

# Revised battlefields selection guidance for consultation (2024)<sup>1</sup>

## ANNEX 4: THE INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS

1. This selection guidance sets out our approach to compiling and maintaining the inventory of battlefields.
2. We explain what a battlefield is, how we decide if a battlefield is of national importance, what we include in a designation, how we draw the boundaries of inventory sites, and the information in the inventory record.
3. We will follow this guidance when we make decisions about whether to include new sites and when we carry out reviews of existing sites using the best available evidence.

### OVERVIEW

4. Under Section 32B of the [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 \(the 1979 Act\)](#)<sup>2</sup>

(1) *'Historic Environment Scotland must compile and maintain (in such form as it thinks fit) an inventory of such battlefields as appear to it to be of national importance.'*

5. Scotland has many historic battlefields, all of which are likely to have some cultural significance to a particular area or group of people. To be included on the Inventory, a site must:

- a) Meet the definition of a battlefield as set out in the 1979 Act.
- b) Be found to be of **national importance** by HES.

6. The battlefields inventory identifies nationally important battlefields and provides information to aid their understanding, protection and sustainable management through the planning system, and in other relevant contexts, such as landscape and land-use management. As such, to be eligible for the inventory, battlefields must also in practice be identifiable and definable in the modern landscape and on modern mapping with a reasonable degree of confidence.

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<sup>1</sup> To replace Annex 4 of [The Designation Policy and Selection Guidance 2019](#)

<sup>2</sup> Section 32B(1) of [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

## WHAT IS A BATTLEFIELD?

7. For the purpose of the inventory of historic battlefields, a 'battlefield' is defined in law (in section 32B of the 1979 Act [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#)) as:

*(a)an area of land over which a battle was fought; or (b)an area of land on which any significant activities relating to a battle occurred (whether or not the battle was fought over that area).*

8. In selecting sites for the inventory, we will use the following definition of a battle.

**A battle is defined as involving at least two opposing groups of primarily military / martial terrestrial forces, actively engaged in direct combat with the other, and with the primary intent of inflicting lethal damage upon the opposing force.**

Sites of conflict which do not meet this definition will not be included on the inventory of historic battlefields.

9. Battlefields or related features within them can also be recognised through other designations. Battlefields or sections of them can be designated through other area designations, such as conservation areas or Local Landscape Areas, while individual structures or features can be designated as scheduled monuments or listed buildings.

## HOW WE DECIDE IF A BATTLEFIELD IS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

10. To decide if a battlefield is nationally important, we examine its cultural significance under three headings.

- Historical and cultural association
- Significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential
- Battlefield landscape

11. A battlefield is likely to be of national importance if it contributes significantly under some or all of these categories of assessment to understanding the history of Scotland, or the linked regional histories that preceded its establishment as a nation.

12. To merit inclusion on the Inventory, a battlefield must exhibit some level of preservation through which it can contribute to our understanding and appreciation of the site. The significance of the battlefield can survive even where the overall character of the landscape has been affected by development or changes in land use. However, if a battlefield has been so altered that it is not possible to identify any significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential or the battlefield

landscape, it will not be included on the Inventory even if it retains strong associative value.

### **Historical and cultural association**

13. This refers to the significance of the battle to the history of Scotland and its contribution to modern society and culture. This includes:

- Military history, strategy and tactics, such as significant military innovations or occurrences associated with the battle.
- Connections to nationally significant historical individuals or groups and their interactions.
- The battle's role within nationally significant event(s) or campaign(s).
- Documentary and historic map evidence that may enhance our understanding of historical events.
- The place of the battle within wider culture, including literature, music, art, sculpture, and film, oral tradition, folklore and tradition, and living connections with groups and communities.

### **Significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential:**

14. This refers to the surviving physical remains and built features associated with the battle as well as the archaeological potential of the battlefield. It covers:

- Human-made features present at the time of the battle, whether as upstanding features or archaeological remains or potential. This could include elements expressly created as a result of the battle, such as field defences, earthworks, camps and / or burials, or existing structures that were directly used in the battle, including roads, bridges or fortifications.
- Other known and potential in-situ archaeological evidence for the battlefield. This could include small artefactual evidence such as bullets, arrowheads and personal effects.
- The contribution or potential contribution of the archaeological and physical remains of the battle to our understanding of wider archaeology and history in Scotland

15. The survival and quality of evidence may be affected by a range of factors including the period within which the battle took place, the scale of the battle, numbers of fallen, the physical properties of any upstanding remains, artefact scatters or buried deposits, the soil conditions and post-battle land use.

