



ENGLISH HERITAGE

# MONUMENTS AT RISK NORTH WEST



# MONUMENTS AT RISK

Scheduled monuments are our most cherished, nationally important archaeological sites and landscapes. In the north west they include prehistoric settlements and burial mounds, stone circles and hill forts, Hadrian's Wall and Romano-British farmsteads, medieval settlements, pele towers, castles, and abbeys, and the industrial structures of our recent past.

They constitute a unique inheritance which tells the story of many generations of human endeavour and life. Scheduled monuments create our sense of time and place, and add greatly to the distinctiveness of our towns and countryside and to our enjoyment of our surroundings.

Although protected by law, scheduled monuments are threatened by a wide range of human activities and natural processes. Survey in the North West region has shown that 552 (42%) of its 1316 monuments are at risk from damage, decay or loss, unless action is taken. Agriculture, natural processes, development and the recreational use of the landscape are the main threats.

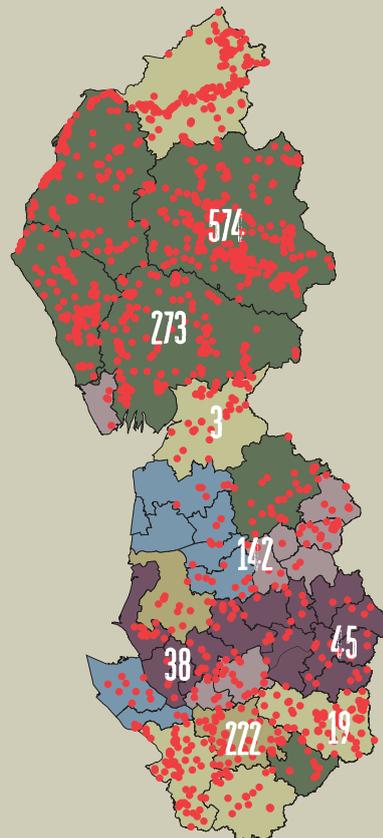
When damaged or lost, scheduled monuments cannot be replaced. Careful management is required if we are to pass them on to future generations in good condition. This requires close co-operation between the owners of scheduled monuments, government, and all organisations charged with caring for the environment.

NUMBER OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS BY ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

Cheshire	222
Cheshire PDNP	19
Cumbria	574
Cumbria LDNP	273
Cumbria YDNP	3
G Manchester	45
Lancashire	142
Merseyside	38

Urban and rural land classifications

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



## SCHEDULED MONUMENTS AT RISK: NORTH WEST

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

The survey had two main objectives:

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

The project for the North West region took place between September 2005 and October 2006. The study systematically assessed all 1316 scheduled monuments in the North West. The results demonstrate that with 42% of monuments at risk, there is an urgent need for action before more of our heritage is damaged or lost.

1 Newbold Astbury, Cheshire: a medieval canopied tomb has recently been restored.



## FACTS & FIGURES

The North West region covers 14,854km<sup>2</sup> which is 11.29% of mainland England; it has a coastline of 1,000km. Using the new Defra definitions, 18.9% of the region is urban, 45.9% is less sparse rural and 35.2% is sparse rural. The average monument density for the region is one per 11.28km<sup>2</sup>.

### OWNERSHIP

1054 scheduled monuments are in private ownership, 143 are owned by local authorities, 113 by government or their agencies, and 6 by utilities.

### FORM AND DATE

The majority of scheduled monuments are earthworks (67%), mainly of prehistoric and medieval date, or standing structures (32%) of medieval and later date.

**1054**  
SCHEDULED  
MONUMENTS ARE IN  
**PRIVATE**  
OWNERSHIP

### LAND USE

42% of scheduled monuments are under grassland cover, 20% are on developed or urban land, 7% are under cultivation, 14% are on semi-natural land, and 6% are in woodland. Coastal, rivers and lakes, and unclassified land make up the remaining 11%.

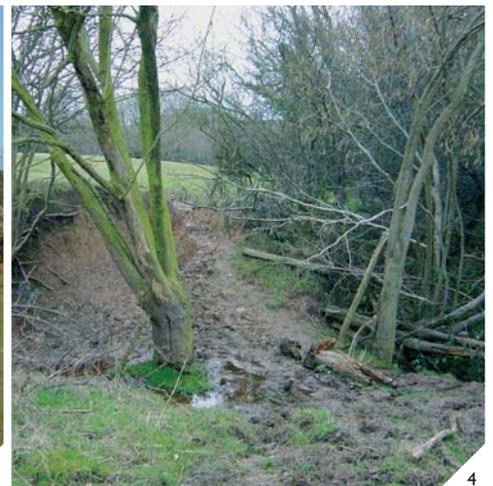
2 Stockport, Greater Manchester: a neglected bank of lime kilns, one of which is being forced apart by scrub growth. The land, set apart for display of the monument, has no information panels.



