence of how monitoring is working in practice.

"I think the output from these repeat actions will need to be properly communicated to everyone - from those with a role in the management of the WHS through to those that use the sites (local and others). There will need to be different levels of detail and types of communication and this will need to be properly accessible. It will also be vitally important to be able to prove that the repeat actions are working, and how they are working."

"Reporting needs to be more engaging. Comments should be visible online and feedback given to those who contribute comments."

There are also more isolated comments **raising concerns about the lack of community engagement** included in the Monitoring actions and **strengthening site protection measures, specifically at the Ring of Brodgar.** One comment highlights repeated issues with visitors ignoring access guidance, damaging monuments and the surrounding land, and behaving disrespectfully. A permanent HES presence was requested. While this view did not appear widely amongst the comments, it has been a theme amongst previous comments and emphasises concerns that monitoring, without enforcement, will be insufficient.

"I do not see the words 'community' or 'engagement' included in any of these repeated actions. Perhaps that will be discussed at the five yearly options appraisal this winter. I do not see a reputational review exercise considering local, national and international sentiment towards the WHS."

"The Ring of Brodgar must have the level of protection and restricted access that currently happens at Maeshowe/Skara Brae...despite signs asking people to keep away from the inner path, there were always visitors up against the stones...Visitors also climb over the outer mounds, despite them being roped off (although the 'barriers' such as they are completely ineffective)...The site needs a permanent HES presence with guardians as at Skara Brae."

3.1.1 Essential Projects and Actions

Question:

Respondents were asked their opinion on the Essential Projects and Actions – one-off actions to improve and enhance the WHS over time – specified within the draft Management Plan. These projects and actions are displayed within the box below. Respondents were asked the following question:

- What do you think about the Essential projects and actions, the one-off actions to improve and enhance the WHS?
 - Open field for comments

Essential Projects and Actions

Accessibility Audit:

Accessibility audit to identify physical and intellectual barriers and identify actions to improve access for all. To include both Ring of Brodgar/Stones of Stenness/Maeshowe and Skara Brae and connections between the component sites and to local communities and infrastructure.

Community Involvement Options Appraisal:

Options Appraisal to review and identify how the community could be more directly involved in the management of and engaged with the WHS, with a particular focus on landowners/managers and residents within the Buffer Zone.

Formalise engagement with the Orkney Gateway Project:

Steering Group to agree a formal relationship and communications protocol with the Orkney Gateway Project to support mutual alignment as necessary.

Skara Brae Climate Change Strategy:

Development and implementation of long-term strategy to address the threat to Skara Brae from climate change / sea level rise and associated coastal erosion.

Buffer Zone boundary review:

Review of the Buffer Zone boundaries in parallel with the development of the new Local Development Plan. Any proposed changes agreed by Signatory Partners and a formal Minor Modification request submitted to UNESCO.

Responses:

23 comments were left in response to this question. Responses were mixed, and common themes amongst the comments were limited.

One recurring theme across the responses was a sense of conditional approval – many participants agreed that the essential projects and actions appear sensible and appropriate, but repeatedly stressed that the value of these proposals depends on delivery, timeliness and visible progress. A number of respondents described the plan positively but also highlighted that actions must generate meaningful results.

“Again a good plan but it needs to happen to timetable and be meaningful.”

“They’re good in theory but, understandably to an extent, aren’t fully defined.”

“Well thought-out, and necessary.”

The need for clearer, more effective communication was also called for – both about what the actions are and how they are progressing. One commenter also highlighted that the defined ‘projects and actions’ are not actually examples of actions and can be viewed as a way of delaying action. This indicates that further communication is necessary to specify what actions are being taken as a result of the Management Plan. Meaningful dialogue with the community and transparency around decisions was requested by a small number of respondents.

“There is no meaningful communication of what you are doing, why or to what ends”

“What projects and actions? An audit, an appraisal, an engagement, a strategy and a review are not actions, they are a way of avoiding actions.”

“I like the plan to involve the local community more.”

A few respondents also used this section to further comment on infrastructure needed – one respondent continued to highlight the inadequate toilet facilities that they feel requires immediate resolution. Specific infrastructure issues, such as the installation of bus stops, were also highlighted here, however only by one respondent.

"I did not see reference to the resolution of toileting arrangements. This is presently a disgrace and needs immediate resolution."

"The temporary installation of bus stops at the start of the B9055 should be progressed as a matter of urgency. Someone will die walking from Stenness along the road because of inadequate public transport planning and driver behaviour."

"Accessibility is indeed vital, and so is better infrastructure"

3.12 Future Opportunities

Question:

Respondents were asked their thoughts about the Future Opportunities actions detailed within the draft Management Plan. These are projects that depend on identifying resourcing and funding. These Opportunities are detailed within the box below and respondents were asked the following question:

- What do you think about the Future Opportunities actions? These are projects and actions that could be carried out if resources are available.
 - Open field for comments

Opportunities

Messaging and Interpretation Strategy:

Development and implementation of a Strategy (including events, collections, online presence) to establish storytelling approaches and site cohesion and increase awareness of archaeology, geography, natural heritage and biodiversity through onsite and online material

Digital Media Strategy:

Building on Messaging and Interpretation Strategy and enhancing web presence and offer online access to information, news, interpretation and events.

