

**MORAY FIRTH PARTNERSHIP
BUILT HERITAGE TOPIC GROUP
TOPIC PAPER**

1. Executive Summary

The Built Heritage Topic Group has agreed that its vision should be '*to protect and enhance the built heritage of the Moray Firth coastal fringe.*'

The group proposes ten means by which such a vision could be realised. They encompass the creation of a database; education and interpretation; training; coastal erosion; economic investment; tourism; community involvement; Building Preservation Trusts and legislation.

2. Map and Description of Topic Group Area of Interest

The Topic Group considers its geographical area of interest to be the coastal parishes of the Moray Firth, or a zone 5 km deep. Its subject matter includes all buildings of historic or architectural interest, other buildings of local character, ancient monuments and other archaeological sites (including shipwrecks and other marine sites up to 12 miles offshore), designed landscapes and buildings at risk.

The coastal fringe of the Moray Firth (the largest such firth in Britain) has played many roles since it was first settled by hunter-gatherers some nine thousand years ago. Then it provided varied habitats for human exploitation; it became a membrane between sea and land through which flowed people, goods and ideas. It has been a fortified coast, a trading frontier, a focus for increasingly mechanised fishing and an early recreational zone. It is this richly diverse inheritance which lends the historic built environment of the Moray Firth coast such power and resonance.

3. Agreed Vision

The vision of the Built Heritage Topic Group is as follows:

'To protect and enhance the built heritage of the Moray Firth coastal fringe through:

- *The creation and maintenance of a database on the built heritage in order to enhance understanding of the built heritage from prehistory to the present day, with particular attention to local building traditions;*
- *The promotion of education, interpretation and communication of the significance of the coastal zone throughout history;*
- *The promotion and encouragement of the sourcing and use of traditional local materials and the fostering of local building traditions through the provision of appropriate training and practical experience;*
- *The recognition of the forces or erosion in respect of their effect on the built environment within the coastal fringe, and the development of appropriate responses;*
- *The encouragement of economic investment in preserving and enhancing the built heritage and the promotion of the benefits accruing from such investment in terms of tourism, economic development, education and employment;*

- *Recognising that it is the character of the built heritage of the Moray Firth coast that attracts many tourists, a marketing strategy dedicated to the promotion of this unique built heritage is required;*
- *Raising community awareness of and encouraging involvement in the built heritage of the coast;*
- *Support for the development of the role of Building Preservation Trusts and other similar bodies;*
- *Seeking to influence the legislative framework surrounding the built heritage*
- *The promotion of architecture and design of the highest quality.*

4. Review of Information

4.1 Current Situation

The individual features of the coast, such as buildings, archaeological sites, seamarkers and shipwrecks together form the fabric of the built heritage of the Moray Firth. Certain elements, such as the fishing villages, are distinctive to the area; others are part of a pattern of connections throughout Scotland, linking the hinterland to its coastal fringe.

4.2 Key Reports and Plans

The relevant local authority forward planning documents, with their policies for the control of development and environmental enhancement are considered to be essential tools for this study. The principal documents are as follows:

- Grampian Regional Council Structure Plan
- Highland Regional Council Structure Plan
- Moray District Council Local Plan
- Moray Council new Structure and Local Plan
- Banff and Buchan District Local Plan
- Aberdeenshire Council Emerging Local Plan (Banff & Buchan)
- Historic Scotland Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (1993)
- National Planning Policy Guidelines No. 5 *Archaeology and Planning*
- National Planning Policy Guidelines no. 13 *Coastal Planning*
- Moray Council Design Guide (1995)

Other policy guidance for the built heritage produced by local authorities includes design guidance for Conservation Areas, shop fronts etc.

4.3 Sources of data

Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record

Aberdeenshire Council Sites and Monuments Record (incorporating Moray Council SMR)

List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Importance (Historic Scotland)
RIAS guides (*Caithness; Sutherland; Ross and Cromarty; Moray; Banff & Buchan*)

Buildings of Scotland: *Highlands and Islands*

National Monuments Record of Scotland
Aerial photographs - SDD survey - coastline and 1:24000 coverage
Buildings at Risk Register (Scottish Civic Trust)
Burgh Surveys (Scottish Burgh Survey)
Conservation Area Maps and Descriptions

In addition, while there is a vast literature on the built environment of Scotland from earlier times which includes many items from the Moray Firth coast, there are relatively few studies which consider the built heritage of the coast as a separate subject.

