

MIDAS Heritage

The UK Historic Environment Information Standard

A standard for the heritage sector – developed by the heritage sector

Recent years have seen a greater expansion and coordination of historic environment data. Landscape character, artefacts, ecofacts and archaeological science data are some of the areas that are increasingly being recorded and monitored by heritage professionals. The adoption of Geographic Information Systems and XML is changing the way we search for and display heritage information and it is important that *MIDAS Heritage* accommodate these data requirements. *MIDAS Heritage* will need to cover any Heritage Protection Reform proposals, support the Heritage Gateway portal and continue to promote e-Government standards. It needs to draw in users from all over the UK and invite SMR/HERs, commercial contractors, government bodies and other domain experts to participate in the working process of expanding and updating *MIDAS Heritage*, as much as is possible. *MIDAS Heritage* is being coordinated by English Heritage on behalf of FISH.

Methodology

Following an extensive review of requirements, and project approach, the development phase of the MIDAS 2nd Edition Project has now begun and is expected to continue until late spring 2007. The key stages and tasks have been identified and consist of a preparatory phase, revision of the ten existing information groups, co-ordinating working groups for six new information groups, and quality checks before and after a peer review.

Small working groups, consisting of invited representatives from English Heritage, FISH, the UK SMR/HER community, contractors and other domain experts, will be organised for each of the new information groups. Anyone wishing to participate in these or the subsequent peer review is more than welcome: all contributions will be much appreciated. If you have a particular interest or area of expertise, please take this opportunity to assist in defining standards for it! This applies to both existing and new information groups.

The new information groups

The set up and definitions of the six new information groups are open for discussion but have generally been defined as:

- **Landscape Character**
Information that records the historic character of a defined rural, urban or coastal/marine area.
- **Artefact and Ecofact Character**
Information recording the character of portable or movable items of heritage, e.g. artefact assemblages and environmental samples. (This group relates directly to the Portable Antiquities Scheme).
- **Designation and Protection**

Information about the legal status of an item recorded in a MIDAS entry, e.g. scheduling, listing, Treasure Act designation, Conservation Area.

- **Heritage Asset Management Events**
Records of actions undertaken to prevent damage to or promote survival of monuments, e.g. scrub clearance to prevent root damage, Buildings At Risk surveys.
- **Historical Events**
Records of historic events that relate to a particular monument, landscape, actor or artefact, e.g. the Black Death. Recorded to add context and setting to features of the historic environment.
- **Interpretation and Presentation**
Description and presentation of information about the historic environment as recorded in a group of MIDAS inventory entries, e.g. an essay about Roman villas in Shropshire, or medieval leather shoes, or horse skulls from 18th century cess-pits in Lancashire. (Essentially metadata for the individual essay, so this will probably be Dublin Core based and may possibly fit into the 'References' information group).

Example unit of information:

Associated Role

| | |
|------------|---|
| Definition | The role by which a person or organization is linked to an entry in the inventory. |
| Guidance | One entry should be used for each role. If a person or organization has served in several roles, multiple entries should be made. |
| Examples | ARCHITECT OWNER SURVEYOR MANUFACTURER |

To view further examples, please see the online version of MIDAS:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/MIDAS3rdReprint.pdf>

Asking for your help

If you would like to participate in defining content for the expanded information groups in *MIDAS Heritage*, please add your suggestions to the new Smartgroup list: www.smartgroups.com/groups/midas2, drafting the name or title of the 'units of information' you think should be included, general definitions of what it is and explanations on how the data should be recorded. Listing examples for each would also be of great help. The definition and guidance notes can be very simple and need not be final in any way. A general idea of their purpose will suffice, to be worked on at a later stage by others. A list of currently proposed units of information will be posted on the Smartgroup to invite discussion and comment, but all the new information groups are in need of suggestions.

There are also units of information that could benefit from clearer definitions, context and guidance notes and I urge you to write to me or add your comments directly to the Smartgroup list. Your suggestions need to be in by end of April at the latest.

Please help *MIDAS Heritage* expand and improve to become a historic environment information standard for users from all over the UK.

The Project Members

The Project Team consists of myself, Tanja Sundstrom (Editor and Team Manager for MIDAS 2nd edition), and Kieran Byrne, with additional assistance from Phil Carlisle and Emma Turner. We are all Data Standards Supervisors at the National Monuments Record Centre. Since arriving at English Heritage last October I have been working with Edmund Lee on developing plans for MIDAS.

The Project Board consists of the Project Executive, Gill Grayson (English Heritage); Senior Users: Victoria Bryant (Worcestershire County Council); Hilary Malaws (RCAHMW); Isabel Holroyd (British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography); Project Manager, Edmund Lee (English Heritage) and Project Support, Brenda Forward (English Heritage).

Thank you in advance for your assistance. Please feel free to invite other people to join the *MIDAS 2nd Edition* Smartgroup list if you think they would be interested in contributing. For further information or contact details, please email/write to me at:

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