

#### Recognising & managing Scotland's historic landscapes

##### What are historic landscapes and why are they important?

Individual features of the past combine to form historic landscapes and these can be significant both visually and archaeologically. Features such as field walls, clearance cairns may seem insignificant in themselves but together they form the character of different areas. Characteristics like a local style of drystone dyking or particular field patterns give distinctiveness and depth to modern countryside and are generally valued as significant both by land managers and the wider community. Designed Landscapes (see *Rural Advice Note 5*) are a particular form of historic landscape that have special protection.

##### How do I recognise them?

You can access the [Historic Landuse Assessment](#) (HLA) website which has mapped relict historic landscapes to a scale of 1 hectare or larger. HLA is being developed by Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) as a tool to identify and manage all Scotland's historic landscapes.

If you need help using HLA data contact Historic Scotland, RCAHMS or your archaeological adviser.



Historic Scotland and the RCAHMS have now mapped HLA data for over 65% of Scotland. The link to this site can be viewed overleaf.



The circular historic planting around this farmhouse near Girvan contributes strongly to the landscape character of this area.

At a smaller scale you can identify old boundaries and features such as old settlements and woodlands from earlier maps or by walking around your farm identify older features that are not part of the current farming system.

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

The Scottish Government, along with the UK government, has signed up to the European Landscape Convention and this led to the [Scottish Landscape Forum](#) to produce the [Scottish Landscape Charter](#). The conservation or restoration of individual features can make a big difference to the character of the farming landscape. By recognising old features and the way they link to form significant historic landscapes, the easier it will be to protect them through future management. This can include actions like repairing dykes, removing waste or dumps of stone that are obscuring archaeological or historic features, replanting individual or avenues of trees and clearing scrub encroaching on walls or archaeological or historic features. The identification and possible restoration of historic landscape features should be an essential element of any farm conservation plan.

*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

- Identify where groups of archaeological sites and other features such as old woodlands and farm boundaries link to form historic landscapes.
- Use old maps like the OS 1st and 2nd editions to identify features that are no longer recorded but which may still survive.
- Use (where appropriate) [Historic Landuse Assessment](#) to identify larger units and map these in relation to any farm plans you may have. Historic landscape features should be recorded as an integral part of any mapped farm audit.
- Record the condition of individual features and in particular what features are obscured, damaged or vulnerable to either future damage or decay.
- Identify what management might both better protect these landscapes and integrate them more clearly with the modern farming landscape.
- Build protection and management of these features into any farm plans you might have, including new woodland planting, agri-environment and land management contract schemes.
- Realise that what happens on a single farm unit, croft or woodland has an impact on the wider landscape and that these landscapes are valued resource for local communities and tourism.
- Consider working with neighbouring units in a collaborative programme either under an agri-environment measure or as part of a water-catchment plan.

Further information - see the Scottish Landscape Forum report

[SCOTLAND'S LIVING LANDSCAPES—places for people](#) sets out the importance of Scotland's landscapes and addresses principles by which should be managed.

The Map section of the [National Library of Scotland](#) has an excellent online source of old maps of Scotland.



Prehistoric field systems form a distinctive part of our upland landscapes. They remain an important visual reminder of the past.



Landscapes change over time, the reasons why certain features were created is not always clear. This does not weaken the value in retaining past landscapes since they contributing strongly to landscape character and distinctiveness.