Research Group and Guidelines:

Establishment of a research-focused steering group to develop and promote robust research guidelines, and to encourage and promote research projects across wide range of relevant fields.

Biodiversity Strategy:

Assessment of biodiversity and integration with existing strategies, for safeguarding biodiversity and the environment, for the WHS and immediately associated land and water.

Responses:

A total of 24 comments were left about the Future Opportunities actions.

The most widespread theme in responses was that several of the Future Opportunities actions should not be optional or dependent on uncertain future funding, but instead treated as core priorities that require active resourcing. A number of respondents argued that messaging, storytelling, digital strategy, and biodiversity work are too important to be relegated to a future opportunities list if funding is available, and that research must be continuous rather than aspirational. There was a repeated sense in the comments that these areas cannot wait for resources to appear but need committed funding strategies to make them happen.

"Surely messaging and digital media strategy need to be ingrained in the plan, and not just happening if some money can be found --- money needs to be found! Likewise Biodiversity Strategy.

Research Group and Guidelines --- research is vital across the WHS. It can't be a stagnant entity and a positive plan to make funding happen is needed, not just the current vague statements."

"The biodiversity is essential I believe. There is lots of opportunity for story telling for educational purposes, as well as entertainment"

"I am particularly pleased to see storytelling identified as an aspect of the 'Messaging and Interpretation Strategy' opportunity (3.1), though I do feel strongly that opportunities 3.1 and 3.2 are more urgent than their inclusion in a 'depending on identifying resourcing and funding' list suggests."

"Some of these seem quite urgent, particularly 3.1 and 3.3, which are keenly related to 2.1"

A further group of comments expressed concern that these actions remain vague, and lack real substance – suggesting that more practical, defined projects are needed. Several responses challenge the focus on writing strategies rather than implementing tangible work. Some also describe the opportunities as safe and predictable and lacking thorough, strategic thinking.

"The actions listed are safe and obvious. They lack imagination and creativity. This is not a list of opportunities. It is another checklist of basic administrative processes which would be required anyway, masquerading as somehow visionary."

"You seem to be saying you have a plan to have a plan in the future!"

"Lots of Strategies - maybe more actions identified too?"

A smaller proportion highlighted the need for proactive funding acquisition and strengthened resourcing capacity to make future projects deliverable. One comment recognised that future opportunities are dependent on resource availability but stressed that this requires active effort. Another appeared sceptical about the opportunities as funding will most likely always be an issue to consider.

"Any additional resources are welcome and it would be excellent if there could be a time / person commitment to proactively seeking funding opportunities to help deliver the management plan objectives/projects."

"Funding is always going to be a problem, so this is pie in the sky..."

Several comments simply express agreement with the Opportunities identified in the Management Plan:

"Excellent"

"I'm happy with them"

"They seem appropriate"

3.13 Other Feedback

Question:

Respondents were asked to provide any other feedback they had to share on the draft Management plan. They were asked the following question:

- If you have any other feedback you would like to share on the draft Management Plan please comment below.
 - Open field for comments

Responses:

23 respondents left a comment to provide additional feedback. A number were short, summary remarks, while others used this section as an opportunity to further highlight points previously discussed.

A number of responses offered positive remarks and gratitude, including thanks for caring about the sites and appreciation for being able to take part in the consultation.

"None. Well done."

"Overall a very clear management plan - it's clear a lot of hard work has gone into it. Look forward to seeing it implemented."

"Other than mentioned above nothing at this time. Thanks in advance"

"Thank you for caring"

"As far as I'm aware, this is the first attempt to involve the Orcadian community in the management of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney sites, although they have belonged to Orkney and Orcadians for millennia."

A prominent concern across these responses is related to the idea of a Management Plan itself and around implementation and execution versus planning. A substantial portion of respondents expressed scepticism about whether the Management Plan will actually be delivered, with comments highlighting a perceived pattern of previous plans failing to translate into meaningful action. There is a clear frustration that strategic documents are produced but then not followed through, with one respondent noting *"there is a history of drift to WHS HONO planning and making statements for the sake of making statements"*. Others echo this sentiment more bluntly, asking *"What is the point? You are just going through the motions"* and expressing despair about the consultation process itself.

"It's not a bad plan -- if everyone makes it happen. There is a history of drift to WHS HONO planning and making statements for the sake of making statements and then resting on the laurels of making a plan rather than making a plan work."

"What is the point? You are just going through the motions."

"I remember filling in something very similar a few years ago, when I filled it in more fully. If you still have those responses on record - please refer to them. I'm reluctant to spend time going through it all again."

"I've been disappointed by this Management Plan. This has the feel of a statutory document obliged to be offered out to consultation which has lots of lovely pictures but no Heart."

Themes discussed previously were again drawn out within this final section. Tourism management and visitor pressures were highlighted. Several comments identified tourism as presenting both immediate threats to the sites and broader sustainability challenges. There was particular concern about managing footfall and the balance between promoting the sites and protecting them. One extensive response argued that the World Heritage designation functions primarily as a Marketing tool that actually threatens the sites it is meant to protect.

For some, the plan does not address the needs of the local community and instead focusses on tourism and the needs of those visiting Orkney.

"I expect most people would believe the World Heritage designation is first and foremost a marketing tool to promote tourism. Ironically, tourism is the most obvious immediate threat to our most prized sites and wider issues of sustainability. Tourism is also the most problematic challenge facing the reputation of our sites locally, nationally and internationally."

