

ITEM 8

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

15 NOVEMBER 2005

SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS AT RISK SURVEY

Report of the Head of Conservation and Land Management

Purpose of Report:

To inform members of the outcome of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Risk Survey and the work proposed to conserve those sites considered to be in poor, bad or declining condition and to protect sites which currently do not have statutory protection but are nevertheless considered to be of regional or national importance.

Legal Implications including Human Rights Act 1998:

Scheduled Ancient Monuments are accorded legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Financial Implications:

The conservation of Scheduled Ancient Monuments considered to be 'at risk' will be carried out under the existing Monument Management Scheme, which is a highly successful, joint-funded partnership between English Heritage (£5000 pa) and Exmoor National Park Authority (£6000 pa).

National Park Purposes:

The actions outlined in this report will further the National Park purpose "of conserving and enhancing the ...cultural heritage" of Exmoor and help achieve National Park Management Plan Objective 9/1 "to conserve Exmoor's historic environment."

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Authority:

1. NOTES the findings of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments At Risk Survey and the proposed conservation work (funded through the existing Monument Management Scheme) to conserve and enhance those sites identified as being in poor, bad or declining condition;
2. SUPPORTS the compilation of a list of archaeological sites considered to be of national or regional importance but which currently do not have the protection of Scheduled Ancient Monument status.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 There are 204 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Exmoor National Park.

1.2 Scheduling is the process through which nationally important sites and monuments are given legal protection by being placed on a list, or 'schedule'. English Heritage takes the lead in identifying sites in England which should be placed on the schedule by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. A schedule has been kept since 1882 of monuments whose preservation is given priority over other land uses. The current legislation - the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 - supports a formal system of Scheduled Monuments Consent for any work to a designated monument. Scheduling is the only legal protection specifically for archaeological sites.

2. SCHEDULED MONUMENTS AT RISK SURVEY

- 2.1 Between September 2004 and January 2005 the National Park Authority undertook a comprehensive, field assessment of the condition of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments on Exmoor. The work was carried out by a conservation trainee, supervised by the Authority's Countryside Archaeological Adviser, under the "Kingfisher" scheme - a European-funded initiative providing professional training for individuals pursuing careers in conservation.
- 2.2 This is the first time a survey of this type has been carried out by any Local Authority in England and sets a standard for future surveys of this kind in other National Parks and beyond. English Heritage has given its support and encouragement throughout. The survey coincided with English Heritage's own national, desk-based survey of 'Scheduled Ancient Monuments at Risk' and the information gathered by the Authority has fed directly into that work.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Exmoor Scheduled Ancient Monuments At Risk Survey follows, and significantly develops, the desk-based methodology developed by English Heritage and was carried out following detailed discussion and liaison with staff at English Heritage, specifically the Inspector of Ancient Monuments and the Field Monument wardens.
- 3.2 After written approaches to landowners, site visits were carried out and assessments of the condition, condition trend and of potential risks were made. Digital photographs, site notes and sketch records were compiled.
- 3.3 The condition, condition trend and potential risks were given a numeric value and the combined scores were used to inform the overall assessment. Other factors, such as access, visitor pressure, erosion, grazing, and vicinity of trackways were also taken into account.
- 3.4 The results of the survey have been compiled into a comprehensive report and a digital photographic archive of all sites has also been created. A copy will be supplied to English Heritage.

4. RESULTS

- 4.1 Of the 204 Scheduled Ancient Monuments listed, two were not located bringing the current total to 202.

44	(22%)	monuments are in Very Good condition
76	(38%)	monuments are in Good condition
43	(21%)	monuments are in Moderate condition
28	(14%)	monuments are in Poor condition
11	(5%)	monuments are in Bad condition

- 4.2 163 (81%) sites within Exmoor National Park are in acceptable condition.
- 4.3 39 (19%) are in unacceptable condition.
- 4.4 38 of the sites are regarded as declining. Of these, 9 sites are in Bad condition and declining, 27 sites are in Poor condition and declining and 2 are in Good condition but declining.
- 4.5 There are several factors that contribute to the unacceptable and declining condition such as over-grazing; inappropriate setting of supplementary feeders; farm machinery and vehicle

damage; desire lines and trackways; visitor pressure; burrowing animals and scrubbing up.

5. THE NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Using the information obtained during the survey the intention is to prepare and implement, over the next five years, a conservation action programme to 'rescue' all Scheduled Ancient Monuments identified as being 'at risk'.
- 5.2 Officers of the Authority will work with landowners, agencies and other landowning organisations to protect these sites, taking advantage, where appropriate, of agri-environment schemes and other grant-aid programmes to encourage positive management.
- 5.3 The Monument Management Scheme – the partnership conservation scheme between the Authority and English Heritage – will also be focused on Scheduled Ancient Monuments identified as being 'at risk.'
- 5.4 The intention is to carry out a further comprehensive survey of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments in due course to enable a reassessment of their condition to be made.

6. OTHER SITES

- 6.1 The current list of Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Exmoor National Park derives mainly from work undertaken during the 1990s by English Heritage and does not adequately reflect the overall national importance of the archaeological resource on Exmoor.
- 6.2 In 2002 English Heritage sought to extend the number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments on Exmoor under its Monument Protection Programme which was a comprehensive review of all archaeological sites on Exmoor. This work was postponed due to internal changes within English Heritage and the launch of the Government's Heritage Protection Review.
- 6.3 In July 2004 the Government set out a series of measures by which it aims to achieve effective and lasting reform of heritage protection, including a number of short and long-term measures. The long-term measures will require primary legislation and work is ongoing towards the preparation of a White Paper with a provisional publication date of spring 2006. The key proposals for the White Paper are:
- New unified register, bringing together the systems of listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and registered parks, gardens and battlefields.
 - Unifying the listed building and scheduled monument consent regimes.
 - Introduction of optional partnership agreements between the owners of a site, local authorities, English Heritage and local communities to be employed as alternative proactive management regimes.
 - Give English Heritage statutory responsibility for designating at a national level. This responsibility currently rests with the Secretary of State for DCMS.
 - Introduce a statutory right of appeal to the Secretary of State on decisions to designate or not designate a site.
 - New overarching statutory definition of historic assets.

- 6.4 In the meantime it is proposed that the Authority draws up a list of archaeological sites which are identified as being of regional or national importance but which currently are not scheduled as being Ancient Monuments. This list will be used to inform and prioritise the management of the historic environment by National Park Authority staff and to guide others concerned with the management of the historic environment. An assessment of the condition of these sites – comparable to that carried out for Scheduled Ancient Monuments - will also be carried out when resources permit.

Jessica Turner
Countryside Archaeological Adviser
26 October 2005