### **Battlefield landscape:**

16. This refers to understanding the landscape characteristics of the battlefield, not just in the main area of fighting but also in the wider landscape where significant events occurred. Battles were rarely fought in small, clearly defined areas. As they often ranged across an extensive area, the landscape context is important for understanding military planning and tactics. It can be key to understanding why events unfolded as they did. The landscape context can also contribute to how

battlefields are remembered, experienced and appreciated today. Landscape characteristics include:

- Features of terrain such as hills and other high ground, or valleys – these might provide or restrict vantage points and lines of sight natural obstacles such as watercourses, bogs and cliffs – these can obstruct movement.
- Areas providing concealment such as slopes, ditches and woodland.
- Routes of movement and manoeuvre such as paths and narrow passes.
- Historic settlements – battlefields often have relationships with settlements that were present at the time of the battle memorials – these are often located to relate to elements of the battlefield landscape, and they may or may not be detached from the main areas of the battle – they contribute to our understanding and appreciation of a battle and its associations.

## WHAT WE INCLUDE WITHIN THE INVENTORY DESIGNATION

17. Each inventory battlefield includes a defined area of interest, within which the events and features that contribute to the site's national importance can be found. Each of these defined areas is based on informed interpretation of available evidence. In some cases, the evidence may also allow for multiple interpretations of an action, and the area of interest will accommodate these.

18. Battles are dynamic and mobile events, that often occur over substantial areas of landscape. We will always include the main area(s) of direct combat in the designation. In addition, there are also activities and features directly related to the battle that can add to the importance of the site (defined in law as "*significant activities relating to a battle*"). When we are making decisions about including sites on the inventory, or on the boundary of sites, we will take into account elements such as:

- Areas of additional combat
- Routes of movement and manoeuvre
- Associated built structures and archaeological features / potential
- Burials and human remains
- Commemorative elements

We will include such features or areas in a designation where they contribute to the national importance of the battlefield.

19. Given the potentially expansive spatial scale of a battle and its related events, it is inevitable that some features and events related to the battle may exist beyond the inventory boundary, in some cases by a substantial distance, while still making a contribution to the cultural significance of the battlefield. In making decisions about what to include in an inventory entry, we will consider factors such as the extent and nature of the events of the battle, the relationships between different events and locations, and their contribution to the national importance of the site.

20. All landscapes in which battles were fought have changed since the battle due to natural processes and human intervention. Some may now lie within heavily developed urban areas, or in areas where there has been significant development or changes in land use. We will only include areas of land where these contribute to the national importance of the battlefield.

## **HOW WE DRAW THE BOUNDARY OF AN INVENTORY BATTLEFIELD**

21. In order for the inventory to serve its primary function as a tool for planning and land management, it is necessary for the historic landscape of the battle to be identified against the modern landscape. In order to accomplish this, boundaries are drawn according to two defining principles:

- a) Where a modern linear feature, such as a road, railway or field boundary, corresponds to the historic area of interest of the battle, we will use this feature as the boundary of the inventory.
- b) Where no suitable feature can be identified for the above, a straight line that does reflect a reasonable and proportionate boundary of the area of interest will be drawn directly between two mapped and identifiable points in the modern landscape. From this, the boundary can be identified on the ground using modern survey equipment.

## **INVENTORY RECORDS**

22. The information within an inventory record is intended to explain why the battlefield is of national importance and provide the necessary information to support the designation.

23. The format of the record has changed over time, and older records may contain different information from more recent examples. As a minimum, all inventory records include information summarising the events of the battle, the reason(s) the site is of national importance and what is included within the inventory area, along with maps showing the boundary of the designation and highlighting known and potential locations of significant features of the site.

24. The inventory records are not intended to provide a single definitive account of the battle. All inventory records reflect the understanding of the battlefield at the time of their creation. Additional supplementary information on each inventory battlefield and its historical context can be found within the entry on the National Record of the Historic Environment.