

Heritage at Risk Statistics: Method Statement 2024

Overview

This Method Statement outlines the process Historic England staff use to assess risk to seven types of designated heritage assets (buildings and structures, places of worship, archaeology, parks and gardens, battlefields, wreck sites and conservation areas), and explains how the Heritage at Risk statistics are calculated.

Section A explains the rationale behind maintaining the national Heritage at Risk Register, the limitations of the process and the general principles used in the assessment process.

Section B describes the methodologies used to assess the level of risk for each asset type. Risk assessment flow charts are included, where available, to illustrate the factors that are considered when decisions are made.

Section C describes how the Heritage at Risk statistics, published annually by Historic England, are calculated. The annual statistics include

- *the number of entries on the Register for each of the seven heritage asset types,*
- *the total number designated for each of the asset types,*
- *the percentage of each designated asset type that appear on the Register, and*
- *the number of entries added to or removed for positive reasons from the Register.*

The Heritage at Risk programme was set up in 2008, expanding on the national Buildings at Risk (BAR) project which had been running since 1998. The national BAR project itself built on the *Register of Buildings at Risk in Greater London* which had been published from 1991 to 1997.

The Heritage at Risk programme's aim is to identify the heritage assets in England that are at risk of loss through neglect, decay or development, or are vulnerable to becoming so.

The following risk assessment types are included on the Register

- Buildings and structures risk assessments (for grade I and II* listed secular buildings and structures; grade II listed secular buildings and structures in Greater London; and structural scheduled monuments)
- Places of worship risk assessments (for listed buildings of all grades (I, II* and II) in use as places of worship)
- Archaeology risk assessments (for scheduled monuments with non-structural remains, below ground and/or earthworks)

- Registered parks and gardens risk assessments
- Registered battlefields risk assessments
- Protected wreck sites risk assessments
- Conservation areas risk assessments

The programme is used to establish the extent of risk and to help assess priorities for action and funding decisions. Further information on our [Heritage at Risk Programme](#) in general is available on our website.

The main statistics calculated for this year are:

- the number of entries on the Register for each risk assessment type;
- the percentage of each designated asset type which appear on the Register; and
- the number of entries added to or removed (for positive reasons) from the Register.

Data from previous years is available on request from Historic England and spreadsheets of each year's data from 2013 onwards are available from our [website](#) but all Heritage at Risk data should be viewed taking into consideration the different ways the data has been gathered over the years the programme has been running.

A. Assessing Heritage at Risk

Introduction

The heritage assets included in the Register are of very different types – including buried archaeological remains, historic buildings, places of worship, wreck sites, battlefields and conservation areas.

Heritage assets are included on the [National Heritage List for England](#) (NHLE) because they have been judged to be of national significance. The NHLE is the only official, up-to-date list of nationally protected sites. (Further information on [the listing process](#) is available on our website.) Conservation areas are designated by the relevant local planning authority (LPA).

A heritage asset becomes at risk when its significance is in danger of being lost or seriously diminished.

The factors that may put these assets at risk are diverse. For example, the specific factors that may put an underwater wreck at risk are different from those that may put a church at risk and the risk factors faced by conservation areas, which typically include a number of buildings and a wide range of other features, are different again.

That having been said, these specific factors often reflect common causes of risk to heritage assets. A heritage asset can often become at risk due to physical damage through neglect or decay or through use of the site, for example from deep ploughing in the case of buried archaeological remains. However, loss of significance, and hence the increase of risk, can also arise from other factors that don't directly cause physical damage, for example, inappropriate changes in the setting of a park or a battlefield.

Owing to the evolution of Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, different methods are currently used to assess whether the different types of assets are at risk, and heritage professionals with different areas of expertise carry out the risk assessments.

Depending on their current use listed buildings can be assessed under either the buildings and structures or places of worship methodologies and depending on whether the site has structural, earthworks and/or buried remains scheduled monuments can be assessed under either the buildings and structures or the archaeology methodologies. Registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields, protected wrecks and conservation areas are assessed under the methodologies that align with their designation type. (For more information on the methodologies please see section B).

The purpose of Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register

The purpose of Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register is to help us understand the overall state of England's historic environment. It helps us prioritise our support and investment, in collaboration with others, to help create thriving places and to improve people's lives.

Risk can be addressed by eliminating or reducing the threats and where possible by bringing assets back into good repair and beneficial use (use which can generate sufficient income to pay for the ongoing maintenance of the asset).

History of the scope of our at Risk Registers

From 1991 to 1997 the *Register of Buildings at Risk in Greater London* was published. It included listed buildings and structures at risk of all grades and was produced by the then English Heritage, with input from the London boroughs.

In 1998 the geographic scope of the Register was extended to the whole of England when the first national *Buildings at Risk Register* was published. It was limited to buildings and structures listed at grades I and II* (including places of worship) and structural scheduled monuments, except for Greater London where grade II buildings and structures at risk and some unlisted buildings, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens were included. Then in 2008 the *Buildings at Risk Register* was expanded and the first *Heritage at Risk Register* was published. Its scope was extended to include other asset types: scheduled monuments with non-structural (below ground and earthwork) remains, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and protected wreck sites across England.

Conservation areas across the rest of England began to be included in the Registers published from 2009 onward.

Places of worship (which until then had been included in the buildings and structures methodology) began to be included in the Registers published from 2011 onward under their own asset type with their own methodology and places of worship of grade II also become eligible for inclusion in the Register.

How sites are identified for inclusion on the Register

Historic England works in partnership with local planning authorities, town and parish councils, amenity groups, community organisations and individuals (including owners) to identify potential 'at risk' assets to be assessed.

Anyone can bring to our attention assets that they are concerned are, or may become, at risk and propose eligible sites for addition to the Register. Information on how to [suggest a change to the Heritage at Risk Register](#) along with the contact details for our [regional offices](#) are both published on our website.

Once we have been notified of a site potentially at risk, suitably trained and qualified Historic England staff members will visit the site and carry out a risk assessment using the methodologies for the various asset types as outlined below.

The limitations faced identifying sites to be retained, added or removed from the Register

Historic England's regional teams have limited resources and must balance their efforts between seeking to ensure that the Register is as up-to-date and accurate as possible, and seeking to help owners, local authorities and communities address heritage at risk.

