

**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD
CONTENT AND COMPUTING SURVEY 2014
Executive Summary**

**Heritage Information Partnerships
Heritage Data Management**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background, Aims and Objectives

The Historic Environment Record (HER) Content and Computing Survey 2014 has been carried out across HERs, Sites and Monument Records (SMRs) and Urban Archaeological Databases (UADs) in England. The aim of the survey was to gather current statistical information on HERs in England. The survey concentrated on the content of HERs, and how the data is stored and made available. The survey has previously been run in 2002, 2005, 2009 and 2012. The term 'HER' is used throughout this report to cover HERs, SMRs and UADs. The project is undertaken as part of National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP) strand 5C1. It is hoped that the results will feed into HERs forward plans.

1.2 Project Scope

The survey was open to HERs in England as listed on the Heritage Gateway, Middlesbrough HER, and Redcar & Cleveland HER¹. The survey focused on HERs maintained by or for local authorities and national parks. The National Trust and Defence Infrastructure Organisation (Ministry of Defence) HERs were excluded as they do not fulfil the same function.

Questions were divided into eleven sections covering

- 1) Historic Buildings – including use of the HER by Conservation Officers
- 2) Types of non-protected records
- 3) Types of protected status records and their spatial representation
- 4) Date range policy
- 5) Information held in addition to the database and GIS records in the form of hard copy reports etc including questions on grey literature backlogs
- 6) Database Software used
- 7) GIS Software used and GIS data shared
- 8) Data standards – specifically the use of thesauri
- 9) Links with other systems
- 10) Data acquired outside the planning process (including use of social media)
- 11) Staffing (HER only)

2. Methods Statement

In May and June of 2014 HERs were invited to undertake an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the 2012 survey. New questions were added to the following sections:-

- Historic Buildings
- Records
- Source Materials
- System Linkages
- Data Acquired outside the planning process

Questions were removed from or modified in the following sections:-

- Historic Buildings
- Recording of Protection Status
- Source Materials
- GIS
- Data Standards
- System Linkages
- Data acquired from sources outside the planning process

¹ Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland HERs are not currently listed on Heritage Gateway

Consultation on the contents and structure of the questionnaire was sought from the following teams and organisations.

- The Association of Local Government Archaeology Officers (ALGAO)
- The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)
- English Heritage colleagues within the Heritage Data Management Team.
- English Heritage colleagues from Designation, Historic Environment Intelligence and Capacity Building Team

3. Results

In total 72 HERs, SMRs and UADs responded to the survey. This represents 84% of those covered by the survey. The results were spread across the eight regions, with no regions producing a 100% response.

The headline results are as follows:-

Sharing data

- An increase in number of HERs available online from 71% to 85%
- 68% of HERs consult with Conservation Officers at least once every 6 months or more on their requirements for HER information.
- A decrease in number of HERs not consulting Conservation Officers at all down from 36% to 11%.
- An increase in the numbers of HERs whose local Conservation Officers use it for reactive casework from 60% to 72%
- 46% of HERs cited lack of resources as a barrier to sharing GIS data within their host organisations

Staffing

- 36% of HERs are maintained by less than 1 FTE
- 7% of HERs are maintained by more than 2 FTE

Content

- 90% of HERs record modern military sites
- The smallest HER surveyed has 700 monument records, the largest surveyed has just over 88,000 monument records
- There are at least 1.39 million monument records recorded in HERs across England
- 10% of HERs do not contain any war memorial records
- 14% of HERs do not contain any First World War monument records

Sources

- An increase in the number of HERs holding Buildings at Risk Register information digitally – up from 38% to 57%
- A decrease in numbers of HERs using Conservation Area Assessments to create source records in the HER database from 73% to 60%.
- 83% of HERs have a grey literature backlog
- 30% of HERs with a grey literature backlog have over 250 reports in that backlog
- 10% of HERs take on average a week to add new grey literature reports to the HER
- 22% of HERs take on average over a year to add new grey literature reports to the HER
- An increase in number of HERs having a disposals policy from 11% to 24%
- 68% of HERs regularly receive data from local groups/individuals outside the planning process
- 43% of HERs provide guidance to local groups/individuals for submitting data

Software

- 76% of HERs use HBSMR as their database software
- An increase in the number of HERs using HBSMR with an SQL backend from 47% to 61%
- 43% of HERs use ArcView and 51% of HERs use MapInfo

The full survey report and detailed statistics are available from Sarah MacLean, Heritage Information Partnerships Supervisor, e-mail: sarah.maclea@english-heritage.org.uk

Bibliography

Howard, B. (2009) Historic Environment Record Content and Computing Survey 2009 Report

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