3 Castlesteads, Cumbria: a popular spot for walkers, visitor erosion is starting to cause noticeable damage. Bracken is also encroaching on the monument.



4 Bradley, Cheshire: a promontory fort is being damaged both by stock and natural erosion.



# MEASURING THE RISKS

The study not only assessed the condition of each monument (whether its remains are buried or upstanding), but also included an initial evaluation of its setting and amenity value. The setting, or general surroundings of a monument, is usually fundamental to forming an understanding and appreciation of the site. Amenity value is a measure of what the visitor can appreciate of the monument when visiting the site. Inappropriate development or land use next to a scheduled monument can be an eyesore, or can lead to the site becoming an 'island', cut off from its surroundings. Traffic, noise, or pollution can spoil visitor enjoyment.



## KEY FINDINGS

### CONDITION

Problems were noted on 42% of scheduled monuments, and 16% were in a wholly unsatisfactory condition. A third of monuments are in a declining condition, and less than 3% are improving.

### RISK

16% of monuments in the North West are at high risk (at risk in the short term) and 26% are at medium risk. Consequently, more than 40% need urgent action to prevent deterioration, loss or damage.

**58%** OF  
MONUMENTS ARE  
HIGHLY  
VISIBLE

### RISK AND LAND USE

40% of high-risk monuments are located in grassland, another 18% are on semi-natural land, 11% are within arable, 12% are on developed or urban land, and 7% are in woodland. The Lake District National Park has the greatest number (65) of high-risk monuments in the region, all of which are on upland pasture and are threatened by bracken infestation.

### VULNERABILITY

17% of scheduled monuments are at risk from agriculture (mainly ploughing and erosion caused by stock), 17% are vulnerable to unmanaged tree, scrub and plant growth, 8% are prone to natural decay, and 4% are threatened by neglect. Another 13% are under threat from varying causes including dumping, vehicle damage, visitor erosion and metal detecting. Some monuments are also under threat from development, animal burrowing, vandalism and forestry.



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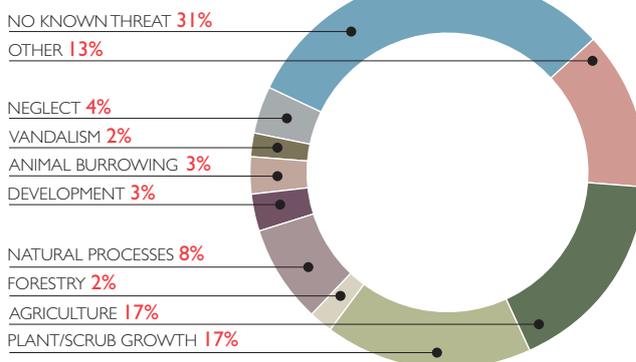
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RISK BY TYPE OF DESIGNATION	HIGH RISK	MEDIUM RISK	LOW RISK
	SCHEDULED MONUMENTS		
SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST	39	40	118
SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION	11	10	35
SPECIAL PROTECTED AREA	6	10	17
NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE	0	0	5
LISTED BUILDINGS	33	42	139
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY	19	51	50
NATIONAL PARK	65	40	190
REGISTERED PARKS & GARDENS	1	11	14
WORLD HERITAGE SITE	11	70	43

**SOURCE OF RISK**



5 Coniston, Cumbria: bracken infestation presents a very serious threat to many upland monuments in Cumbria including this prehistoric cairnfield.

6 Moor Divock, Cumbria: from this viewpoint this prehistoric stone circle appears in good order; but it has been vandalised (see photo 7).

7 Moor Divock, Cumbria: one of the stones of the circle has been defaced with graffiti scratched into its surface with a hard object.

8 Ribble Valley, Lancashire: an 'island' within an arable field, this bowl barrow is affected by plough clipping as well as scrub growth and animal burrowing.

9 Portfield, Lancashire: burrowing animals have caused extensive damage to the earthworks of this prehistoric hillfort.

**LEGISLATION**

Current ancient monument legislation permits potentially damaging activities (ploughing, horticulture, forestry, gardening) on all or parts of 17% of scheduled monuments.

