
Heritage Data Info Sheet



Services for Historic Environment Records from the NMR

This information sheet is designed to act as a guide for those involved in the management of English Historic Environment Records to relevant services available from English Heritage's National Monuments Record.

Background

The former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) was given the 'lead role' for Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) in England by the Department of the Environment (DoE) following the KPMG report in 1988. Since then the names have changed, the RCHME has merged with English Heritage (EH), which is now sponsored by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and SMRs have been renamed Historic Environment Records (HERs). The lead role however remains and this is vested in the National Monuments Record (NMR) at EH. The NMR works closely with the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) to support HERs, provide leadership and provide a range of services to meet their needs.

Leadership

One of the RCHME's first actions after being given the lead role was to commission an assessment of English SMRs, the *Baker Report*, which provided a point in time record and made 44 recommendations. The NMR has continued to provide an overview of the sector through work such as the *HER Content and Computing Survey 2005*. The NMR hosts regular working party meetings with ALGAO and IHBC which has continued to develop policy on HERs and provide leadership in the sector, for example *Benchmarks for Good Practice (EH & ALGAO 2002)*. EH's commitment to HERs was demonstrated by its response to the DCMS consultation on HERs, which set out its vision for how the sector should develop. The NMR has also been heavily involved in background work for Heritage Protection Reform, particularly where it relates to HERs.

Co-ordination Services

Co-ordination of the HER community is provided through the HER Forum which consists of three elements: the email list; formal meetings and HER News.

Email Discussion List: The NMR runs an email discussion list hosted by JISCMail (the national academic mailing list service), for those working in and with HERs, as well as those using or having an interest in them. The list debates/discusses issues and assists HERs in sharing experience to help ensure consistency of recording and services as well

as announcing events, publications etc. To ask to be added to the list send an email explaining your interest to HERFORUM-request@jiscmail.ac.uk



HER Forum Meetings: The NMR organises twice yearly meetings (Summer and Winter) open to all members of the forum. These meetings move round the country and consist of presentations and discussions on projects and issues of interest to HERs and their users. These one day conferences are useful continuing professional development for heritage professionals.

HER News: HER news items and the HER News/SMR News Archive is available online via the Heritage Gateway – www.heritagegateway.org.uk

Advisory Services

Another way in which the NMR assists HERs is by sharing its experience providing advice on a wide range of areas. This is done through visits, audits and the HER Manual.

Visits: These are available at the request of an HER (or may be suggested by the NMR) to offer advice on a range of areas such as data standards, database design, GIS, archive storage, websites, funding and public services.

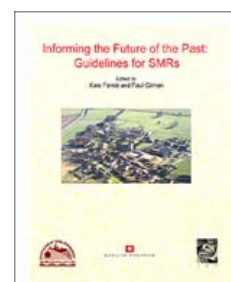
Audits: The NMR runs a programme of HER Audits and Audit Reviews. These are carried out by the individual HERs following a specification produced by, and using a database supplied by, the NMR. A grant to carry out the audit is available from the NMR to cover 50% of the cost. The audits are wide ranging in scope covering the data, database, GIS, archives, resources (financial and staffing), website and services. On completion of the audit a response is produced by the NMR commenting on the audit and making recommendations. A follow up visit is also offered to discuss the audit's findings, implementing the



recommendations and addressing any areas of weakness identified. It is also recommended that progress against recommendations is assessed in the future. A review of the programme conducted in 2001 showed the audits had been influential in improving quality in HERs and providing additional funding from their parent organisations. Audits are also used by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Historic Environment Enabling Programme* (HEEP) at EH to ensure that funding is going to a good quality and well maintained record.

*formerly known as Archaeology Commissions

Manual: *Informing the Future of the Past* (Ferne & Gilman, 2000) is a manual for HERs published by EH and produced in association with ALGAO and the Archaeology Data Services (ADS). The manual is wide-ranging with chapters covering all aspects of HER management, contributed by a range of experts. A complimentary copy was provided for every English HER by EH. An updated web based second edition will be available in April 2007.