4.4 Key organisations and individuals

- Highland Council
- Moray Council
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Moray Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise
- Grampian Enterprise
- Caithness Sutherland Enterprise
- Ross and Cromarty Enterprise
- Inverness and Nairn Enterprise
- Enterprise North-East
- Highlands Buildings Preservation Trust
- North East of Scotland Preservation Trust
- Historic Scotland
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
- Scottish Civic Trust
- Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
- Banff Preservation Society
- Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust
- Inverness Civic Trust
- Moray Society
- Portsoy and District Ltd.

4.5 Review of existing data

Many of the lists of buildings of Historic or Architectural interest for the subject area (i.e. Highland and Moray) have been re-surveyed to a high standard. The revision of those for part of Banff and Buchan has yet to be completed. The contents of the archaeological SMRs are, inevitably, of varying quality which reflects the dynamic nature of the subject, with new discoveries being made regularly. The Defence of Scotland project, which is recording the traces of the defence of these shores in the two World Wars, has a strong coast element.

The Topic Group acknowledges that there will always be scope for future research, particularly on unlisted or non-statutory structures on which varying degrees of information are currently held.

4.6 Legislative framework

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement (Scotland) Regulations 1984.

Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development (Scotland) Order 1992.

5. Review of Issues and Opportunities

The Topic Group identified the following issues and opportunities and has accorded them three broad priorities, as follows:

Urgent

- Differing standards of control/thresholds of intervention are currently apparent between the various local authorities. *It is in the interests of the built heritage to review these and adopt the best available practice. (Link to Management Strategy Topic Group).*
- Varying availability of grants. *Similarly, review and adopt best practice. (Links to Economic Development and Tourism Topic Groups.)*
- Since local government reorganisation, the financial resources available for built heritage conservation have been curbed, leading to a cancellation of at least three town schemes and there has been no enhancement of staff resources. *(Links to Economic Development, Tourism, Management Strategy and Community Involvement Topic Groups).*
- Coastal erosion is an a yet unquantified threat to sensitive archaeological sites and deposits. *Need for assessment survey and management; recording strategy and regular monitoring. (Links to Geomorphology and Coastal Defence Topic Group).*
- The development of a role for the North East Scotland Preservation Trust and the Highland Buildings Preservation Trust and other similar bodies. *(Links to Economic Development, Tourism, Management Strategy and Community Involvement Topic Groups).*

Medium-term

- Need for sharing of ideas on work practices. *Considerable efficiencies may arise from exercises such as best practice workshops. (Links to Natural Heritage and Management Strategy Topic Groups).*
- Involvement of local groups. *The built heritage can enhance strong local identities. (Links to Community Involvement Topic Group).*
- Possibility of a 'centre of learning' for the Moray Firth. *Great opportunity for research and communication of the whole subject area of the Moray Firth Partnership. (Links to all Topic Groups).*
- The means of emphasising connections across the Moray Firth. *Identify and restore historic links, e.g. Chanonry Point/Fortrose. (Links to Tourism and Management Strategy Topic Groups).*

- Need to develop research and assessment programmes for the built heritage. (*Links to Community Involvement Topic Group*).
- Communication of work of Partnership in the built heritage to local people. (*Link to Community Involvement Topic Group*).
- Opportunity to develop teaching packs on the built heritage similar to those for the natural heritage. (*Link to Education and Natural Heritage Topic Groups*).

Long-term

- The encouragement of changes to the legislation. *Identify and explicate anomalies in application of legislation.* (*Link to Management Strategy Topic Group*).

6. Appendices

6.1 Information collected during preparation of this report.

Extracts from:

List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Highland, Moray and Aberdeenshire Council areas)

Aberdeenshire Sites and Monuments Record (incorporating the Moray Council SMR)

Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record

Structure and Local Plans as detailed in 4.2 above.

6.2 Members of Topic Group

Richard Leith (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)

Elizabeth Beaton (North East Scotland Preservation Trust)

John Duncan (Highland Council)

John Gerrard (Scottish Civic Trust)

R.J. Robertson (Moray Council)

Mia Scott (Highland Buildings Preservation Trust)

Ian Shepherd (Aberdeenshire Council)