

### FARM BUILDINGS

#### Preserving Scotland's past surviving in old buildings

##### Why are these features important?

Much of Scotland's farm history from the recent past is held in old farm buildings. Some of these may still be in use, some have been converted to other uses and others have become redundant. Within these buildings are many features explaining how our ancestors used the land in the past. The structure of the buildings will tell the status and aspirations of those who built them. The materials from which they are built, whether timber, turf, clay, stone and thatch, can tell how the land was managed or exploited. The fabric of buildings through blocked up arches, entrances, windows and alterations can help explain how a building was used at different points in its history.

##### Why does it matter?

Grants may be available to assist with preserving Listed Buildings. Unfortunately, the Scottish agri-environment programme does not fund the routine maintenance of old farm buildings. Where they are recorded as buildings of architectural merit on archaeological Sites & Monuments Records, it may be possible to claim individual buildings as archaeological features and get funding for routine repairs - though generally this is restricted to ruinous unroofed structures.

Even the most humble of farm buildings may



Changes in farming practice mean that many attractive farm buildings are no longer in use.



Wherever possible farm steadings should be retained in farming use.

have architectural or archaeological interest and be worthy of recording by photograph or measured survey. However, under current planning laws you do not necessarily have to consult when demolishing or converting a building to another agricultural use.

*If you propose to alter the appearance of an existing building substantially, convert a building to a different use, develop a new building for a use not classed as agriculture or forestry or construct a new access or car park then you will generally need planning permission. Planning permission is also necessary for any larger agricultural buildings either over 465 square metres or 12 metres in height and any building for the keeping of livestock for non-agricultural purposes, such as horses.*

##### What should I do to protect them?

Routine maintenance can be critical in preserving buildings.

When planning to convert or demolish an old farm building, it is important to consider whether it has architectural, archaeological or historic significance. Consult your local council archaeology service if uncertain. If they are unable to respond then take photographs of all features you consider significant and supply a copy to your local Sites & Monuments or Historic Environment Record.

*Much of Scotland's archaeological heritage lies in rural areas. This sheet is one of a series giving advice on some of the ways these important remains can be protected during normal rural land management.*

### GOOD PRACTICE

- Check [PASTMAP](#) or [Historic Scotland](#) to see whether any of your farm buildings are listed as being of architectural or historic importance. Contact your local planning authority if unsure.  
An archaeological audit may also help identify significant buildings.
- Do not do any work on a listed building other than minor repairs without consulting your local planning authority.
- When undertaking repair or restoration work try and do this in sympathy with the original building by using similar materials and styles of construction. Contact Historic Scotland for specialist advice on materials and techniques and use the guidance listed below for the sympathetic conversion and conservation of buildings.
- Before deciding on altering or demolishing a farm building consider whether it may have architectural, archaeological or historic importance. Consult your local archaeology service or your local conservation officer if uncertain whether this applies to your building. A set of photographs may help them decide if your building is important enough to justify specialist recording without requiring a site visit.
- Where interesting architectural features are revealed during conversion or alteration work e.g. revealing an earlier building when removing mortar cladding, take photographs of features revealed and report all significant discoveries to your local authority archaeologist or conservation officer.
- Remember that fixtures and fittings such as stalls for stock may be as significant as the main structure of a building. Take advice before removing or repairing such features.

Further information - [A Guide to Farm Diversification and Planning Permission in Scotland](#) [2003]

[Maintaining your home](#) [2007] gives useful advice on appropriate repairs for all buildings

Historic Scotland's **INFORM** series gives specialist advice on appropriate materials and techniques for repairing traditional farm buildings, particularly if they are also listed.

The [Guide for Practitioners - Rural Buildings of the Lothians: Conservation and Conversion](#) [£6] has



The architectural merit of many farm buildings makes them worth preserving even if they are not used for their original purpose.



This byre, in a poor state of repair, was once a dwelling as can be seen by the fireplace at the gable end. It is of architectural interest because it contains crucks, an early form of roof supports built into the walls.