"Other than the effects of the climate emergency I think managing tourism will be a major issue."

"Again, I really feel footfall needs sorting out. I welcome the community engagement. I'd like to see biodiversity and nature be a priority given the special landscapes in which these places sit."

"Overall, it is a weak document designed to promote the needs of tourism operators, particularly volume tourism, and the needs of centralised bodies, such as HES. It doesn't address the needs and wishes of the local communities that will be directly affected by the intentions contained within it."

Concerns around toilets were again reiterated within this final section – this being the primary concern for some respondents.

"At the Maeshowe Visitor Centre, there used to be 3 toilets available for clients to use. Currently there are only 2, which leads to queues and delays..."

"Toilets, Toilets, Toilets"

A small number of comments addressed partnership working and organisational effectiveness. One respondent commended the management team for delivering the previous plan with "real tangible results", while another criticised the partners for not being able to work together effectively to address concerns.

"The management team / steering group have had great success delivering the outgoing management plan with real tangible results. They should be commended given the lack of dedicated staff across the organisations. Hopefully, the positive improvements will continue and the sites will benefit more in the future from ambitious projects and sustainable management which responds to emerging pressures."

“The partners involved in managing the World Heritage Site appear to be unable to work together effectively and efficiently to address community concerns, to improve access and provide basic sanitation. It could be said the Ness of Brodgar, funded by charitable donations and staffed by volunteers, has done more good for Orkney’s reputation in the last 2 decades than the World Heritage Site partnership.”

Individual respondents raised specific points. One respondent called for a committee timescale for the next management plan to avoid strategic drift. Another highlighted the limited publicity for the consultation.

“Please build into the plan a timescale for - and commitment to - the preparation of the next plan. There has been a gap between the last management plan and this one, and such gaps generally pose a risk of strategic drift.”

“Publicity of this consultation seems to have been somewhat scant. I saw a QR code in the Co-Op, but that is all I have noticed...”

3.14 Necessary information

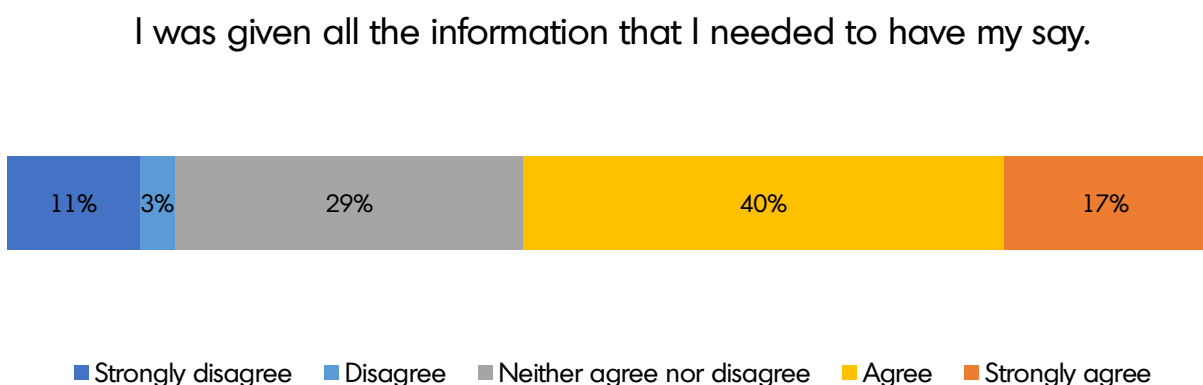
Question:

Respondents were asked if they were given all the information they needed to have their say. They were presented with the following statement and asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with it.

- I was given all the information that I needed to have my say.
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree

Response:

Figure 10. Necessary information given



Base: 35

The majority of respondents either agreed (40%) or strongly agreed (17%) that they were given all the information they needed to have their say on this consultation. A small proportion disagreed (3%) or strongly disagreed (11%), while the remaining respondents remained neutral (29%).

3.15 Clarity of consultation

Question:

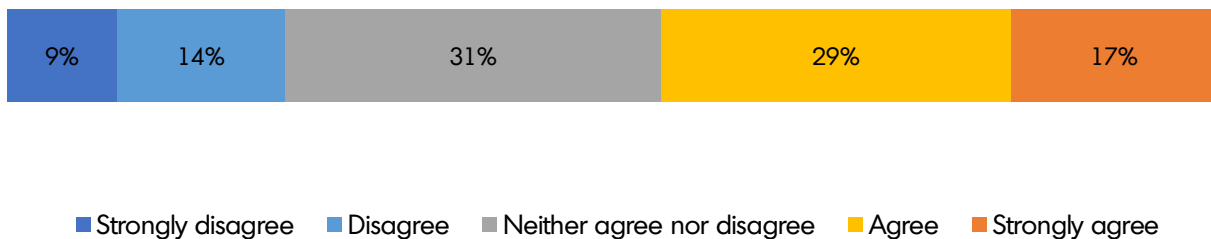
Respondents were asked to identify the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the consultation and engagement activity was clear and easy to understand. They were presented with the following statement:

- This consultation and engagement activity was clear and easy to understand.
 - Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree

Response:

Figure 11. Clarity of the consultation and engagement activity

This consultation and engagement activity was clear and easy to understand.



