

# Case Study

## Heritage at Risk: Condition Monitoring of Scheduled Monuments

### Background

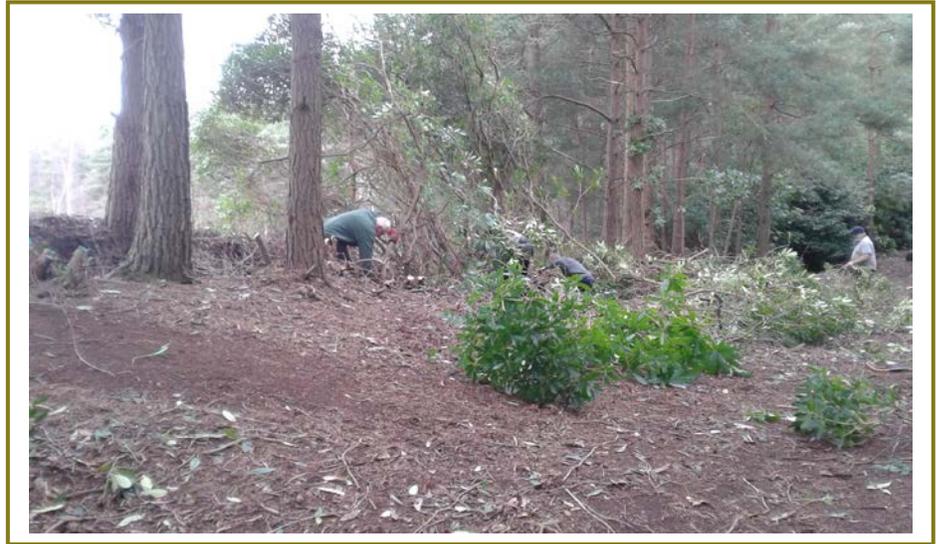
Scheduling is the selection of nationally important archaeological sites. Only deliberately created structures, features and remains can be scheduled. Prospective sites are assessed by Historic England, and viable cases are presented to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), who have the final decision on classification.

Scheduled monuments are not always ancient or visible above ground. Currently, there are almost 20,000 Scheduled Monuments on the list held by Historic England. These range from prehistoric standing stones and burial mounds, through to the many types of medieval site - castles, monasteries, abandoned farmsteads and villages - to more recent results of human activity, such as collieries.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

The Heritage at Risk Programme (HAR) was launched by Historic England in 2008. Sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development, are added to the Heritage at Risk Register.

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2017-registers/>



*Volunteers cut back Rhododendron to prevent damage to a Bronze Age barrow*

### The project

The Heritage at Risk Register is updated annually by Historic England. The end result is a dynamic picture of the sites most at risk and most in need of safeguarding for the future. Of the 575 known Scheduled Monuments across the South Downs National Park (SDNP), 41 appeared on the 2016 Register and a further 92 were categorised as 'vulnerable and in decline'. The majority of these had not been assessed since 2010 or earlier. Due to their HAR classification, these 133 monuments were considered a priority for determining their current condition.

Condition monitoring identifies the main threat(s) or vulnerability to each monument site (e.g. animal burrowing, tree growth, visitor erosion) and rates the overall condition based on five categories, ascertaining the level and urgency of works required.

Historic England and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) agreed on a partnership approach to condition monitoring all 133 Scheduled Monuments. The Historic England Heritage at Risk Principal Adviser (South East) and the Archaeologist for Chichester District Council gave staff training to the SDNPA Ranger area teams in order to ensure a coherent and consistent monitoring method across all sites.

A number of these monuments were already familiar to the Ranger teams and site conditions had been improved and maintained through our regular programme of 'on the ground' maintenance work. These monuments now have a greater chance of being reclassified and removed from the Heritage at Risk register.

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“Working together with the SDNPA has enabled us to monitor change to scheduled monuments at risk and to identify positive steps to help improve their condition. We look forward to working with the rangers over the next year with the aim of removing more protected monuments and sites from our Heritage at Risk Register.”

Alison McQuaid - Acting Heritage at Risk Principal for Historic England in the South East

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## The outcome

After a period of five months, SDNPA Ranger area teams across the National Park had completed the condition monitoring of the priority monuments. Based on these assessments, Historic England are in the process of reclassifying and prioritising ‘at risk’ sites and specifying the safeguarding action required.

Once the report has been circulated, SDNPA will then develop a phased management plan in order to undertake the necessary works to remove key sites from the ‘At Risk’ or ‘Vulnerable’ classification.

Many of the Scheduled Monuments within the National Park are Bronze Age barrows; the main risks to their longevity being scrub invasion, tree roots and burrowing animals. Whilst undertaking assessments, some ‘quick wins’ were identified by the Ranger teams where vegetation could be cleared with the help of volunteers.

A Bronze Age barrow, straddling Lavington Common and Duncton Common, was at risk from rhododendron and pine growth, the roots of which could severely damage the monument. After liaison and agreement between the two landowners (the National Trust and the Leconfield Estate), South Downs Rangers felled the Pine trees and volunteers from the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (SDVRS) helped to remove the Rhododendron and treat the stumps. Regrowth of the rhododendron will be sprayed in the summer.

New photos were subsequently sent to Historic England for consideration for removal from the At Risk Register.

**The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2014–19** sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 11 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

**This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:**

**Outcome 4:** The condition and status of cultural heritage assets and their settings is significantly enhanced, many more have been discovered and they contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf)

## The future

The remaining Scheduled Monuments within the South Downs National Park will be assessed to ascertain their condition using the same method employed for those classified as ‘At Risk’ and ‘Vulnerable and in decline’.

Resulting information will be sent to Historic England for assessment, noting any deterioration in the remaining Scheduled Monuments. They will then be reclassified as appropriate. Using this updated information, SDNPA will consider future works on new priority sites.

For further information on Scheduled Monuments within the SDNP, please contact:

[info@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:info@southdowns.gov.uk)

If you would like to nominate a historical site for scheduling, please contact Historic England for further information:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments/>

[listing.enquiries@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:listing.enquiries@HistoricEngland.org.uk)



Historic England

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