Limitations of the large number of designated assets

There are around 380,000 entries on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE- the List) for 'listed' buildings and structures including places of worship. Of these about 2.5% are grade I (of exceptional interest) and about 5.8% are grade II* (of more than special interest). Some entries on the List cover more than one building, such as a row of terraced houses and some entries on the List which count as 'listed buildings' are for structures which are not buildings for example walls, gates, churchyard monuments and milestones etc.

In addition, there are almost 20,000 scheduled monuments on the List. There are also nearly 10,000 conservation areas designated by local planning authorities. With such numbers, it is far beyond the resources of Historic England to carry out a detailed, comprehensive assessment of every heritage asset in the country on an annual basis to determine which assets are at risk.

Limitations of the large number of grade II listed buildings and structures

As there are currently over 325,000 grade II secular buildings and structures outside Greater London, Historic England does not have the capacity to assess secular grade II listed buildings and structures across England for inclusion on the Register. However, grade II places of worship are included on the Register and grade II listed secular buildings and structures in Greater London are still included with the continued input and collaboration of the London boroughs.

Some local planning authorities in England maintain local heritage at risk registers that DO include grade II buildings and structures. Some local at risk registers also include unlisted buildings. Some amenity societies also collate their own at risk registers which may also include assets ineligible for inclusion on Historic England's Register as each group use their

own eligibility and selection criteria. There is a [selected list](#) of other at risk registers on our website.

Limitations on the reassessment of entries already on the Register

It is not possible, in any one year, for Historic England officers to visit and monitor each of the nearly 5,000 entries already identified as being at risk, although many sites identified as being at risk on the Register will have been visited and every entry is reviewed annually.

Although these limitations need to be borne in mind when looking at the annual Heritage at Risk statistics, as the data grows year on year, the Heritage at Risk Register provides an indication of the state of England's historic environment. Furthermore, the Register itself and the wider participation involved in generating it, helps communities to engage actively with their heritage and care for their historic environment.

Assessing whether a heritage asset is at risk: general principles

By whatever means a designated heritage asset which is potentially at risk is identified, the assessment of whether it should be included on the Register is systematically carried out by Historic England staff using the methods outlined below that have been specifically developed for the type of heritage asset under consideration.

Each regional team typically includes conservation architects/surveyors, landscape architects, project officers and archaeologists, who will deploy the 'buildings and structures', 'parks and gardens' or 'archaeology' risk assessment methods respectively.

Asset types that are smaller in number, for example protected wrecks and registered battlefields, are dealt with by specialists at a national level.

Conservation areas, which are designated by local planning authorities (LPAs), are assessed by conservation officers or historic environment leads within the LPAs, and the risk assessments are moderated by Historic England staff to ensure consistency.

Each asset on the Register has a nominated contact who is responsible for that entry. They are named in the Register with a telephone number. This is a Historic England staff member for all entry types except conservation areas and grade II secular buildings in Greater London where the nominated contact is from the relevant local authority.

Owners of heritage assets (with the exception of conservation areas) are informed in writing when an asset is added to, or removed from, the Register. In doing so, we emphasise that inclusion on the Register does not necessarily, or usually, imply criticism of the owner because the factors giving rise to the risk are very often beyond the reasonable control of the owner. We stress the value of the Register as a tool for Historic England and others to

prioritise effort and to help owners find solutions, for example through advice and grant assistance.

Each risk assessment method defines the factors that typically put that type of asset at risk and provides tools such as checklists, decision trees and flow charts that assist staff in making their assessment. Nevertheless, each building or structure, structural monument, archaeological site, park, garden, battlefield, wreck or conservation area is unique and survives in a unique context, and in each case professional judgement plays an essential part in the assessment process. The assessment does not just involve a 'yes/no' question of whether the asset is at risk, but is a balance of its condition, occupancy, vulnerability and trend where relevant.

B. Assessing whether a heritage asset is at risk: methodologies for asset types

1. Buildings and structures (previously referred to as 'buildings at risk')

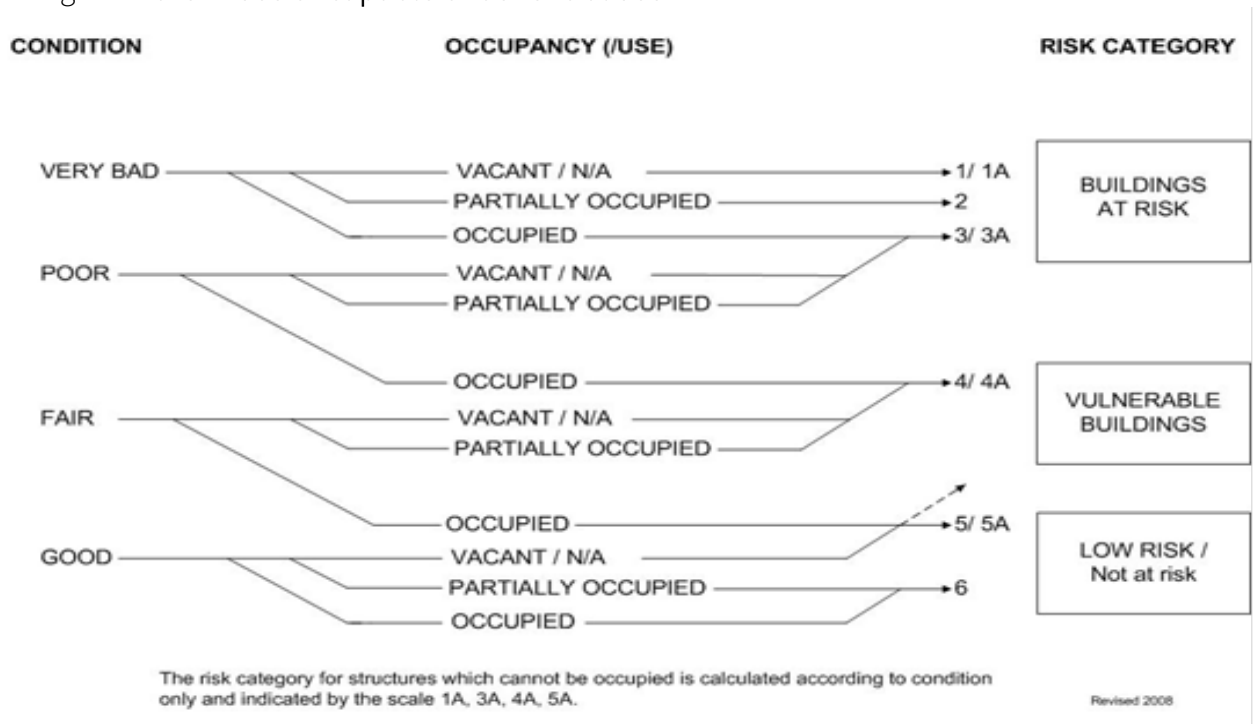
Local planning authorities, amenity groups, community organisations and individuals can put forward nominations for grade I and grade II* listed buildings and structures (for grade II listed buildings and structures in Greater London only) and structural scheduled monuments they believe should be added to the Register. They can also suggest updates to existing entries on the Register.