**AMENITY VALUE**

58% of monuments are highly visible and 32% are partly visible. Buried remains alone survive for 10%. Forty percent are fully accessible to the public, and 40% have limited public access. Only 18%

have no access. Developed interpretation is available at only 4% of monuments, 6% have some interpretation, and 83% have no on-site interpretation.

**SETTING**

An initial appraisal of the appearance of monuments suggests that 6% include many features of more recent date, 26% have some modern features, and 68% have few or no modern features. In 57% of cases the monument's setting has changed substantially since

it was constructed or in use. Partial changes in setting have occurred in 30% of cases. In 1% of cases it can be considered to be unchanged. Setting was not assessed in 12% of cases. Monuments within National Park and AONB boundaries are generally at lower risk than the regional average.

**DESIGNATION**

Monuments within National Park and Environmentally Sensitive Area boundaries are at lower risk than the regional average, but only slightly. Risk is not significantly reduced on land holdings in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and monuments within AONB boundaries are at higher risk than the regional norm.

## IMPROVED AREA CONSERVATION

Many of our landscapes and townscapes are recognised as being of special importance because of their historic, natural, or aesthetic qualities – or because they are in need of economic regeneration. These areas normally benefit from strong safeguards against unsympathetic development, and can be eligible for grant schemes that could significantly help to reduce the extent to which scheduled monuments within their boundaries are at risk.

**10** Allerdale, Cumbria: an extensive Romano-British settlement survives as a crop mark. It is included in two Countryside Stewardship agreements, but remains under plough.



In some cases the risks to scheduled monuments can be reduced simply by good land management, or by informed planning policies and decisions that take full account of the national importance of historic sites.

However, some monuments do require significant resources in order to stabilise their condition, to carry out repairs, or to change the way in which the land on and around the monument is used. English Heritage may sometimes be able to assist private owners with grants where the costs of repair or stabilisation are likely to be a significant burden.

In the North West region English Heritage has also prepared short digital reports for major stakeholders who may wish to consider improving the management of sites in their areas. The stakeholders for whom these will eventually be available include each of the region's county councils, AONBs, National Park Authorities, the Forestry Commission, the National Trust and the Ministry of Defence.

As a result of the Scheduled Monuments at Risk project, the priorities for improved scheduled monument management have been identified throughout the North West region for the first time.

At a strategic level, the major threats to the condition of monuments in the region have been identified. In addition, practical management requirements have been identified for individual monuments.

Practical advice on the management of scheduled monuments is available from the Historic Environment Local Management website at [www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk)

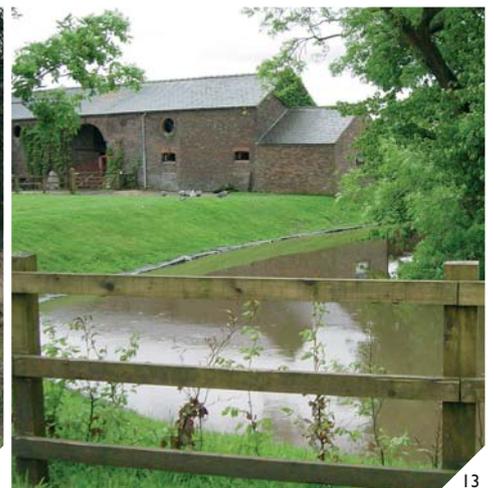
**11** Tatham, Lancashire: a post medieval colliery, now a roofless ruin, requires consolidation work to prevent further decay and collapse.



**12** Vale Royal, Cheshire: a bowl barrow rapidly being reduced by ploughing. A pending application for Higher Level Stewardship would take the field out of arable cultivation.



**13** Halton, Cheshire: a well maintained example of a moated site.



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

## THE WAY FORWARD

There will be no easy or overnight solution to the issues identified by the Monuments at Risk survey. Although English Heritage has a statutory duty to promote the conservation of ancient monuments, our financial resources can only solve a small fraction of the problems. Other partners must also make a commitment to play a vital role in improving the condition of these important sites. In some cases, legislative change is required.

The current level of risk to scheduled monuments in the North West must be reduced if future generations are to enjoy this fragile heritage. More than 40% of monuments are in need of management action to prevent further deterioration, loss or damage. English Heritage believes that no monuments that are legally protected in the public interest should be at high risk.