Base: 35

Less than half of respondents agreed (29%) or strongly agreed (17%) that the consultation and engagement activity was clear and easy to understand, while a notable proportion neither agreed nor disagreed (31%) with this statement. Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) either disagreed (14%) or strongly disagreed (9%) indicating that for some, this process of engaging with the consultation was not clear or easy to understand.

APPENDIX 1 – ADDITIONAL RESPONSE

The following response was received in a separate format via email. The feedback relates to very specific parts of the management plan and is most coherently viewed as a standalone piece:

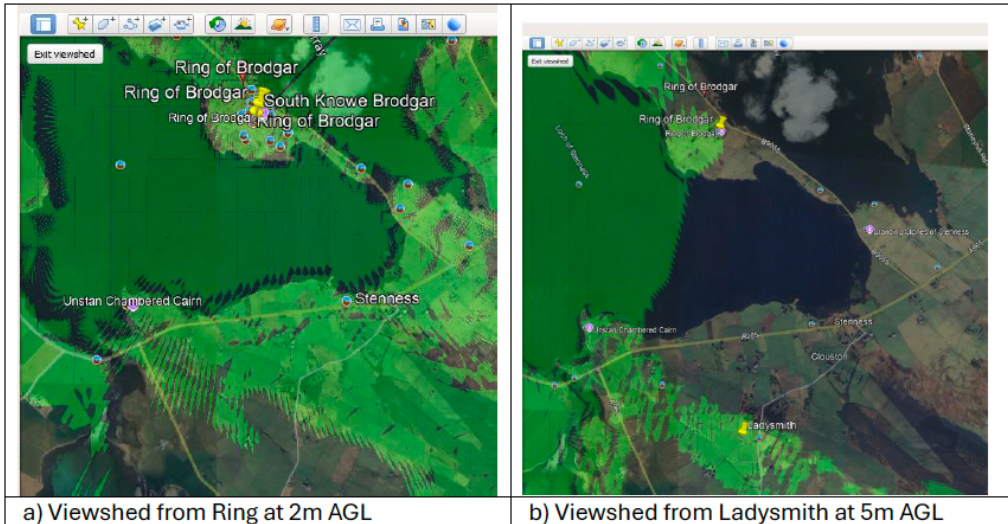
World Heritage Site/ Heart of Neolithic Orkney/ HES Management Plan 2025-35

Comments from [REDACTED]

Comment#1 References: Para 2.2 The Buffer Zone and Wider Context (page 19); Strategic Objective 02 (p62). Policy 8 of the LDP 2: “Development will not be permitted where it breaks the skyline at the sensitive ridgelines of the WHS”

Suggestion: To help developers and planners, create and publish a map showing the location of these ridgelines on the ground, for structures of height 5m, 10m and 15m.

This could be done as a GIS project for a summer student. The illustration below shows the ‘Viewshed’ function in Google Earth Pro being used to a) identify the ridgeline for a zero height structure and b) check whether a particular site (Ladysmith) of height 5m breaks the skyline.



Rationale: It is difficult for developers and planners to comply with and enforce Policy 8.

At the example site of Ladysmith, OIC approved Planning Application 13/077/PIP, but only *after it was built* did it become apparent that the apex of the building broke the sensitive skyline. See picture below, taken from the Ring of Brodgar, which validates the viewsheds above.



Comment#2 Reference: Para 2.4 Attributes of OUV. page 32, Attribute#3. “The alignment of the Maeshowe passageway on the Barnhouse Stone”