As a rule of thumb, listed buildings tend to be occupied or in use or capable of occupation or use, whereas some listed structures (walls, gates, monuments etc) and some structural scheduled monuments are not occupied or in use and may be partially ruinous. A typical listed building might be a historic house whereas a typical structural scheduled monument might be the upstanding ruins of a medieval castle or abbey, or industrial remains. However, part of the richness of our heritage is its diversity and many assets defy simple pigeonholing by type or combine different types within a single whole.

Historic England staff members assess buildings and structures nominated for inclusion on the Register, or which they have visited for other reasons.

Buildings and structures, including structural scheduled monuments, are assessed on their condition, combined where applicable, with their occupancy (or use).

This chart shows how condition and occupancy interact to generate the degree of risk for buildings that **are in use or capable of beneficial use**:



Buildings, structures and structural scheduled monuments which **cannot be occupied and are incapable of beneficial use** are assessed by condition only. They are assessed as **at risk** if they are in

- very bad or poor condition;

and are assessed as **vulnerable** if they are in

- fair condition but lacking management arrangements to ensure their maintenance.

Condition is graded as follows

- **very bad** means a building or structure where there has been structural failure or where there are clear signs of structural instability; or where there has been loss of significant areas of the roof covering, leading to major deterioration of the interior; or where there has been a major fire or other disaster affecting most of the building;
- **poor** means a building or structure with deteriorating masonry and/or a leaking roof and/or defective rainwater goods, usually accompanied by rot outbreaks within and general deterioration of most elements of the building fabric, including external joinery; or where there has been a fire or other disaster which has affected part of the building;
- **fair** means a building or structure which is structurally sound, but in need of minor repair or showing signs of a lack of general maintenance;
- **good** means structurally sound, weathertight and with no significant repairs needed.

The condition of buildings and structures on the Register is usually graded as 'very bad' or 'poor'. However occasionally buildings or structures which are of a 'fair' or 'good' condition may be added to the Register if they are vulnerable to becoming at risk because they are empty, underused or face redundancy without a new use to secure their future.

Assessing vulnerability in the case of buildings or structures in fair condition necessarily involves judgement and discretion. A few buildings on the Register are in good condition, having been repaired or mothballed, but a new use or owner is still to be secured.

Occupancy (or use) is noted as

- vacant (or not in use)
- partially occupied (part in use)
- occupied (in use), and
- occasionally, unknown.

(For structural scheduled monuments, occupancy/use is not usually applicable.)

Buildings, structures and structural scheduled monuments **capable of beneficial use** are assessed as **at risk** if they are in

- very bad condition
- poor condition and vacant or only partially occupied.

and are assessed as **vulnerable** if they are in

- poor condition and occupied

- fair condition and vacant or partially occupied or about to be vacated as a result of functional redundancy, e.g. a hospital in the period of rundown to closure, and
- occasionally, in good condition and vacant.

Buildings and structures are removed from the Register when fully repaired/consolidated, their future secured, and where appropriate, occupied.

Buildings and structures remain on the Register whilst solutions are being implemented, as a reminder of the need for monitoring and to ensure that repair and re-use are seen through to completion.

2. Places of worship

Places of worship included on the Register are buildings that are listed grade I, II* or II and used as a public place of worship at least six times a year. If a place of worship has been permanently closed or is used for another purpose, it will be assessed using the buildings and structures risk assessment method. Outside Greater London, if a grade II place of worship is no longer in use as a place of worship it will no longer be eligible for inclusion in the Register.

The definition of ‘place of worship’ includes buildings used for public worship by any faith or denomination. In April 2024 the total number of listed places of worship in England was approximately 14,800.

The method used to assess whether a place of worship is at risk is essentially the same as that used to assess other historic buildings and structures (as outlined above), with one important difference: the criterion as to whether a building is occupied is not used as by their nature, places of worship are in use, although some may be used more frequently than others.

Information on the condition of listed places of worship comes from a variety of sources. Historic England has carried out or commissioned a number of surveys of listed places of worship to assess their condition. Within the Church of England every church building must be inspected every five years by an architect or chartered building surveyor approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). This is known as the quinquennial inspection system and the resulting quinquennial reports are a very valuable source of information on the state of repair of churches. Other denominations have similar processes for carrying out regular inspections of condition.

In some areas there is a Places of Worship Support Officer (often part-funded by Historic England), who will identify places of worship potentially at risk and support congregations in taking remedial action. Local authorities, amenity groups, community organisations and individuals may also highlight places of worship that are potentially at risk. Whatever the source by which a place of worship is identified for potential inclusion on the Register, the

decision of whether or not to add or remove it from the Register will be taken by Historic England staff after a visit from one of our conservation architects, surveyors or inspectors.

Places of worship will be assessed as **at risk** and added to the Register if their **condition** is assessed to be **very bad** or **poor**. Places of worship in fair condition overall are assessed as **vulnerable**, and those in good condition are assessed as **not at risk**, where

- **very bad** means there are serious problems which require urgent attention,
- **poor** means there are widespread problems; lack of basic maintenance,
- **fair** means there are minor problems and general wear and tear,
- **good** means there are no obvious problems.