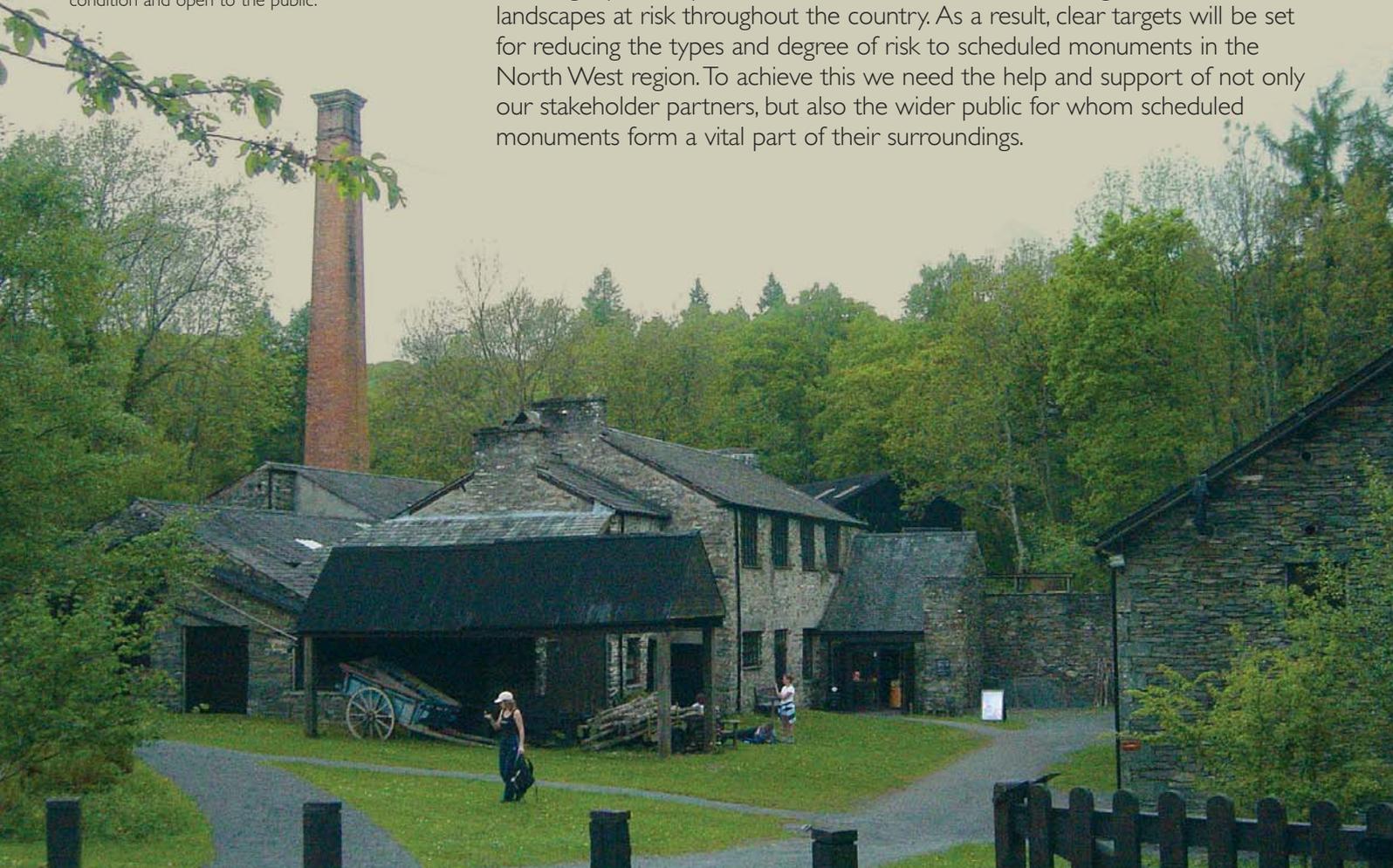
One of the impediments to efficient and effective management of scheduled monuments has until now been England's overly complicated system of heritage legislation. We therefore welcome government's commitment to reform the current arrangements for the protection of the historic environment in the context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

English Heritage believes that a concerted effort by landowners, local and national government, and the organisations that make decisions about our environment, can make a real difference. We particularly encourage public sector funding bodies to achieve a balance between historic, natural and other environmental issues when deciding grant priorities and we welcome the enhanced profile accorded to our heritage by the Defra Environmental Stewardship Scheme for agricultural land.

We believe that reducing the risk to scheduled monuments should be accorded a similar priority to the achievement of biodiversity targets, and that these efforts can often be mutually supportive.

English Heritage is committed to measuring its success as an organisation by securing a year-on-year reduction in the number of buildings, monuments and landscapes at risk throughout the country. As a result, clear targets will be set for reducing the types and degree of risk to scheduled monuments in the North West region. To achieve this we need the help and support of not only our stakeholder partners, but also the wider public for whom scheduled monuments form a vital part of their surroundings.

