

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND ACT 2014

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY

Part 1 – Historic Environment Scotland

Section 2 – Functions of Historic Environment Scotland

11. [Section 2](#) sets out the functions of the Historic Environment Scotland. Subsection (1) sets out that the new body has the general function to investigate, care for and promote Scotland’s historic environment. Subsection (2) expands on the general function.
12. Subsection (2)(a) gives Historic Environment Scotland the function of identifying and recording the historic environment. It might, for example, do this by undertaking field and aerial survey programmes to identify new sites or gather more information about existing sites, and creating records of discoveries.
13. Subsection (2)(b) gives Historic Environment Scotland the function of understanding and interpreting the historic environment. It might do this by undertaking research into historic buildings to determine their date and building sequence and presenting the results to a variety of audiences in various media.
14. Subsection (2)(c) gives Historic Environment Scotland the function of learning about, and educating others about, the historic environment. This might be done by participating in collaborative research programmes with individuals, academic institutions and other bodies, or by acquiring knowledge of traditional skills and techniques and helping to maintain these by training new craftspeople, or by using material in the collections to contribute to teaching materials for schools.
15. Subsection (2)(d) gives Historic Environment Scotland the function of protecting and managing the historic environment. It could do this by engaging with the development planning process to ensure that the historic environment is considered in strategic development proposals. Its work in designating scheduled monuments, listed buildings, gardens and designed landscapes and battlefields will provide the foundation for protection of these important assets.
16. Subsection (2)(e) gives Historic Environment Scotland the function of conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Its work in this respect might include undertaking or arranging hands-on maintenance and repair work at the visitor properties it manages, or supporting work to improve the general condition of a conservation area.
17. Subsection (3) gives Historic Environment Scotland the function of managing its collections as a national resource for reference, study and research. Subsection (4) expands on this function. Definitions of “collection” and “object” are given in section 14 of the Act and explained under ‘Section 14 – Interpretation of Part 1’ in paragraphs 77 to 81.

18. Subsection (4)(a) sets out that in exercising its section 3 function Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to preserving, conserving and developing its collections. It might, for example, do this by engaging specialist conservators to maintain or bring objects in the collections to a good condition, by ensuring that the objects in its collections are stored and accessed in ways which seek to minimise deterioration, or by adding significant new material to its collections to ensure that their value and currency are maintained. Such activities might be undertaken within the framework of a collections strategy.
19. Subsection (4)(b) sets out that in exercising its section 3 function Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to making the collections accessible to the public and to persons wishing to carry out study and research. This could be achieved by making public search rooms available so that objects in the collections can be brought to persons wishing to consult them or by digitally copying objects and making them available online.
20. Subsection (4)(c) sets out that in exercising its section 3 function Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to exhibiting and interpreting objects in the collections. Ways of doing this might include organising the public display of objects on a particular theme or topic, and delivering audio, visual or audio-visual aids to assist those wishing to understand the context and cultural significance of the exhibits. It might collaborate to exhibit collections internationally to encourage tourism to Scotland, or seek the loan of another body's collections to support particular exhibitions. This function will also be delivered online.
21. Subsection (5) sets out the manner in which Historic Environment Scotland is to exercise its functions.
22. Subsection (5)(a) sets out that in exercising its functions Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to encouraging education and research. This might include partnering with academic institutions and other bodies in research projects, or seeking to encourage school and university students to use its collections or visitor sites in connection with curricular studies.
23. Subsection (5)(b) sets out that in exercising its functions Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to promoting and contributing to understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment and of its collections. Activities such as organising public events and activities at the properties that it looks after, publishing accessible and useful information and running hands-on activities to engage the public in the process of discovery would be among the ways it could achieve this.
24. Subsection (5)(c) sets out that in exercising its functions Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to promoting the diversity of persons accessing the historic environment and its collections. It might, for example, invest in works to improve physical access to the monuments and historic buildings it presents to the public or deliver community engagement activities that are focused on increasing diversity and tailored to meet the needs of particular groups and individuals. Online access to its services might be particularly important here.
25. Subsection (5)(d) sets out that in exercising its functions Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to offering and promoting leadership in relation to the historic environment. This could include leading collaborative projects to develop standards in connection with the management, protection and conservation of the historic environment. It might also lead by example: demonstrating high standards of conservation work or producing attractive and informative publications.
26. Subsection (5)(e) sets out that in exercising its functions Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to working in collaboration with other persons (whether in partnership or in other ways). Ways of doing this might include providing training and support to groups wishing to identify and record their local historic environment,

or supporting owners who wish to repair or maintain historic buildings in the most authentic manner. It might work with others to develop online solutions that fulfil specific user needs by providing integrated access to information and digitised collections held by several different collections.

27. Subsection (5)(f) sets out that in exercising its functions Historic Environment Scotland must do so with a view to contributing, as appropriate, to the development and delivery of policies and strategies in relation to the historic environment. This might involve active participation in and contributing expert knowledge to professional forums and committees. This strategic approach is currently represented by Scotland's Historic Environment Strategy, in which Historic Environment Scotland will be a key partner.
28. Subsections (6) and (7) allow Historic Environment Scotland to support and assist (including by financial support and assistance) any other person carrying out functions similar to its own functions.
29. Subsection (8)(a) requires Historic Environment Scotland, when exercising its functions, to have regard to wider relevant government policies and strategies. It might do this, for example, by ensuring that a modern building which acts as accommodation for its staff is compliant with government policies on energy efficiency and waste reduction, by ensuring that the management of visitor sites is in accord with biodiversity requirements or by considering wider regeneration objectives when allocating grants and loans under its various programmes.
30. Subsection (8)(b) requires Historic Environment Scotland, when exercising its functions, to have regard to the interests of local communities, as may be appropriate in the circumstances. It will be for HES to decide on what is appropriate in each case.