The focus when assessing the condition of a place of worship is mainly on critical weather-proofing areas, for example roof coverings, drainage systems and high-level stonework. We look in particular for issues with

- high-level stonework – significant areas of badly-eroded masonry at high level, particularly on towers and spires, and fallen bits of stone or brick around the perimeter of the building;
- gutters and downpipes – plant growth in gutters and hopper heads; downpipes that are disconnected or detached; water discharging into the walls; blocked drains with plant growth in them;
- the interior – evidence of leaking/water ingress such as staining or bubbling paintwork, rot outbreaks; damage to interior fixtures and fittings;
- roofs – slipped or missing slates or tiles; slate or tile debris around the perimeter of the building; cracked or missing leadwork; general failure of flashings;
- structural stability – significant cracks, bulges or other structural defects in walls, where these appear likely to threaten the stability of the whole or a large part of the structure of the building;
- other areas – for example, general problems with window glass and stonework; signs of vandalism such as broken windows, graffiti and refuse in the churchyard; paintwork not renewed; widespread failure of external render.

Churches are often complex structures and many are amongst the oldest surviving buildings in the country. They are constructed of a wide range of materials, often local, which may be difficult or expensive to obtain today. They have features such as towers and spires which can be technically difficult and expensive to repair. They sometimes have delicate and vulnerable interior features, such as wall paintings. Because they are only periodically occupied, churches are especially vulnerable to heritage crime, for example lead theft from roofs.

It is often the case that only part of a church building, e.g. the tower or one of the aisles, is in very bad or poor condition, and it then becomes a matter of professional judgement whether this puts the whole building at risk. Usually if a major or a very significant element of a church is considered to be at risk then the judgement is made that the whole building is at risk and it is included in the Register.

The majority of listed places of worship have now been assessed. The baseline for calculating the listed places of worship on the Register changed in 2016 from only those which had been assessed to all listed places of worship.

Places of worship risk assessment entries are removed from the Register once the building has been repaired.

3. Archaeology

The archaeology risk assessment method is used to assess the risk to scheduled monuments that are either preserved below ground (buried archaeological sites) and/or survive in part as earthworks (for example, a burial mound, the ramparts of prehistoric hillfort, or a medieval moat).

Where the scheduled monument includes a substantial above ground structural element, this part of the monument will be assessed using the buildings and structures methodology.

Some scheduled monuments contain all three elements: buried archaeology, earthworks and above ground structures and are therefore assessed under both methodologies (for example, the ruins of some medieval abbeys) and therefore have two (or more) entries on the Register.

Many of the factors that can put buried archaeological remains or earthworks at risk are different from those that will put a building or standing structure at risk, and because the remains can be buried or only survive as relatively subtle earthworks, the chances of accidental damage are much higher. Archaeological remains are delicate and can be damaged by both physical actions (for example, ploughing) and by changes to the soil conditions (for example, organic remains such as wooden artefacts may only survive because they are waterlogged; if the water table is lowered and the soil dries out, such remains will begin to decay.)

In considering the risk to archaeological remains, the assessment must take account of what is significant about the remains and what factors may threaten that significance. For example, if much of the significance of the remains lies in the fact that they are preserved by waterlogging, factors that may cause the soil to dry out present a threat, as do factors that cause the water to become more oxygenated, as oxygenation also promotes decay.

When assessing the risks to archaeological scheduled monuments, the following **vulnerabilities** will be considered:

Management vulnerabilities arise from how the site of the scheduled monument is managed and how the land is used, for example:

- arable ploughing

- arable clipping
- bracken (its rooting systems can cause extensive damage)
- forestry (root damage)
- gardening
- plant growth
- stock erosion
- tree/scrub growth (root damage)
- woodland management

Natural vulnerabilities and **human actions** which may put a monument at risk include:

- animal burrowing
- coastal erosion
- collapse
- deterioration in need of management
- development (permitted development, development requiring planning permission, development by public utilities and/or road construction)
- dewatering/drainage
- digging
- dumping (it is illegal to fly-tip on a scheduled monument)
- flooding
- levelling
- mineral extraction and related subsidence
- natural erosion and erosion caused by visitors
- subsidence
- unlicensed metal detecting
- vandalism, and
- vehicle damage.

The risk assessment will also take into account whether a formal management plan for the monument is in place and, if so, whether the plan is being implemented. Where no formal management plan exists, an assessment will nevertheless be made of whether the management regime is benign or detrimental.

The final assessment will record whether the scheduled monument is **at risk, vulnerable or low/not at risk**. A site's condition is expressed in terms of the scale and severity of the adverse effects on it, ranging from those with 'extensive significant problems' to others that have only 'minor localised problems'.

The **trend** will also be recorded: 'improving', 'stable', 'declining' or 'unknown'.

This Risk Assessment Chart for Scheduled Monuments helps to take the assessor through the various steps in the assessment process, but the final decision lies with the professional judgement of a member of Historic England staff.

Scheduled Monuments at Risk - Risk Assessment Chart

Monuments are considered to be at Low Risk unless a higher risk is identified below

YES	Assessment of Risk to significance	NO
<i>Built structures</i>		
Go to 2	1. Does a building or built structure form an important component of the monument's significance?	Go to 7
Go to 4	2. Is the building/structure in reasonable repair?	Go to 3
High Risk	3. Is an important part of the building/structure at risk of collapse?	Go to 4
High Risk	4. Has the building/structure suffered from recent vehicle damage, vandalism, dumping, burning etc affecting its significance?	Go to 5
Medium Risk	5. Does the building/structure exhibit signs of moderate decay or loss?	Go to 6
Medium / High	6. Do trees, scrub or other vegetation pose a threat to the building/structure?	Go to 7
<i>Water components</i>		
Go to 8	7. Does water or wetland form an important component of the monument's significance?	Go to 10
High Risk	8. Has there been a major permanent reduction or change in its water levels recently?	Go to 9
Medium / High	9. Is seasonal or occasional drying out affecting the monument's significance?	Go to 10
<i>Arable</i>		
Go to 11	10. Is the monument under arable/arable rotation or affected by arable clipping?	Go to 13
High Risk	11. Does the monument survive as an earthwork or strong soilmark?	Go to 12
Medium / High	12. Are there other factors such as type of crop(s), ploughing/tillage regime, soil type and depth etc which are increasing risk?	Go to 13
<i>Erosion and burrowing</i>		
Go to 14	13. Does the monument suffer from burrowing and/or erosion by animals, people, vehicles or natural phenomena?	Go to 15
Medium / High	14. Is this burrowing or erosion moderate or extensive and/or affecting a significant component of the monument?	Go to 15
<i>Vegetation</i>		
Go to 16	15. Is an important part of the monument covered by or within an area of woodland, scrub or bracken?	Go to 19
High Risk	16. Is bracken and/or scrub badly affecting the significance of the monument?	Go to 17
High Risk	17. Is it in a woodland regime which is badly affecting the significance of the monument eg short rotation coppice, unmanaged woodland	Go to 18
Medium Risk	18. Is the woodland, scrub or bracken moderately affecting the significance of the monument?	Go to 19
<i>Human and other factors</i>		
High Risk	19. Does the monument have a recent history of anti-social behaviour - dumping, vandalism, metal-detecting, damage etc?	Go to 20
Medium / High	20. Is the monument vulnerable for any other reason? e.g. history of owner/occupier issues; unauthorised works including contractors, utility companies, highway authorities; coastal erosion	Go to 21
Medium / High	21. Is the setting of the monument vulnerable for any reason, and does this add to the risk level?	Low Risk