South Lakeland, Cumbria: Stott Park bobbin mill is in Guardianship; it is a working monument in good condition and open to the public.



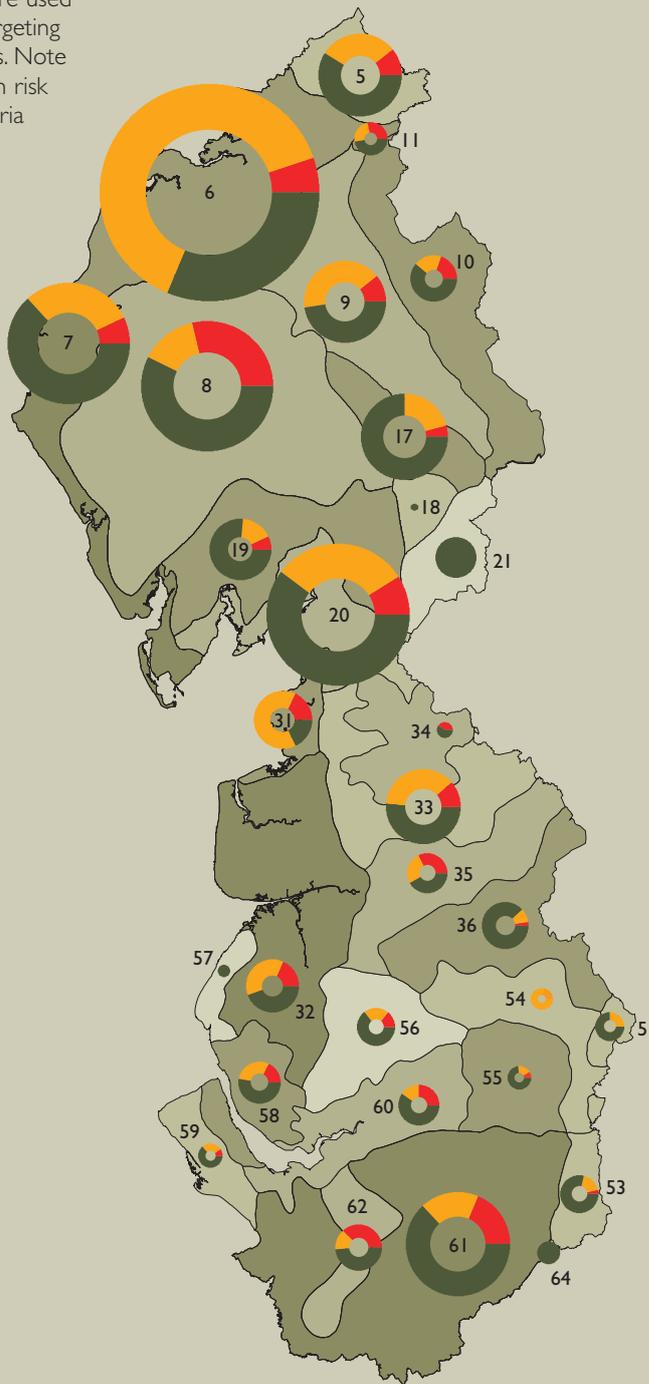
The distribution of scheduled monuments at risk in the North West analysed using Countryside Character Areas. The Joint Character Areas, defined jointly by the statutory conservation agencies, are used alongside other datasets in the targeting of environmental farming schemes. Note the number of monuments at high risk (bracken infestation) in the Cumbria High Fells (Area 8)

**SCHEDULED MONUMENTS RISK CATEGORY**

- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk

**COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREAS**  
Number refers to CCA reference code

5	Border Moors and Forests
6	Solway Basin
7	West Cumbria Coastal Plain
8	Cumbria High Fells
9	Eden Valley
10	North Pennines
11	Tyne Gap and Hadrian's Wall
17	Orton Fells
18	Howgill Fells
19	South Cumbria Low Fells
20	Morecambe Bay Limestones
21	Yorkshire Dales
31	Morecambe Coast and Lune Estuary
32	Lancashire and Amounderness Plain
33	Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill
34	Bowland Fells
35	Lancashire Valleys
36	Southern Pennines
51	Dark Peak
53	South West Peak
54	Manchester Pennine Fringe
55	Manchester Conurbation
56	Lancashire Coal Measures
57	Sefton Coast
58	Merseyside Conurbation
59	Wirral
60	Mersey Valley
61	Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain
62	Cheshire Sandstone Ridge
64	Potteries and Churnet Valley



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