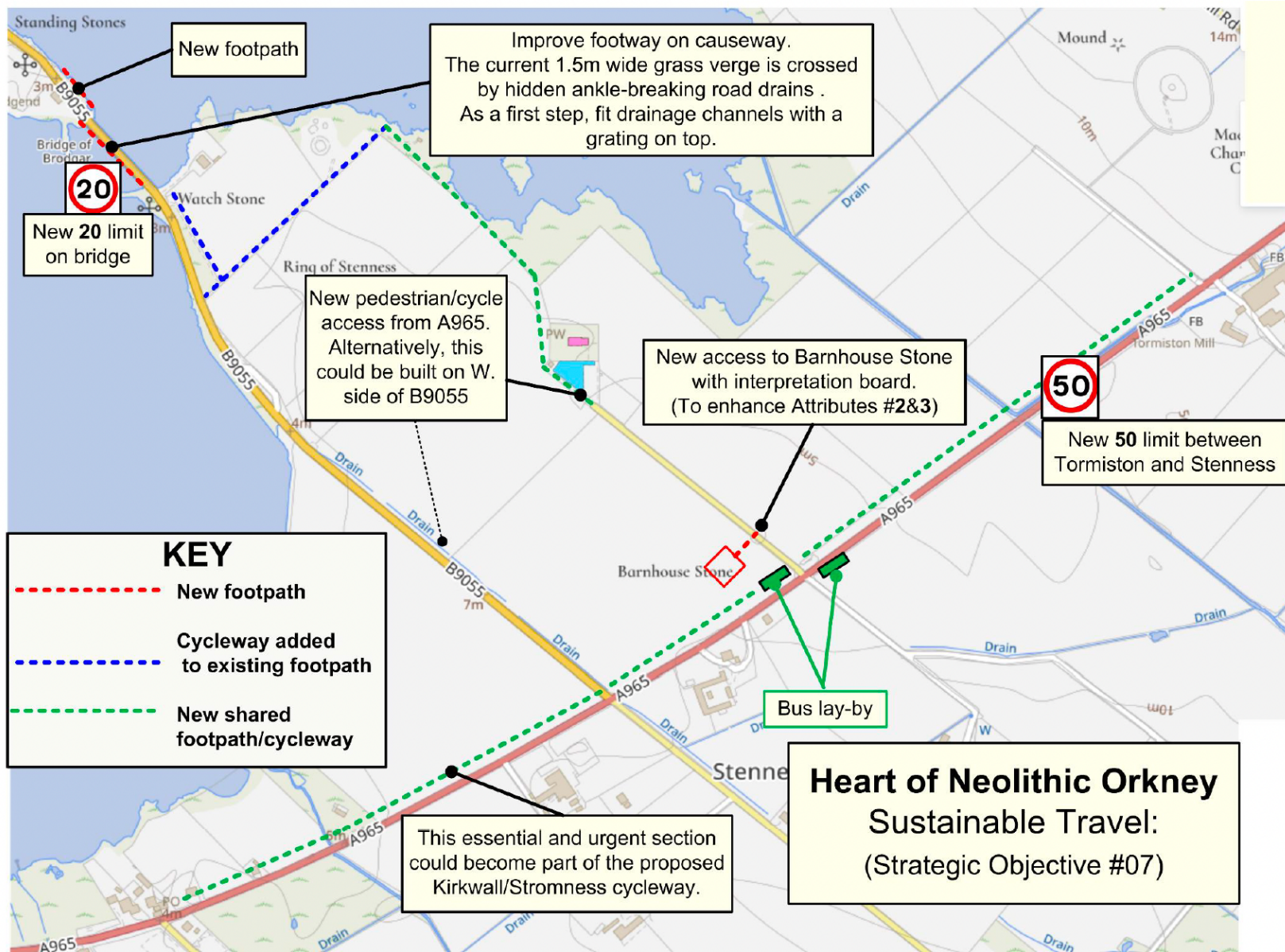
Suggestion: When the opportunity arises, modify the HES fencing at the entrance to Maeshowe so as not to obstruct the view of the Barnhouse Stone from inside the cairn. The existing gate gets in the way, presumably because the Ministry of Works were not aware of the important sightline.

A similar issue applies to the entrance of Unstan tomb, which aligns with the Watchstone and the causeway to the Ness. From inside the tomb, this view is obstructed by heavy mesh and a metal gate in the fence surrounding the site.

See images below.

| | |
|--|---|
|  |  |
| <p>Barnhouse Stone from inside Maeshowe. With HES gatepost and latch! Similar photo on p49 of the Management Plan.</p> | <p>Unstan passageway: ‘view’ of Watchstone.</p> |

Comment#3 References: Managing Visitors (p13); Aim 5 (p61); Strategic Objective 07 (p62); 4.1 Climate Emergency/Sustainable Travel (p48).



APPENDIX 2 – COLLECTIVE ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

The following feedback, whilst not directly relevant to the Management Plan itself, was also provided and is worthy of wider consideration. This feedback is individually detailed within the main body of the report in relation to the individual Challenge where the feedback was provided, but it was requested that this additional feedback should also be included collectively for ease of distribution.

The importance of community engagement and inclusion was emphasised by one respondent. Utilising social media, more local story-telling and citizen science (similar approaches to those used by other organisations) were suggested as strategies for climate monitoring and raising awareness of climate change – sharing local stories about climate impacts. Though an isolated comment from one respondent who lives in Orkney, their

“It is important that issues of the Anthropocene are addressed, and we all need to be ecological citizens...I have read about the Internet of Things which is used by citizen science projects to monitor air quality. I know the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) have sites where you can post pictures of birds. It would be good if the World Heritage site had something similar...I think social media is very important for sharing experience of climate change.”

One person offered specific suggestions regarding strategies which could be used to reduce the impact of cruise ships on climate change. This included having policies to regulate cruise emissions, provide shore power, and incentivise low-emission travel, suggesting that climate change and visitor management should be closely aligned.

“HES and OIC should jointly lobby for tighter regulation of cruise emissions. OIC must make it a priority to provide shore power to cruise ships, make it a policy to exclude the most polluting, and insist Shore-Ex companies pay their fair share for access, and reduce their direct emissions.”

A suggestion was also offered regarding learning from the management of comparable sites elsewhere threatened by climate change.

“Think globally - how do other sites (like Calanais in Lewis, Outer Hebrides) manage?”

The following feedback, whilst not directly relevant to the Management Plan itself, was also provided and is worthy of wider consideration.

One person offered some recommendations around artistic expression of the site. They suggested a possible collaboration with the Pier Arts Centre, as well as widening the scope of the history shared about the site to include Childe, the Battle of Summerdale and the mapper Murdo Mackenzie.