Does the current management of the monument affect the risk status of the monument?

Does the risk score accord with your professional judgement about overall risk to the monument and its trajectory?

Between 2005 and 2008, England's scheduled monuments were systematically surveyed to assess their condition and vulnerability. The baseline for archaeology records is the 2009 Register.

Throughout the year, Historic England staff members assess entries on the Register to ascertain if they are still at risk. Archaeology assessment entries are removed from the Register once sufficient progress has been made to address identified issues, and a significant reduction in the level of risk to the site has been demonstrated.

Where it is known that there has been a change in the overall condition, condition trend or vulnerability of scheduled monuments, they are assessed and visited. Such sites are identified through Historic England monitoring and casework, or by partners such as Natural England. If the site meets the risk assessment criteria for inclusion on the Register, they will be added.

Historic England is consulted by Natural England on applications for Countryside Stewardship for sites in agricultural use. Historic England uses aerial photography images as part of their assessment of the site. If this desk-based assessment suggests that there may be cause for concern, a site visit may be undertaken, and the risk status of the scheduled monument assessed using the method outlined above.

4. Registered parks and gardens

The Historic England *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*, established in 1983, currently identifies just over 1,700 sites assessed to be of particular significance. The register of parks and gardens contains a variety of site types: rural parks and gardens, public parks, cemeteries, institutional (hospitals, asylums etc.). The emphasis is on 'designed' landscapes, rather than purely on planting or botanical importance, although these may be an important part of a registered park or garden's design.

We recognise that development is often vital to the long-term sustainability of a park or garden. But insensitive and cumulative change can unintentionally undermine the very essence of the historic design. As well as measuring the impact of change within registered sites, we also try to identify external threats to their special qualities and setting.

Registered parks and gardens vary enormously in size but nearly all involve many different features, and sometimes several owners. Often neglect is localised and easily dealt with; elsewhere the neglect may be much more serious and lead to irreversible damage.

By 2009 all registered parks and gardens in England had been assessed to categorise whether they were at risk. This was based on a mixture of assessment against a set of indicators and professional judgement.

Initially all sites were assessed through a desktop appraisal, this included available data on the condition and vulnerability of each site along with information about its management. A pilot study, including site surveys, was used to identify the indicators for measuring condition and vulnerability – the two key ones being pressures from development (including impact on views and vistas) and detrimental neglect (e.g. state of historic fabric).

On the basis of this baseline assessment, the **condition** of registered parks and gardens was provisionally recorded as being either

- optimal/generally satisfactory,
- generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems,
- generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems,
- extensive significant problems, or
- unknown.

Historic England regional staff then moderated the results to ensure robustness and accuracy of the data. Parks and gardens assessed as unsatisfactory or with significant problems were included on the Register.

Since the baseline assessment, sites on the Register are assessed annually to see if they are still at risk, and new entries, identified by professional staff as being at risk, are added.

In assessing the **condition** of registered parks and gardens, the following factors are considered

- whether the integrity of the park or garden is damaged by development, both inside or outside the registered area, including the effect of this on key views and vistas;
- whether its integrity is damaged by neglect;
- whether there are buildings or structures at risk within the park and garden.

Significant component features are also considered. These include avenues, cultivated or display gardens, design elements (earthworks etc.), designed water features, drives and paths, garden buildings and structures, other structures, grass cover, natural water features, shrubs and hedges, clumps and groups of trees, terraces and steps, views and vistas, woodland and shelter belts.

In terms of vulnerability, sites are all placed into one of three **vulnerability categories**

- **low** – where the historic park and garden is managed as designed or management is compatible with the historic interest;
- **medium** – where the management of a site is considered overall to be benign to the historic interest but there are some problems;
- **high** – where there is uncertainty about the future conservation of the historic park and garden.

In **assessing vulnerability**, the following factors are considered

- whether there is a Conservation Management Plan
- whether there is fragmented ownership (if this is causing management difficulties)

- whether major detrimental development is planned
- whether the use of the site is compatible with its historic significance

The park or garden's **trend** is taken into account, that is to say whether it is

- improving
- stable, or
- declining.

Parks and gardens risk assessment entries are removed from the Heritage at Risk Register once plans are put in place to address issues and positive progress is being made.

5. Registered Battlefields

Each year, Historic England staff assess registered battlefields to identify if any should be added to the Register and to update existing entries, including removing from the Register those that are no longer at risk.

Each battlefield is assessed against four key criteria

- **Landscape readability** – is it possible to understand the context of the battle?
- **Landscape features** – are hedgerows, walls and trees which had a significant impact on the battle still in place?
- **Archaeological integrity** – is the archaeology of the battle being disturbed?
- **Ambience** – are activities such as development having a negative impact on the setting of the site?

Current **condition**, future **vulnerability** and **trend** are all taken into account.

These factors are considered to judge whether they are having a negative impact on **condition**

- intensive agriculture
- tree planting
- deteriorating boundaries
- metal detecting
- loss of earthworks
- golf courses impacting on site.

These factors are considered to judge whether they are having a negative impact on **vulnerability**

- development pressure
- hydrological works
- intensification of agriculture
- metal detecting

- roads and traffic.