Data Services

Reference Data: The Data Standards Unit at the NMR maintains reference data lists and thesauri for the heritage community such as the Thesaurus of Monument Types. These, together with reference data owned by others, are recommended by FISH (Forum on Information Standards in Heritage) on their INSCRIPTION list of approved terminologies. The largest user group for this data is the HER community. EH reference data is supplied free of charge to HERs under licence and HERs can also submit new candidate terms for inclusion. Further details are available in the *Historic Environment Thesauri Quick Guide*. In partnership with FISH, EH publishes MIDAS, the Monument Inventories Data Standard, which is used by HERs as the basis for their databases.

NMR Licences: HERs are offered a free licence to hold EH copyright material from the NMR and to make it available to the public. This includes monument, event and archive listings, as well as reports, plans and other archive items. NMR Enquiry & Research Services will also licence and supply additional items to HERs on request.

Liaison with Projects: The NMR can act as an intermediary between national recording projects such as the Defence of Britain and HERs, assisting in getting the results of such surveys back into the HERs at the end of the projects.

LB Online: The NMR has made a version of the Lists available via the web to all local authorities. In addition, Listed Buildings data is also supplied to local authorities for loading into HER and other planning-related systems.

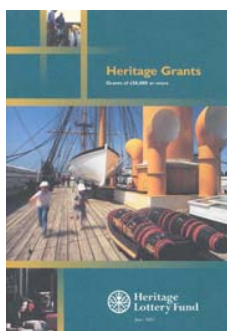
Computing Services

Advice: As well as IT advice such as database design, the NMR will provide assistance for any IT companies working with HERs to ensure that developments meet with national standards, for example MIDAS and Inscription.

HBSMR: EH works in partnership with exeGesIS SDM Ltd, developers of HBSMR, a database and GIS package designed specifically for the HER community and used by about 60% of the HERs in England. EH does not gain financially from the partnership. The NMR supports the HBSMR User Group which decides development priorities for future development of the software.



Funding



The NMR can assist HERs with applications for grants, in particular from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which makes grants available to HERs for outreach programmes including online access to HER data, under its Heritage Grants programme. The HLF expects HER applicants to have consulted the NMR prior to submission and can make HER audit completion a condition of funding. The NMR has also held training seminars on applying for grants and produced guidance with ALGAO. Other than audits, EH does not fund HERs directly, however, they do provide pump-prime funding for development control posts, which can free up HER officers time for work on the HER.

Publicity

The NMR regards publicising the network of English HERs as part of its lead role. Contact details for local HERs are maintained by the NMR via the [Heritage Gateway](#). HERs are urged to inform the NMR when any contact details change. The NMR has published a companion information sheet to this one titled *Historic Environment Records: A Guide for Users*. This is available from the NMR and on EH stands at conferences and exhibitions. HERs can request copies or download it in digital format. The NMR has also contributed to courses for users of HERs in association with ALGAO and the Archaeology Training Forum (ATF).

Further Information

Publications

Baker, D, 1999, *An Assessment of English Sites and Monuments Records*

EH, 2006, *HER Audit Specification* (revised version)

EH, 2003, *Historic Environment Records: A Guide for Users*

EH, 2003, *EH Response to the DCMS Consultation on Historic Environment Records*

EH & ALGAO, 2002, *Historic Environment Records, Benchmarks for Good Practice*

Fernie, K. & Gilman, P. eds, 2000, *Informing the Future of the Past: Guidelines for SMRs*

Fraser, D. & Newman, M., 2003, *The British Archaeological Database in Hunter & Ralston Archaeological Resource Management in the UK, an Introduction, 2nd edition*

Lee, E. ed, 1998, *MIDAS – A Manual and Data Standard for Monument Inventories*

Newman, M, 2001, *The SMR Data Audit Programme – A Review*

Newman, M, 2002, *SMR Content and Computing Survey 2002*

Howard, B, 2006, *HER Content and Computing Survey 2005*

Websites

www.heritagegateway.org.uk Heritage Gateway

www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/herforum.html HER Forum email list & archive

www.english-heritage.org.uk further information on services

www.algao.org.uk the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK

www.ihbc.co.uk the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk> ADS, hosts online data for some HERs and offer specialist advice

www.fish-forum.info Forum on Information Standards in Heritage, MIDAS & Inscription

www.hlf.org.uk Heritage Lottery Fund, provides funding for HER outreach projects

For any further details contact:

Heritage Data Management

English Heritage

National Monuments Record Centre

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