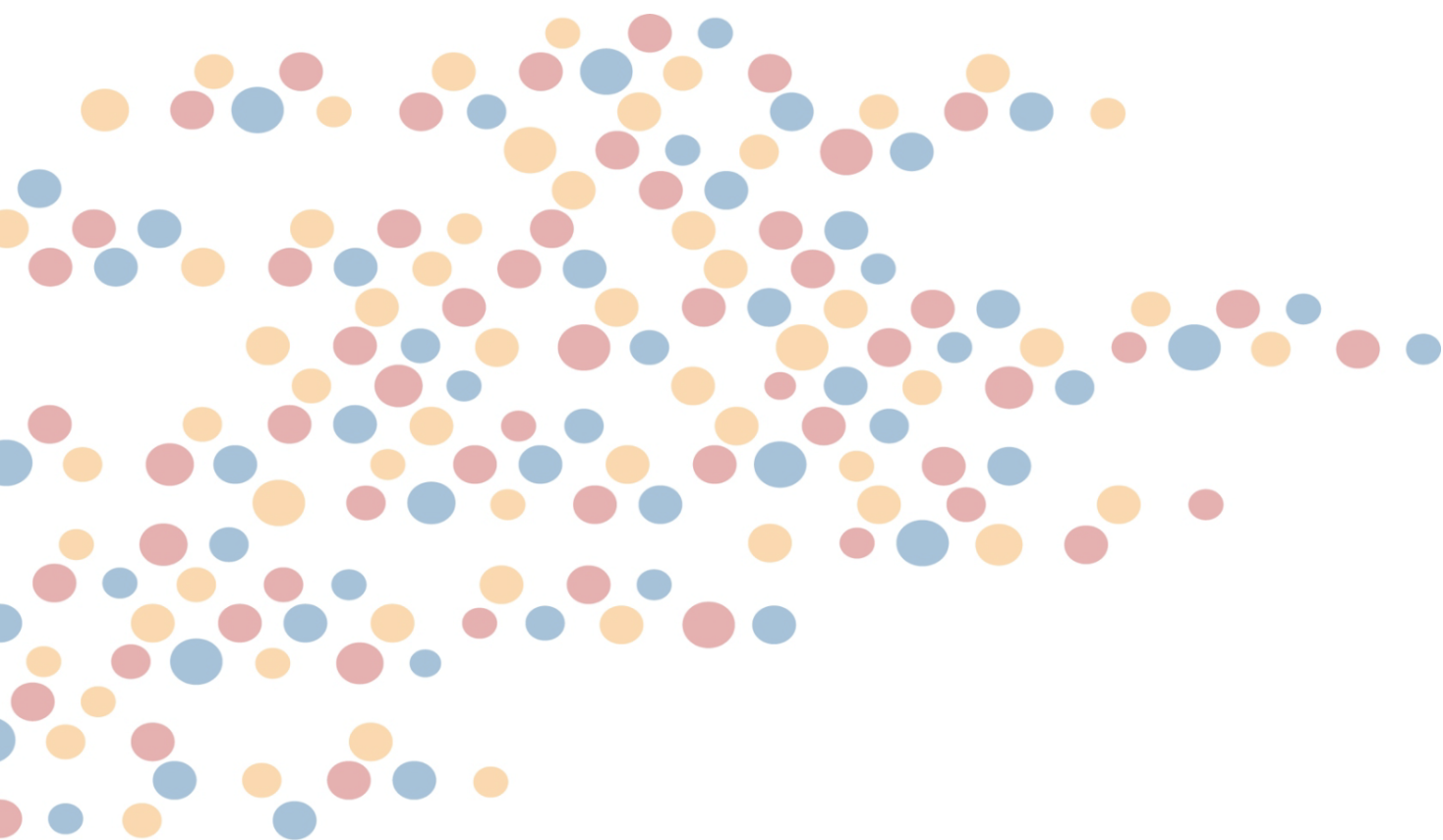
“Artistic expression around the Neolithic sometimes feels jaded or lacking. I know the Pier Arts Centre is in the middle of a major redevelopment. Is there room for link up here? The telling of the history of the heritage zone feels limited e.g. we never here about Childe in any great depth and there is little about the Battle of Summerdale or e.g. the mapper Murdo Mackenzie”

One person raised a concern around the direction of research and learning being decided by organisations located outside of Orkney. They reinforced the view that the World Heritage Site belongs to Orkney, not to any external parties.

“Once again, this section appears to indicate that research and learning is to be driven by external bodies with external agendas. The Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS belongs to Orkney and to Orcadians, not to the external bodies that have expropriated it.”

One person also highlighted the value of international collaboration regarding the site, which they believed would add a level of depth to the community.

“There is also scope for much more international interaction which would give a richness and depth to our community.”



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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) – Initial Screening

What is an EqIA?

An EqIA is a process of analysing and informing decisions about a proposed or existing project (this could be a policy, a planned service or a change to a service, a proposal for building or access work, a strategic publication or a major financial decision). The aim is to identify any discriminatory or other negative impacts that the proposal could have on a particular group or part of the community or workforce. These effects could be as a result of people's race, disability, age, gender re-assignment, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (known as 'protected characteristics').

Why do I need to do one?

The Equality Act (2010) puts a general legal duty on all public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.

We use the EqIA to identify potential positive impacts of our work and take full advantage of any opportunities for promoting the benefits of inclusion. Assessing impact is an effective way of improving our policy development, service delivery and decision making to ensure we consider the needs of employees and the various communities we are in contact with, to identify potential steps to advance equality, foster good relations, and demonstrate that we do not unlawfully discriminate.

When do I need to do the Initial Screening?

The Initial Screening helps to decide whether a full EqIA is needed. It should therefore be done in tandem with the development of your business case. You will find references to the equality impact assessment embedded in the business case paperwork on the intranet.