The battlefield's **trend** is taken into account, that is to say whether it is

- improving
- stable
- declining.

Based on an assessment against these categories, sites deemed to be at risk of loss of historic significance are included on the Register.

Battlefield assessment entries are removed from the Heritage at Risk Register either when actual damaging activities are reversed or managed, or when threats recede due to effective management planning.

6. Protected wreck sites

Every year, trained professional Historic England staff assess all protected wreck sites to identify whether any additional sites have become at risk and should be added to the Register and to update existing entries, including removing from the Register those that are no longer at risk. Licensees also provide condition information on protected wreck sites to Historic England.

A protected wreck site will be considered to be **at risk** if there is a significant likelihood of loss or further loss of historical, archaeological or artistic significance from it within the foreseeable future.

Assessment at **vulnerable** indicates that there is a reasonable likelihood of loss of historical, archaeological or artistic significance in the future if no change in the management regime takes place.

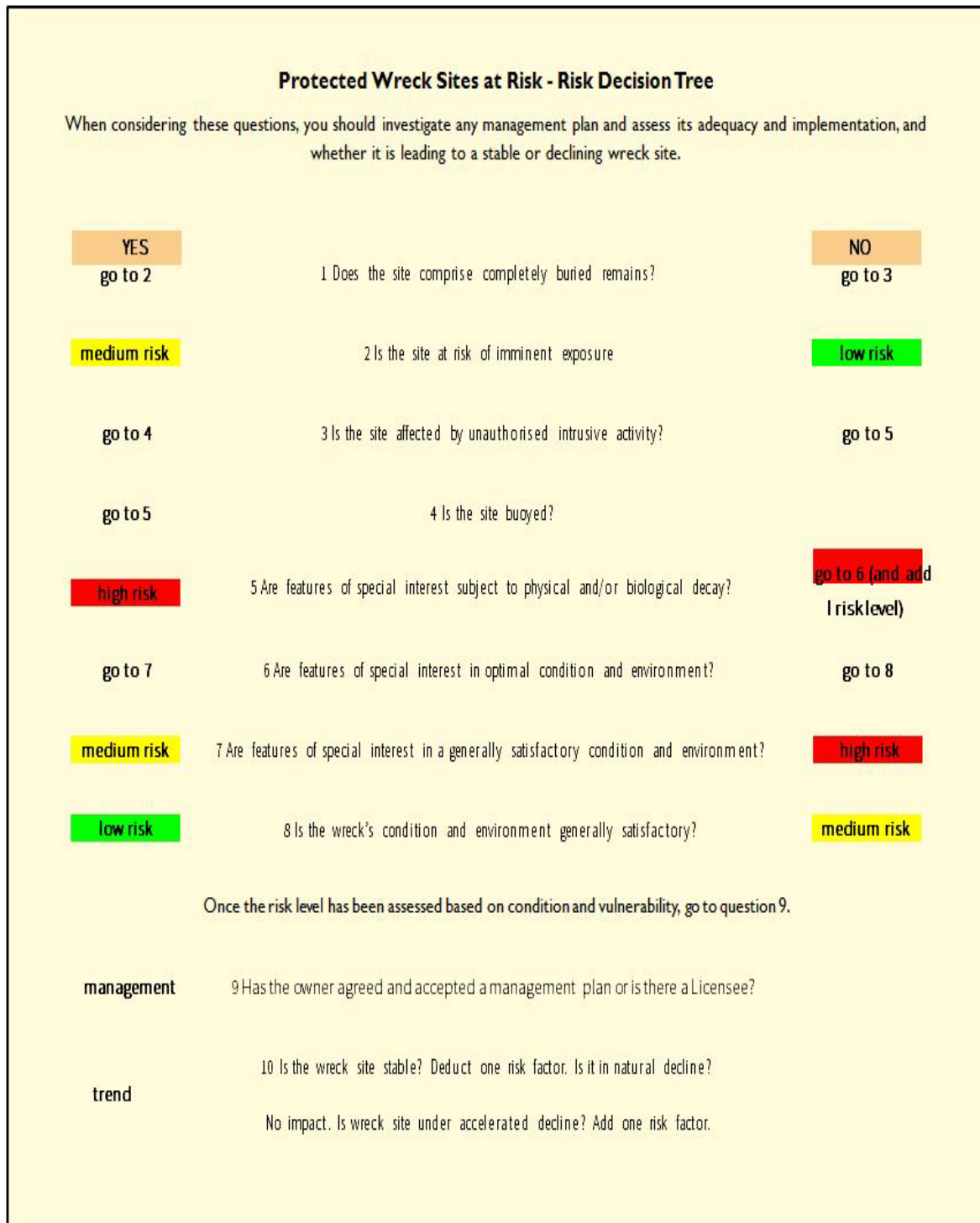
Low/ not at risk indicates that the site is being managed in a way that is sympathetic to its historical, archaeological or artistic significance. Historic England recognises that natural processes, such as erosion, cannot always be prevented. Protected wreck sites that are subject to such forces will not be considered at risk if they are subject to a planned programme of managed change, recording and investigation.

Three broad factors are considered when assessing the risk to wreck sites

- **Condition** – the current condition of the wreck, whether in optimal condition, generally satisfactory, generally unsatisfactory or having extensive problems;
- **Vulnerability** - an assessment of the natural and anthropogenic influences on the site, and;

- **Trend** - an assessment of the management regime and whether the monument condition is improving, remaining stable or experiencing unmanaged or inappropriate decline.

The following decision tree can be used as an aid to professional judgment and to help to ensure uniformity of decision making amongst assessors.