If your project is likely to have a significant impact on people and is a public facing service e.g. key tourist sites; have a direct impact on the public e.g. communications; likely to differentially and significantly affect a discrete group who have a protected characteristic e.g. project design and accessibility for disabled users; potentially will affect staff e.g. organisation re-design/re-structures, you need to carry out an initial screening to determine if a fuller assessment is required.

The initial assessment will form the foundation of any fuller EqIA and does ensure that equality considerations are built into the early stages of developing your project and runs parallel to business case development and implementation.

All full EqIA's must be published on our website. Initial Screening EqIA's will be held on file in the relevant Directorate.

What do I do now?

As part of the process of planning your project you should carry out an initial screening to check whether it is relevant to the equality groups identified above. You should not start your project or implement your policy or plan until you have filled in the Initial Screening form and identified whether or not a full EqIA is required.

Advice and support is available from the Equalities Manager, External Relations & Partnership – anila.mirza@hes.scot

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Directorate and Service: | World Heritage and Heritage Policy Service, Heritage Directorate | | Name of Lead Officer: | Rachel Nicholson | |
| | | | Team: | World Heritage and Heritage Policy Service | |
| | | | Tel: | 0131 668 8959 | |
| | | | Email: | rachel.nicholson@hes.scot | |
| | | | Date started: | May 2023 | |
| Proposal/Project: | Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Management Plan 2023-2033 | | | Reference No. (if applicable): | |
| What is the Proposal? | Budget & Other significant Financial Decision | Corporate Policy/Plan (New or Change) | New or Changed HR Policy & Practice | New or Changed Service Delivery / Service Design | |
| | No | No | No | Yes | |
| Who Does the Proposal Affect? | Stakeholders | Partners | Members of the Public | Employees | Other, please specify: |
| | Yes – including local community, landowners/ managers | Yes – the plan is a partnership document | Yes – tourists and other visitors and users of the site, special interest groups | Yes – the sites which make up the WHS are all PiC's | Participants in education and learning at all levels, researchers |

| The main aims of this proposal | Projected Outcome of this Proposal |
|--|--|
| <p>The UK has obligations under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention to have a management system in place that ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Sites (WHS) is protected and managed for future generations. In the UK, this is achieved through a Management Plan for each WHS.</p> <p>Best practice is for Management Plans to be regularly reviewed, monitored and implemented. The new Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS Management Plan for 2023-2033 draws on the work that has already been delivered through previous Partnership Management Plans and specifically builds upon the work of the 2014-2019 Management Plan.</p> <p>It sets out an overarching vision, defining the second cycle of a 30-year vision, and its six long-term aims with associated medium-term objectives to address key issues for the Site's management over the next ten years. The aims are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To protect and conserve the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site for present and future generations 2. To inspire and engage people with the World Heritage Site and deepen their understanding of the Site's values. 3. To use our World Heritage status to benefit people and communities in Orkney and elsewhere. 4. To interpret and present the Heart of Neolithic Orkney to the highest standard. 5. To enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site responsibly, sustainably and equitably. 6. To facilitate a diversity of research connected to the World Heritage Site and draw on the results to pursue the Long Term Aims. <p>The Management Plan will be accompanied by annual Action Plans designed to deliver the aims and objectives through specific actions or projects.</p> | <p>The Management Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly set out the special qualities and values of the site • establish a framework for decision-making to preserve the specific character of the WHS • ensure a coordinated approach by the partners who work together to deliver the plan • address threats and opportunities for the WHS so that it can be managed sustainably |

SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Equality Protected Characteristics: What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Quantitative and qualitative information should be considered in determining any impact.

| Protected Characteristic | Neutral Impact | Positive Impact | Negative Impact | Please provide information on how the impact on this protected characteristic was identified and arrived at. |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Age | | X | | <p>Whilst we do not know the exact breakdown of visitors to the WHS by age profile or those engaging with the site digitally, there is likely visitors from all age demographics.</p> <p>A key aim of the Management plan is to enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site, both physically and digitally, in a responsible and equitable way. Some of these improvements will be delivered via the Islands Deal funded Orkney Gateway programme, which sits separately from the Management Plan. Individual Gateway projects will likely require EqIA assessment, but at present the proposals are not fully developed.</p> <p>Older age groups are more likely to have mobility issues or other disabilities and could potentially benefit from positive impacts through enhanced access improvements. Groups with children may also benefit from improved access. For instance, improved infrastructure on sites such as upgrades to travel and path networks would benefit individuals with limited mobility whilst increasing digital access would benefit those who are unable to physically travel to the World Heritage Site.</p> |
| Disability | | X | | <p>We do not have quantitative or qualitative information on the number of disabled individuals who engage with the WHS.</p> <p>A key aim of the Management plan is to enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site, both physically and digitally, in</p> |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| | | | | <p>a responsible and equitable way. There is potential for positive impact on people with disabilities through proposed enhanced access improvements, such as path and travel networks. Any new forms to increase digital access will conform to AA standards for accessibility.</p> <p>The Management Plan aims to present and interpret the WHS to the highest standard. Any specific projects or actions to achieve this should include reasonable adjustments to ensure they are accessible to disabled people. However, on the sites themselves the extent to which adjustments are considered reasonable will be restricted by the archaeological and protected nature of the monuments.</p> <p>Some of these changes will be delivered via the Islands Deal funded Orkney Gateway programme, which sits separately from the Management Plan. Individual Gateway projects will likely require EqIA assessment, but at present the proposals are not fully developed.</p> |
| Sex | X | | | The potential for the Management Plan to impact positively or negatively on sex appears to be neutral and therefore further assessment is not felt to be necessary. |
| Ethnicity | X | | | The potential for the Management Plan to impact positively or negatively on ethnicity appears to be neutral and therefore further assessment is not felt to be necessary. |
| Religion / Belief / non-Belief | | X | X | <p>A key aim of the Management plan is to enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site, both physically and digitally, in a responsible and equitable way.</p> <p>Some parts of the WHS are spiritually important to some individuals and contribute to people's identity through 'sense of place'. In addition, Pagan weddings and other Pagan religious ceremonies are held at the Ring of Brodgar. There is potential for positive impacts from improved access that could benefit these groups.</p> <p>However, there is also potential for negative impacts arising from another key aim of the Plan, protecting and conserving the WHS. For instance, by restricting access to certain parts of the WHS to address erosion issues or requirements for adjustments in ceremonies to avoid impact on the monuments. These are examples of time limited and area restrictions actions, with the former not disproportionately affecting</p> |

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| | | | | one specific protected characteristic. However any restrictions will be managed through the annual Action Plans and decisions will be taken within HES's ongoing framework for managing Properties in Care so negative impacts will not be significant. |
| Sexual Orientation | X | | | The potential for the Management Plan to impact positively or negatively on Sexual Orientation appears to be neutral and therefore further assessment is not felt to be necessary. |
| Transgender | X | | | The potential for the Management Plan to impact positively or negatively on gender reassignment appears to be neutral and therefore further assessment is not felt necessary. |
| Pregnancy / Maternity | | X | | <p>A key aim of the Management plan is to enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site, both physically and digitally, in a responsible and equitable way. There is potential for positive impact on pregnant individuals and carers of young children through proposed enhanced access improvements within and between sites in the WHS.</p> <p>Some of these improvements will be delivered via the Islands Deal funded Orkney Gateway programme, which sits separately from the Management Plan. Individual Gateway projects will likely require EqIA assessment, but at present the proposals are not fully developed.</p> |
| Marriage / Civil Partnership | X | | | The potential for the Management Plan to impact positively or negatively on marriage and civil partnership status appears to be neutral and therefore further assessment is not felt necessary. |

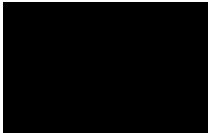
Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations.

| | Please say how your proposal will contribute to the general equality duty | What is the potential impact of your proposal |
|--|--|--|
| Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct): | Not applicable | Not applicable |

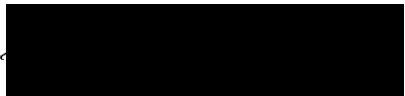
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| <p>Advance Equality of Opportunity (taking positive action through activity and policies which widen access; participation and opportunity to protected groups):</p> | <p>Several of the aims of the Management Plan provide opportunities to contribute to the advancing of equal opportunity. In particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To inspire and engage people with the World Heritage Site and deepen their understanding of the Site's values. 2. To use our World Heritage status to benefit people and communities in Orkney and elsewhere. 3. To interpret and present the Heart of Neolithic Orkney to the highest standard. 4. To enhance access to and experience of the World Heritage Site responsibly, sustainably and equitably. | <p>Objectives and specific actions could focus on encouraging and including people with protected characteristic to participate in activities and interact with the WHS.</p> <p>For example, particular age groups, those with disabilities or pregnant individuals could potentially benefit from positive impacts related to access improvements. Any specific projects or actions to achieve this could include reasonable adjustments to ensure they are accessible, however on the sites themselves the extent to which adjustments are considered reasonable will be restricted by the archaeological and protected nature of the monuments.</p> |
| <p>Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):</p> | <p>A key aim of the Management Plan is to make the WHS more accessible. It is expected that this will lead to specific actions with inclusivity at their heart.</p> | <p>In the delivery of the Management Plan, partners will take a more inclusive and open view of heritage and how to make it accessible to all.</p> |

| JUDGED OVERALL LEVEL OF NEGATIVE /DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT: | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| LEVEL | | COMMENTS | |
| HIGH | No | | |
| MEDIUM | No | | |
| Impact: | | N/A | |
| Action/s: | | N/A | |
| Lead Officer: | | | Action timescale: N/A |
| LOW | Yes | <i>No negative impact has been identified.</i> | |
| Evidence | <p>The initial screening has confirmed that there are no proposals in the Management Plan that will have any significant negative effects on the basis of protected characteristics. There is potential for negative impacts upon religion and belief, but it was determined that these are addressed by existing procedures that balance access and conservation issues on Properties in Care. Positive impacts for age, disability and pregnancy and maternity were identified.</p> | | <p>Outcome: Initial EqIA screening completed. Full assessment is not required.</p> |

SECTION THREE: LEAD PROJECT OFFICER SIGN OFF

| Lead Project Officer: | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------|------------|
| Signature: |  | Date: | 29/06/2023 |

SECTION FOUR: DIRECTOR/HEAD OF SERVICE SIGN OFF

| Director / Head of Service: | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-------|------------|
| Signature: |  | Date: | 29/06/2023 |