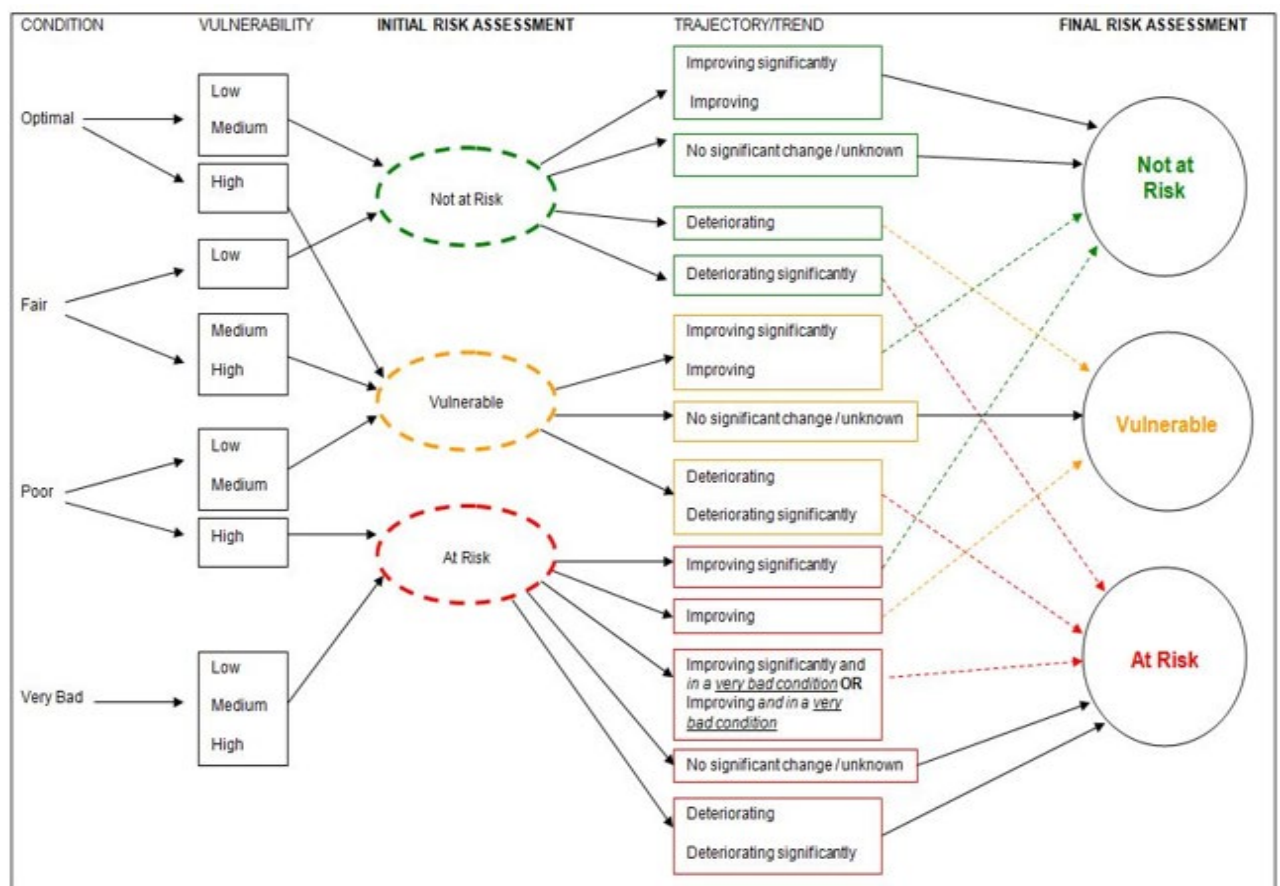


7. Conservation areas

The procedure for assessing conservation areas changed in 2018. Between 2009 and 2017 every local planning authority was invited annually to complete an online survey on the state of each of their conservation areas. An assessment of current **condition, threats** and **trends** was then used to assess risk, with those that were expected to deteriorate in the next three years, or in very bad or poor condition and not expected to change significantly in the next three years, defined as **at risk** and included on the Register. The online survey was made up of 35 questions about background, condition, vulnerability and trend. Some of these questions had weighted scores which determined an overall assessment of condition, vulnerability and trend, which then led to a final overall risk assessment.

From 2018, the online survey has been discontinued and instead Historic England staff have asked local planning authorities to provide updates on their conservation areas, bringing the risk assessment of conservation areas in line with other types of heritage asset, whose risk status is not determined by an automated weighted scoring system but involves professional judgement on a case-by-case basis.

For conservation areas proposed for addition to, or removal from the Register, local authority historic environment staff fill in a questionnaire including questions on the background of the area, its overall **condition, vulnerability** and **trend**. The *Conservation Areas Risk Assessment Flow Chart* is then used to determine the overall **risk assessment for the area**.



Conservation area entries are removed from the Register once issues have been identified, plans put in place to address them, and positive progress is being made.

Overview of the sections on the conservation area survey questionnaire

1. **Background Information**

This section asks for the basic information relating to the local authority, including contact details and the name/locality of the area being surveyed.

2. **Condition**

This section addresses whether the special interest of the conservation area is being jeopardised by inappropriate change or neglect, including to the public realm. The overall condition of the conservation area is then assessed as one of the following:

- very bad
- poor
- fair, or
- optimal.

3. **Vulnerability**

This section explores whether there are any impending development proposals that could threaten the special interest of the area, whether there are any measures in place to manage the impact of development, and whether there are any measures in place to address any of the elements contributing to the area's poor condition. The overall vulnerability is then assessed as one of the following:

- high
- medium, or
- low.

4. **Trend**

The trend is assessed as one of the following:

- deteriorating significantly
- deteriorating
- no change
- improving, or
- improving significantly.

5. **Risk Assessment**

Using the flowchart, the **condition** and **vulnerability** assessments are combined to give an '**initial at risk assessment**'. The expected trend for the area over the next three years is then used to come to a '**final at risk assessment**'.

Where the initial risk assessment is 'not at risk'

- if the trend is 'improving significantly', 'improving', or 'no significant change/unknown', then final risk assessment is 'not at Risk'
- if the trend is 'deteriorating', then final risk assessment is 'vulnerable'

- if the trend is ‘deteriorating significantly’, then final risk assessment is ‘at risk’

If the initial risk assessment is ‘vulnerable’

- if the trend is ‘improving significantly’ or ‘improving’, then final risk assessment is ‘not at risk’
- if the trend is ‘no significant change/unknown’, then final risk assessment is ‘vulnerable’
- if the trend is ‘deteriorating significantly’ or ‘deteriorating’, then final risk assessment is ‘at risk’

If the initial risk assessment is ‘at risk’

- if the trend is ‘improving significantly’ then final risk assessment is ‘not at risk’
- if the trend is ‘improving’, then final risk assessment is ‘vulnerable’
- if the trend is ‘improving significantly or improving but the CA is still in a very bad condition (see note below)’ ‘no significant change/unknown’, ‘deteriorating’ or ‘deteriorating significantly’ then final risk assessment is ‘at risk’

(Note that if the condition of the conservation area has been assessed as ‘very bad’ then any trend (even ‘improving’ or ‘improving significantly’) must lead to a final assessment of ‘at risk’ until the condition assessment of the area has improved to at least ‘poor’.)

Conservation area removals from the Register

When a conservation area has improved and is ready to come off the Heritage at Risk Register, local authorities are asked to fill out the questionnaire to provide an updated assessment of condition, vulnerability and trend, and to state the main reason why the conservation area is no longer ‘at risk’, selecting from the following options:

- Improved management of site (e.g. Heritage Partnership Agreement, new Management Plan)
- Vulnerability/threat removed: development plans no longer relevant
- Vulnerability/threat removed: new owner or occupier/new use
- Vulnerability/threat removed: other (please specify)
- Repaired
- Grant aid: Historic England
- Grant aid: Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) or National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)
- Grant aid: from both Historic England and HLF or NLHF
- Grant aid: LPA
- Grant aid: Natural England Environmental Stewardship
- Grant aid: other (please specify)
- Enforcement action
- Reassessed: correction to previously assigned risk assessment
- De-designated.

C. How the Heritage at Risk statistics are calculated

Percentages of heritage assets at risk are produced by dividing the number of entries for each of the assessment methodologies on the Heritage at Risk Register by the corresponding total number on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), except for conservation areas where the total number of conservation areas designated by the local planning authorities is used, as conservation areas are not included in the NHLE.

Historic England hosts and maintains the NHLE on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Each year sites are added and removed from the NHLE which may mean the total number for each methodology type changes.

The figures cited in our statistics for total numbers of heritage assets on the NHLE for each of the methodology types reflect the figures as at **31 March** each year.

Conservation areas are designated by local planning authorities. The local planning authorities are asked to update Historic England on new conservation area designations and de-designations each year so, as with the other methodology types, the total number may change each year.

The statistics for all risk assessment types are published each year in the summer.

Producing the secular buildings and structures risk assessment statistics

The number of secular grade I and II* listed buildings and structures on the Register is divided by the total number of secular grade I and II* listed buildings and structures on the NHLE to produce the percentage of grade I and II* listed buildings and structures that are on the Register.

The percentage of grade II listed secular buildings and structures on the Register in Greater London is calculated in the same way.

In 2023 a new table was added which gives the percentage of the total of secular buildings and structures on the Register (i.e. including grade I and II* listed secular buildings across the country plus the secular grade IIs in Greater London).

The number of buildings and structure risk assessment entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given. (Please note this table includes structural scheduled monuments.)

The identification of all listed places of worship enabled a revision to the previous (buildings at risk) methodology in 2013 and listed places of worship are now excluded from the calculation of the percentage of listed buildings and structures that are on the Register. The

new percentage for listed **secular** buildings and structures has therefore been the official statistic since 2013.

Producing the places of worship risk assessment statistics

The number of listed places of worship on the Register of all grades (I, II* and II) is divided by the total number of listed places of worship of all grades on the NHLE to produce the percentage of all listed places of worship on the Register.

The number of places of worship risk assessment entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given.

The percentage of all listed places of worship became a new official statistic in 2014.

Producing the scheduled monument risk assessment statistics

The number of scheduled monument entries on the Register with an archaeology risk assessment is divided by the total number of designated scheduled monuments on the NHLE to give the percentage of scheduled monuments on the NHLE that are on the Register with an archaeology risk assessment.

The percentage of scheduled monuments on the NHLE that are on the Register with a buildings and structures risk assessment is calculated in the same way.

The number of scheduled monument entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given, with separate figures given for those scheduled monuments with archaeology risk assessment entries and those with buildings and structures risk assessment entries. Joint totals for both types of assessment are also given.

Producing the registered parks and gardens risk assessment statistics

The number of registered parks and gardens entries on the Register is divided by the total number of designated registered parks and gardens on the NHLE to produce the percentage of registered parks and gardens that are on the Register.

The number of parks and gardens risk assessment entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given.

Producing the registered battlefields risk assessment statistics

The number of entries for registered battlefields on the Register is divided by the total number of designated registered battlefields on the NHLE to produce the percentage of registered battlefields that are on the Register.

The number of registered battlefields assessment entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given.

Producing the protected wreck sites risk assessment statistics

The number of protected wreck site entries on the Register is divided by the total number of designated protected wreck sites on the NHLE to produce the percentage of protected wreck sites that are on the Register.

The number of wreck site risk assessment entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given.

Producing the conservation areas risk assessment statistics

The number of conservation area entries on the Register is divided by the number of conservation areas designated by their local planning authorities to produce the percentage of conservation areas that are on the Register.

Up to, and including 2019, the percentage of conservation areas at risk statistics were based on the number of conservation areas surveyed by local planning authorities each year; since 2020 the total number of designated conservation areas has been used.

The number of conservation area risk assessment entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given.

Producing the statistics for Historic England grants to entries on the Heritage at Risk Register

This grants figure includes Historic England's grant spend on entries on the Register.

It includes grants for repairs, management agreements to field monuments, grants to underwrite repairs notices and urgent works notices, grants to partnership schemes in conservation areas and funding to Heritage Actions Zones.

It does not include grants for national or regional capacity building, funding to High Street Heritage Action Zones, Heritage Protection Commissions, or Everyday Heritage.

More information on the types of Historic England grants currently available can be found on [our website](#).

The total amount spent on the grant types listed during the past financial year is given, along with the total number of entries on the past year's Register that received those specified grants from Historic England.

Producing the total on the Register of all methodology types

The number of entries for each methodology type are then added together to create the total number of entries on the Register.

The total number of entries added to and removed (for positive reasons) from the previous year's Register to form the current Register is also given.

This method statement was created in August 2018 by the Services Team (HE Planning) and is updated annually.

This version was issued in August 2024 by the Grants Team (HAR), Business Improvement.

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact our customer services department: Telephone: 0370 333 0607

E-mail: customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk