



St Kilda World Heritage Site

MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2032



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



**NATIONAL
TRUST** *for*
SCOTLAND

The National Trust for Scotland
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HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
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Foreword

We are delighted to be able to present the revised Management Plan for the St Kilda World Heritage Site for the years 2022 – 2032, which sets out what needs to be achieved and how this will happen over the next decade.

St Kilda is a small archipelago of breathtaking scenery and wildlife set in the Atlantic Ocean. That ocean provides complex habitats to support marine ecosystems and large seabird colonies but also greatly influenced the course of human settlement. Isolated by heavy seas throughout much of the year the people of St Kilda sustained their community through hunting and gathering seabirds and their eggs, as well as small-scale farming, before choosing to leave their island home in 1930. Today, the remains of that cultural landscape together with the archipelago's dramatic scenery and its wildlife draws an increasing number of visitors from near and far.

Because of this historic interdependency of landscape, wildlife and culture, St Kilda is inscribed as a mixed World Heritage Site, the only one in the UK to have this status and one of only 39 in the world. This exceptional significance means it is essential that its management balances these different conservation needs and so partners from Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Ministry of Defence are involved in the decision-making process. Working together the partners will ensure that the islands continue to be protected, cared for, and enjoyed.

World Heritage Sites are of outstanding international importance and belong to all the peoples of the world irrespective of where they are. Through this plan we will take full responsibility for passing the site onto future generations in the best possible condition. We will contribute to a fairer and better world through linking the plan's outcomes to the United Nations Strategic Development Goals, that aim to take action to: combat climate change; conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources; and, protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems.

On behalf of the National Trust for Scotland and all our partners, thank you to everyone who has contributed to this plan and through doing so demonstrating just how much we care about the future of St Kilda. Its publication marks the beginning of a ten-year journey to find out more about this wonderful and inspiring place, to share knowledge of its wildlife and culture, and help contribute to the wider community in the Western Isles and its sustainability. Together, we look forward to achieving the ambitions of this plan, the final period of which will coincide with the centenary of the evacuation of St Kilda in 2030. That will be an extraordinary moment to reflect on this exceptional place and its recent and ancient history, which continues to captivate and inspire the imagination of people from around the world.

Philip Long OBE FRSE

Chief Executive, National Trust for Scotland

St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan 2022-2032

The islands of St Kilda are owned by the National Trust for Scotland, which has overall responsibility for management of the archipelago. This Management Plan for the St Kilda World Heritage Site has been agreed by the National Trust for Scotland and Key Stakeholders (see below), who are committed to working together to implement the plan.

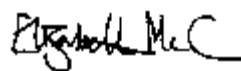
Philip Long OBE FRSE

Chief Executive
The National Trust for Scotland



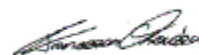
Elizabeth McCrone

Director of Heritage
Historic Environment Scotland



Francesca Osowska

Chief Executive
NatureScot



Malcolm Burr

Chief Executive
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



David Mealing

LTPA Head of Establishment
Ministry of Defence, Defence Equipment & Support





Soay sheep resting
© Emma Bothamley

Contents

8	Fact sheet	
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9	Section 1	
	St Kilda World Heritage Site	
	1.1 Summary	10
	1.2 Our vision for St Kilda World Heritage Site	11
	1.3 How to use this plan	12
	1.4 What is a World Heritage Site?	13
	1.5 World Heritage Sites in the UK	13
	1.6 Inscription on the World Heritage List	13
	1.7 Introduction to St Kilda World Heritage Site	14

15	Section 2	
	Statement of Outstanding Universal Value	
	2.1 Brief synthesis	16
	2.2 Criteria for inscription	18

20	Section 3	
	Managing St Kilda World Heritage Site	
	3.1 How the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan was prepared, and why it is required	23
	3.2 How St Kilda World Heritage Site is managed	24
	3.3 How the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan will be implemented	25
	3.4 World Heritage Site buffer zone	25

27	Section 4	
	Threats and opportunities for future management of St Kilda World Heritage Site	
	4.1 Threats to St Kilda World Heritage Site	29
	4.2 Opportunities	33

37	Section 5	
	Outcomes and operational objectives	
	Outcome 1	38
	The biodiversity, habitats and ecological functions of the World Heritage Site will be conserved.	
	Outcome 2	42
	The cultural heritage of the World Heritage Site will be conserved.	
	Outcome 3	47
	Global challenges (such as climate change) and other risks to St Kilda will be identified, and mitigation and adaptation implemented.	
	Outcome 4	48
	Enhance access to St Kilda in a sustainable way and present more people with more opportunities to experience the World Heritage Site, understand its significance and support its protection.	
	Outcome 5	50
	Enhance opportunities for research and knowledge sharing, and use research to underpin our management and interpretation of the World Heritage Site.	
	Outcome 6	52
	Achieve effective management of the islands that is transparent, collaborative and underpinned by sustainable practices.	
54	Appendices	
	Appendix 1	55
	Statement of Outstanding Universal Value	
	Appendix 2	59
	Review of the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan	
	Appendix 3	67
	Background information	
	Appendix 4	70
	St Kilda Research Guidelines	
	Appendix 5	73
	Maps	

Fact sheet

Property Manager	Susan Bain
Region	Highlands & Islands
Approximate area (hectares)	854ha (owned by the National Trust for Scotland)
Date of acquisition	1957
Inalienable?	Yes (declared 1969)
Local Authority	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Address	National Trust for Scotland, Balnain House, 40 Huntly Street, Inverness IV3 5HR
Plan prepared by	Susan Bain and Berwyn Murray
Date of approval	Approved by National Trust for Scotland Executive Committee, 17 September 2021 Noted by National Trust for Scotland Board of Trustees, 28 October 2021
Designations <i>(Boundary maps for each designation are available in Appendix 5)</i>	Word Heritage Site: St Kilda World Heritage Site (WH5) Special Area of Conservation: St Kilda Special Area of Conservation (8383) Special Protection Area: St Kilda Special Protection Area (8580) National Nature Reserve: St Kilda National Nature Reserve (5064) Site of Special Scientific Interest: St Kilda Site of Special Scientific Interest (1471) National Scenic Area: St Kilda National Scenic Area (9151) Scheduled Monuments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• St Kilda, Village and related structures (SM2276)• St Kilda, Claigneann an Tigh Faire, platform and cleitean (SM3197)• St Kilda, Geo Chrubaidh, settlement (SM3240)• St Kilda, Gleann Mor, settlement (SM2277) Marine Environment High Risk Area: St Kilda north and south

© Mc2 Photography



Section 1

St Kilda World Heritage Site

St Kilda World Heritage Site

1.1 Summary

St Kilda is one of the most significant properties in the National Trust for Scotland's (the Trust's) portfolio. The tiny island group and surrounding ocean is one of only 39¹ mixed World Heritage Sites across the globe. The towering cliffs and sea stacks are a haven for thousands of breeding seabirds, surviving on the rich marine resources. Abandoned by the original community nearly a century ago, the densely packed cultural landscape is a reminder of the people who lived there for thousands of years. Today, the island group is a destination for thousands of visitors, a site for research and part of a wider Ministry of Defence (MoD) base.

This management plan sets out how the Trust and key stakeholders will protect and care for the outstanding heritage of St Kilda, while allowing people to enjoy and discover the islands. The plan not only reflects the Trust's values but also the strategic objectives of the World Heritage Convention, and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to protect the planet and make a fairer world for everyone (a summary of the Sustainable Development Goals considered relevant to St Kilda is available in Appendix 3).

Climate change and invasive non-native species are the biggest threats to this World Heritage Site and will be a focus of this plan. There are great opportunities to learn more, engage more people to support and care for St Kilda, and to pass on this valuable resource to future generations.

¹ Correct at July 2021



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1.2 Our vision for St Kilda World Heritage Site

St Kilda World Heritage Site will be an awe-inspiring landscape and healthy marine environment, supporting thriving colonies of seabirds and unique island wildlife. A well-conserved cultural landscape will interpret the history of the communities that lived on this remote edge of the Atlantic. It will have an international reputation for conservation, research opportunities and sustainable tourism, and be valued and supported by all who take pride in this spectacular archipelago.

Our vision will be delivered through the following six outcomes:

1. The biodiversity, habitats and ecological functions of the World Heritage Site will be conserved.
2. The cultural heritage of the World Heritage Site will be conserved.
3. Global challenges (such as climate change) and other risks to St Kilda will be identified, and mitigation and adaptation implemented.
4. Access to St Kilda will be enhanced in a sustainable way and we will present more people with more opportunities to experience the World Heritage Site, understand its significance and support its protection.
5. Opportunities for research and knowledge sharing will be enhanced, and research will be used to underpin our management and interpretation of the World Heritage Site.
6. Effective management of the islands, which is transparent, collaborative and underpinned by sustainable practices, will be achieved.

SECTION 1

St Kilda World Heritage Site

1.3 How to use this plan

This management plan sets out how we will manage St Kilda World Heritage Site for the next ten years. It also ensures the Trust meets its obligations relating to the National Nature Reserve (NNR) accolade and other statutory designations. The long-term, strategic vision mentioned above will guide our management of the site. Whilst the vision presents the Trust's long-term aspiration and goals, it is one that is shared with key stakeholders and has been developed through a wide-reaching process of engagement. The six main outcomes will guide the delivery of the vision during the duration of this management plan, through 2030 (100 years after the last permanent inhabitants left St Kilda), to 2032. A series of more detailed operational objectives show how these outcomes will be implemented. Collectively, these elements provide the management framework through which detailed action plans, specific projects and operational activity will be delivered. The St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan will be reviewed and updated in 10 years and will stay current until a new management plan has been approved.

This management plan does not include a detailed overview of the history of the archipelago, previous management nor the significance of its natural and cultural heritage. However, this detailed information is available in the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan (2012–17).



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1.4 What is a World Heritage Site?

A World Heritage Site is a site of natural and/or cultural heritage significance, which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community.²

World Heritage Sites can be nominated by any State Party that is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.³ Sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List once UNESCO's advisors on cultural sites (the International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS])⁴ and/or advisors on natural sites (the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN])⁵ have undertaken a rigorous assessment of the site and submit an evaluation of the significance of the site to the World Heritage Committee. At its annual meeting, the World Heritage Committee then makes the final decision on which sites to inscribe on the World Heritage List.

1.5 World Heritage Sites in the UK

In 1984, the UK Government ratified the World Heritage Convention. World Heritage Sites remain a reserved matter under the Scotland Act 1998, and therefore responsibility in the UK lies with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). However, management of the historic and natural environment in Scotland is a devolved matter, with responsibility sitting with Scottish Ministers. A concordat between DCMS and the Scottish Government provides that Scottish Ministers are responsible for the selection of sites in Scotland for nomination and for ensuring the proper management of the Scottish World Heritage Sites. All matters pertaining to the management of the sites are therefore agreed with the Scottish Government, where appropriate, in the first instance.

1.6 Inscription on the World Heritage List

St Kilda was first inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986 for its outstanding natural heritage (criteria vii and x). In 2004, the inscription was extended to include the surrounding marine environment (criterion ix), and in 2005 the archipelago became the UK's first and only dual World Heritage Site, when the islands' relict cultural landscape was also inscribed on the World Heritage List (criteria iii and v).

2 Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO, 2019

3 The aims of the Convention are the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value.

4 Established in 1965 as an international non-governmental organisation

5 Established in 1948 as an international non-governmental organisation

SECTION 1

St Kilda World Heritage Site



The abandoned village
© Jim Richardson

1.7 Introduction to St Kilda World Heritage Site

Isolated in the Atlantic Ocean, St Kilda is one of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the United Kingdom, lying 99 miles off the west coast of mainland Scotland. Concentrated in a compact group, the tiny volcanic archipelago encompasses four main islands – Hirta, Dun, Soay and Boreray – and numerous sea stacks including Stac an Armin, Stac Lee and Levenish. In total, it covers a land area of 854 hectares. With the inscription of the surrounding marine environment in 2004, the total area of the World Heritage Site now extends to 24,201.4 hectares.

Evidence indicates that the archipelago was occupied, perhaps continuously, for over 4,000 years, until 1930. In this year, the community of St Kilda petitioned the UK Government to assist them to leave the island and to find homes and occupations on the mainland. In the following year, the islands' owner, MacLeod of MacLeod, 27th Chief of Clan MacLeod, sold the islands to the Earl of Dumfries (later the 5th Marquess of Bute), who recognised the value of the bird populations on the islands and ran St Kilda as an unoccupied bird sanctuary.

On the death of the 5th Marquess of Bute, the archipelago was bequeathed to the Trust, coming into our care in 1957. Also in this year, a military radar tracking station was established by the MoD on Hirta and the whole archipelago was designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR). In 1969, the Trust declared the islands inalienable.⁶

Since the evacuation in 1930, St Kilda has had no permanent inhabitants. However, since 1957 there has been a continual presence on Hirta of initially military personnel and latterly MoD contractors at the MoD base, as well as Trust and NatureScot (NS) staff, volunteers and researchers. Public access to the archipelago is from the sea, with visitors arriving by private yacht, charter boat and cruise ships.

⁶ Inalienability provides the maximum protection the Trust can afford a property. Inalienable properties cannot be removed from Trust ownership against the Trust's will, except by prescribed parliamentary procedure.



Section 2

Statement of Outstanding
Universal Value

The cliffs of Ruaival and Dun
© Mc2 Photography

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value⁷

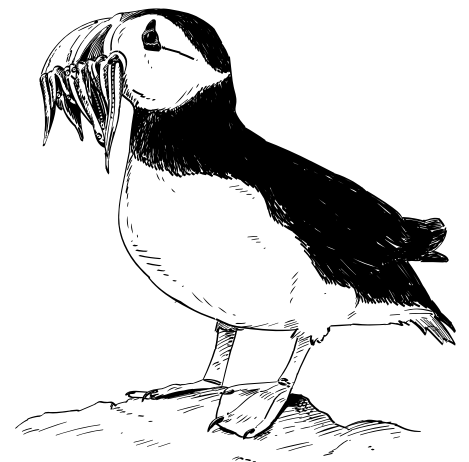
2.1 Brief synthesis

The tiny archipelago of St Kilda, lying off the west coast of mainland Scotland, is breathtaking. Formed from the rim of an ancient volcano associated with the opening up of the North Atlantic some 65-52 million years ago, the intensely dramatic, jagged landscape of towering cliffs – some of the highest sea cliffs in Europe – and sea stacks present stark black precipitous faces plunging from steep grass-green slopes in excess of 375m. Scenically, every element appears vertical, except the smooth amphitheatre of Village Bay on Hirta with its relict historic landscape. Exposure to some of the greatest wave heights and strongest wind speeds in Europe plays a major role in shaping the coastal ecology.

With nearly one million seabirds present at the height of the breeding season, St Kilda supports the largest seabird colony in the north-east Atlantic, its size and diversity of global significance making it a seabird sanctuary without parallel in Europe. The very high bird densities that occur in this relatively small area, conditioned by the complex and different ecological niches existing in the site and the productivity of the surrounding sea, make St Kilda unique. Of particular significance are the populations of Northern Gannet, Atlantic Puffin and Northern Fulmar. The sight and sound of these myriad seabirds adds significantly to the scenic value and to the experience of the archipelago during the breeding season.

The islands' isolation has led to two outstanding examples of remote island ecological colonisation and subsequent genetic divergence in the two endemic sub-species, the St Kilda Wren and St Kilda Fieldmouse. The feral Soay sheep, so much a feature of the landscape, represent an ancient breed, descendants of the most primitive domestic sheep found in Europe. They provide a living testament to the longevity of human occupation of St Kilda and, in addition, are a potentially significant genetic resource.

⁷ The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted in 2013. The full text of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is available in Appendix 1.





The combination of oceanic influences (proximity of deep ocean currents along the continental slope, extreme exposure to waves and oceanic swell, high water clarity) and local geology around the archipelago has created a marine environment of unparalleled richness and colour. The seabed communities are outstanding in terms of biodiversity and composition, including 'northern' and 'southern' species at the extremes of their range. The plunging underwater rock faces are festooned with sea life – a kaleidoscope of colour and form kept in constant motion by the Atlantic swell, creating an underwater landscape of breathtaking beauty. The complex ecological dynamic in the marine environment is essential to maintenance of both the terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

Overlaying the spectacular natural landscape and giving scale to it all, is a rich cultural landscape that bears exceptional testimony to millennia of human occupation. Recent research indicates that the archipelago has been occupied on and off for over 4000 years. The landscape including houses, large enclosures and cleits – unique drystone storage structures found, in their hundreds, across the islands and stacks within the archipelago – culminates in the surviving remains of the nineteenth and twentieth century cultural landscape of Village Bay. The time depth, preservation and completeness of the physical remains, provides a tangible and powerful link to the islands' past history, its people and their way of life, a distinctive existence, shaped by the St Kilda's response to the peculiar physical and geographic setting of the islands.

The islands provide an exceptionally well preserved and documented example of how, even in the most extreme conditions of storm-swept isolated island living, people were able to live for thousands of years from exploiting natural resources and farming. They bear physical witness to a cultural tradition that has now disappeared, namely reliance on seabird products as the main source of livelihood and sustenance, alongside subsistence farming. These age-old traditions and land uses that have so shaped the landscape, have also unquestionably contributed to its aesthetic appeal.

St Kilda represents subsistence economies everywhere – living off the resources of land and sea and changing them over time, until external pressures led to decline, and, in 1930, to the abandonment of the islands. The poignancy of the archipelago's history, and the remarkable fossilised landscape, its outstanding and spectacular natural beauty and heritage, its isolation and remoteness, leave one in awe of nature and of the people that once lived in this spectacular and remarkable place.

SECTION 2

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

2.2 Criteria for inscription

Criterion (iii): St Kilda bears exceptional testimony to over two millennia of human occupation in extreme conditions.

Criterion (v): The cultural landscape of St Kilda is an outstanding example of land use resulting from a type of subsistence economy based on the products of birds, cultivating land and keeping sheep. The cultural landscape reflects age-old traditions and land uses, which have become vulnerable to change particularly after the departure of the islanders.

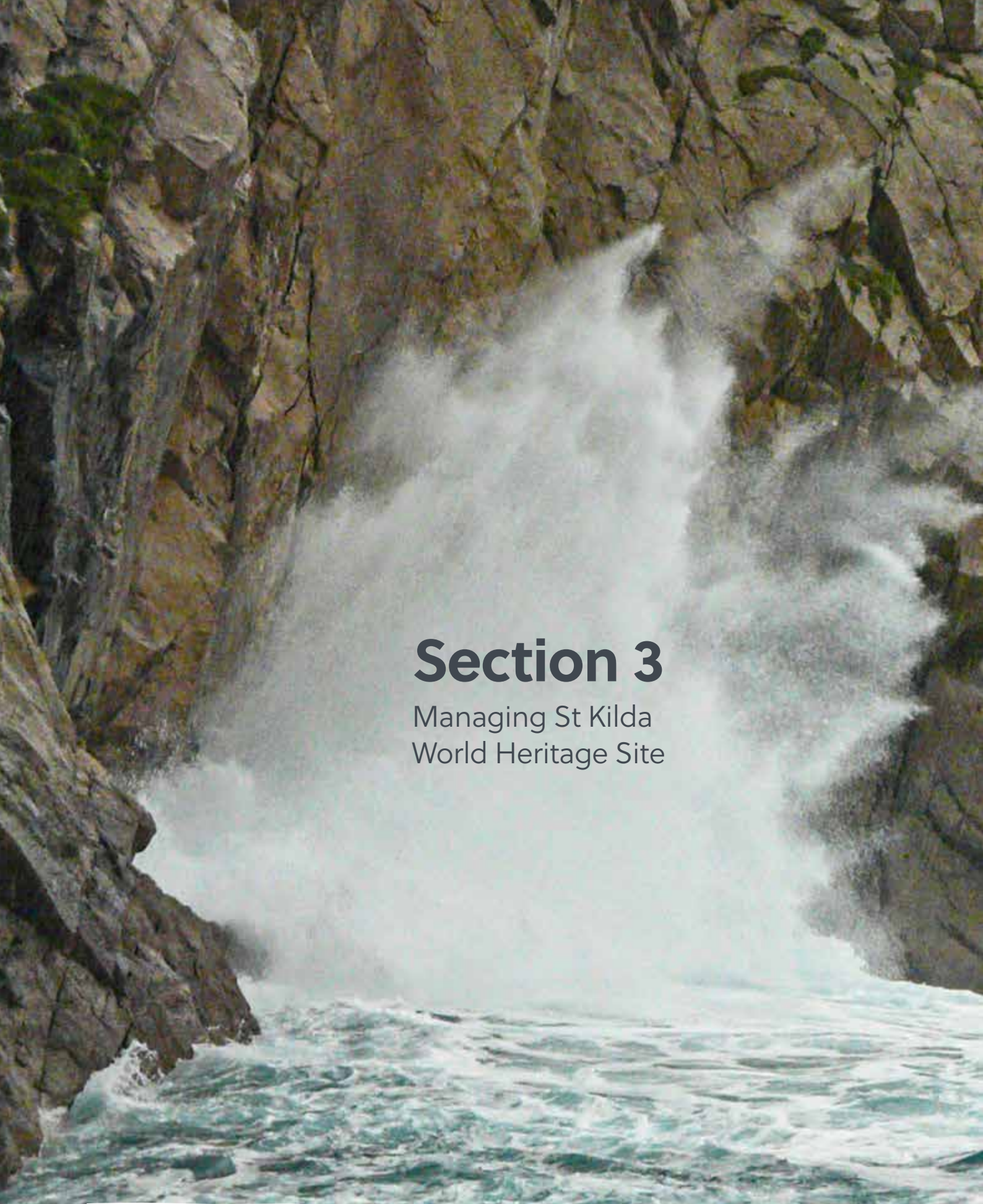
Criterion (vii): The scenery of the St Kilda archipelago is particularly superlative and has resulted from its volcanic origin followed by weathering and glaciation to produce a dramatic island landscape. The precipitous cliffs and sea stacks as well as its underwater scenery are concentrated in a compact group that is singularly unique.

Criterion (ix): St Kilda is unique in the very high bird densities that occur in a relatively small area, which is conditioned by the complex and different ecological niches existing in the site. There is also a complex ecological dynamic in the three marine zones present in the site that is essential to the maintenance of both marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

Criterion (x): St Kilda is one of the major sites in the North Atlantic and Europe for seabirds with over 1,000,000 birds using the island. It is particularly important for gannets, puffins and fulmars. The maritime grassland turf and underwater habitats are also significant and an integral element of the total island setting. The feral Soay sheep are also an interesting rare breed of potential genetic resource significance.



Children on the street c 1900
© NTS Milne



Section 3

Managing St Kilda
World Heritage Site



Managing St Kilda World Heritage Site

This section explains how the World Heritage Site is managed, how this management plan was prepared and why it is required.

As one of the most significant properties in the Trust's portfolio and one of only 39⁸ dual World Heritage Sites globally, conservation of the archipelago's outstanding universal value remains the primary management objective, although St Kilda is valued by many people for a wide variety of reasons. For the MoD, St Kilda is an integral part of the MoD Hebrides Range; for the communities of the Western Isles, it holds a strong emotional attachment; and for others, it provides direct and indirect employment. Many people are enthralled by St Kilda's story and that of its people; others see the research potential it has; and others see it as a recreational resource. Consequently, management of St Kilda matters not only to the Trust but also to many others including both the UK and Scottish governments, HES, NS, the MoD and its agents, and CnES, as well as people all around the world. Management of St Kilda is therefore complex, and it is important to the Trust that integrated conservation and management of the site is achieved collaboratively.



8 Correct at July 2021



Fulmar with Boreray and the stacks
© Brian W Matthews (bwmphoto)

3.1 How the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan was prepared, and why it is required

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2019) require that each World Heritage Site should have an appropriate management plan or other documented management system that specifies how the Outstanding Universal Value of a property should be protected.

This plan has been developed by a thorough programme of stakeholder engagement, undertaken during winter 2017 with more focused engagement in spring 2021. Care was taken to identify the range of stakeholder groups with an interest in the future management of St Kilda, and facilitation was tailored to meet the specific needs of each group to maximise inclusion and participation. The Trust remains committed to a collaborative approach to management and sees it as critical to achieving sympathetic and integrated management of all interests on St Kilda. Care has been taken to ensure issues and aspirations identified are addressed within this plan.

3.2 How St Kilda World Heritage Site is managed

Future management of St Kilda will be guided by this management plan. As noted in section 1.4 the vision, outcomes and objectives collectively provide the management framework through which detailed action plans, specific projects and operational activity will be delivered.

The management plan is principally informed by the Trust's Conservation, Learning, Access & Enjoyment Principles (2018), as well as a range of local, national and international policy and legislation.⁹ The Trust's principles inform all decisions relating to St Kilda, drawing on international thinking and long-term commitments to heritage conservation and sustainable development, such as the Burra Charter¹⁰ and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹¹ In summary, the approach set out in the Trust's principles prioritises conservation of heritage of national and international significance and decisions which are in the best long-term interests of Scotland's heritage, environment and people. The principles also set out the Trust's approach to decision-making:

- Informed by significance
- Prioritises health and safety; subject to that, prioritises conservation where conflicts arise between conservation and other interests
- Evidence-based, using knowledge and expert advice both inside and outside the Trust.

As noted above, where conflicts arise between conservation and other interests, conservation is prioritised. If conflicts arise between approaches to different conservation interests (e.g. where the zonal approach to conservation of the cultural landscape may conflict with the principle that natural processes take their course), these will be resolved through application of the Trust's principles (an evidence-based, significance-led approach), working in collaboration with key stakeholders and other expert advisors.



9 A full list of relevant legislation, policies and guidelines is available in Appendix 3.

10 The Burra Charter – the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013

11 UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

3.3 How the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan will be implemented

The Trust will implement the management plan, working collaboratively with four key stakeholders:

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)
- Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
- NatureScot (NS)
- Ministry of Defence (MoD) and its agents

The stakeholders support the Trust's delivery of the management plan, providing expert advice, resources and regulatory functions. A full explanation of the role of each stakeholder is available in Appendix 3. The main mechanism for ensuring regular communication and the delivery of the objectives in the management plan with key stakeholders is through the Strategic and Operational Management Groups:

- The Strategic Management Group (SMG) provides strategic direction, considers and advises on new policies, and maintains an overview of the management plan and its delivery, as and when required.
- The Operational Management Group (OMG) agrees operational work plans and co-ordinates actions planned by each member organisation to help them deliver their obligations. The OMG meets regularly to review progress.

3.4 World Heritage Site buffer zone

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2019) state that wherever necessary for the proper protection of a site, an adequate buffer zone should be provided. Where no buffer zone is proposed, the nomination should include a statement as to why the buffer zone is not required.

The provision of a buffer zone was discussed during the re-nomination in 2005; in the case of St Kilda, there is no buffer zone. For the physical cultural heritage on land, the sea itself serves as a protection area around the islands. Although there are potential risks to the marine area, it was concluded that the existing measures in UK and European law protect the site and that a buffer zone would not add to that.



© NTS

A large, powerful wave is crashing over a rocky coastline. The wave is a vibrant turquoise color, and the water is turbulent. In the background, a large, dark, conical rock formation (a sea stack) rises from the sea. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall scene is dramatic and captures the raw power of the ocean.

Section 4

Threats and opportunities
for future management of
St Kilda World Heritage Site

Threats and opportunities for future management of St Kilda World Heritage Site

This section identifies the key threats and opportunities in managing St Kilda World Heritage Site, which inform the vision, outcomes and objectives within this plan. Threats and opportunities have been identified through the UNESCO Periodic Reporting process,¹² ongoing monitoring of the site, and engagement with stakeholders. As described in section 3.1, a thorough process of specific engagement with a range of stakeholders supported the preparation of this management plan.



Top row, left to right: Research; Gannet entangled; Beach clean
Bottom row, left to right: visitors; stranded whale
© NTS

12 Periodic Reporting Cycle, 2013

4.1 Threats to St Kilda World Heritage Site

Effective protection of the World Heritage Site relies on a thorough understanding of its vulnerabilities and the threats to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Over past millennia, the natural and cultural landscape of St Kilda has changed and will continue to change. This plan will ensure that change is managed in such a way that it enhances or does no harm to the OUV of the World Heritage Site. The plan also provides a framework to monitor and manage current and potential threats. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) will be undertaken prior to any work or activities that may affect the OUV of the site, in line with ICOMOS and IUCN guidelines.

Some threats to St Kilda can be tackled and mitigated locally by the Trust and stakeholders; others (such as climate change) cannot and will require collaboration and action on a much larger scale. The following section provides an overview of the six current and potential threats listed below, with specific operational objectives that demonstrate how they will be approached:

- Climate change
- Invasive non-native species
- Historical repair and conservation work
- Pollution
- Impact of pandemics
- Offshore development

4.1.1 Climate change

Climate change is a significant current threat to the OUV of St Kilda World Heritage Site, overwhelmingly due to practices that happen outside the site and outside the Trust's control. Sea-surface temperatures around the archipelago are increasing. The associated changes in the marine ecosystem will have an impact not only on marine species but also the colonies of seabirds breeding in the archipelago. A shift in the distribution of prey species can greatly affect breeding success and fledgling survival. Climate change may alter the frequency and severity of storms or lead to an increase in drought events, which could have a significant effect on both the natural and cultural heritage of the islands. Storm events may increase the rate and extent of coastal erosion, putting archaeological deposits and some structures at heightened risk of damage and potential loss. Changes in rainfall patterns, either longer drought periods or sudden downpours, may bring about changes to vegetation, buildings and landscape and will require mitigation.

Climate change may also affect operational management. Travel to and from St Kilda may be adversely affected, which would have an impact on deployment of staff, researchers and contractors; essential deliveries of food, materials and equipment; and visitor numbers. Periods of drought may necessitate the import of water or restrictions on the number of people on the island.

SECTION 4

Threats and opportunities for future management of St Kilda World Heritage Site

A process of assessment and synthesis of existing monitoring data is required within the year of this plan period, before specific objectives can be set for climate change adaptation and mitigation. However, the climate emergency will be at the core of all operations and decision-making processes on St Kilda.

Plan objective:

Objective 3.1 Develop and implement objectives for climate change adaptation and mitigation, based on the outcomes of a Climate Vulnerability Index assessment (CVI).

4.1.2 Invasive non-native species

The introduction of invasive, non-native species – including mammals, plants, invertebrates and disease – poses a significant ongoing threat to the natural heritage of both the marine and terrestrial ecosystems. While this is one of the biggest threats to the World Heritage Site, most elements can be managed by the Trust and key stakeholders through robust biosecurity.

Plan objective:

Objective 1.1 The islands will be free of potentially damaging new non-native species.

4.1.3 Historical repair and conservation work

Works to the historic fabric of buildings on Hirta have been carried out since 1957, with many of these going unrecorded until the late 20th century. In some cases, the use of unsuitable materials or poorly designed interventions has resulted in contemporary issues. Where these issues can be clearly identified as resulting from post-1930 intervention, the Trust will attempt to rectify the problem and propose solutions collaboratively with key stakeholders and the standard consents process. The cultural heritage database is a useful management tool in this process, recording past interventions and linking to historical images. Where the evidence is more ambiguous, these issues will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis through dialogue and reference to current conservation principles and best practice. These works will form part of our annual repair and maintenance programme.

Plan objective:

Objective 2.1 The cultural significance of St Kilda will be retained and interpreted through a selective, zoned approach to conservation of buildings and structures.



Early work party 1950s
© NTS

4.1.4 Pollution

The current levels of pollution in the oceans are an ongoing threat to all marine life and seabirds. This is outside the Trust's control. Plastic waste and discarded fishing equipment kill and maim marine life and seabirds in the World Heritage Site. Oil and other toxic spills from shipping are a potential threat, as is the opening up of the North Atlantic to oil exploration and extraction. With our own operations on St Kilda, we will follow policy and legislation on waste disposal and transfer of fuels, as we seek to minimise our impact on the environment.

Plan objective:

Objective 1.7 Ensure current and future human activities do not pose a threat to the World Heritage Site.

SECTION 4

Threats and opportunities for future management of St Kilda World Heritage Site

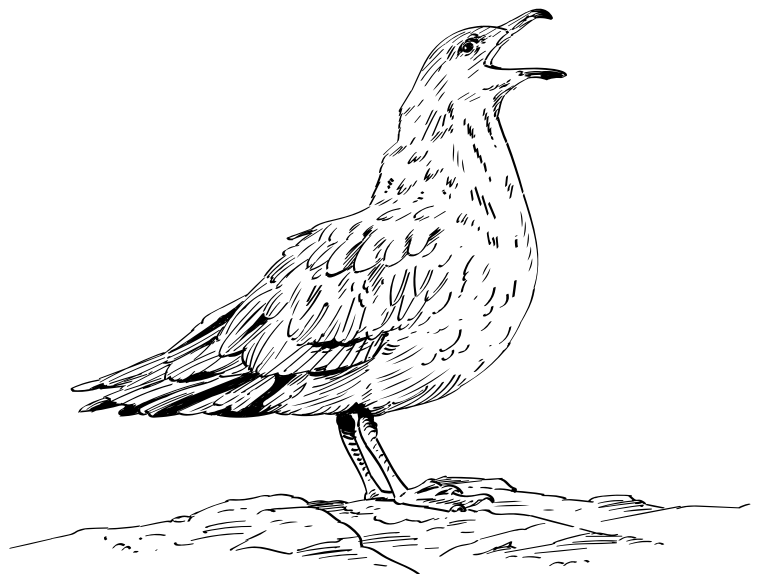
4.1.5 Impact of pandemics

Global pandemics, or local outbreaks that affect movement of people, are both a current and potential threat to our ability to monitor and manage aspects of the World Heritage Site. Travel to and from the archipelago is affected, which has an impact on the deployment of staff, researchers and volunteers, as well as the work they carry out, including biosecurity and monitoring. Essential deliveries of food, materials and equipment are also affected and there will be a decline in visitor numbers. Global and local economies are affected, which may have an impact on funding and resources available for the site.

Plan objectives:

Objective 6.1 To be more financially secure, ensuring that income will support our core operations, through identifying and maximising income streams.

Objective 6.4 Work collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan.



4.1.6 Offshore development

Offshore development associated with oil exploration and renewable energy in the North Atlantic is a potential threat, which may impact negatively on the setting of the World Heritage Site. Offshore development and the associated increased shipping may also negatively affect marine species, increase the likelihood of shipwrecks, and disrupt seabird feeding and loafing sites. However, this is an emerging threat; we are still learning about its potential impacts, and further research is required. The Trust recognises that threats from offshore development are largely outside the World Heritage Site and outside the Trust's control. Whilst well-designed renewable energy development is supported, the Trust will need to work collaboratively with key stakeholders to assess each potential development on a case-by-case basis, and advocate for planning decisions that protect the OUV of the site.

Plan objectives:

Objective 1.7 Ensure current and future human activities do not pose a threat to the World Heritage Site.

Objective 6.4 Work collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan.

4.2 Opportunities

The following have been identified as key opportunities for the future management of St Kilda World Heritage Site:

- Research
- Sustainable tourism
- Operational resources

4.2.1 Research

Article 5 of the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage states that State Parties should:

'develop scientific and technical studies and research and to work out such operating methods as will make the State capable of counteracting the dangers that threaten its cultural or natural heritage'

SECTION 4

Threats and opportunities for future management of St Kilda World Heritage Site

St Kilda presents outstanding opportunities for research into its natural and cultural heritage, and in recent years the World Heritage Site has supported a diverse range of research interests. These have been delivered collaboratively by the Trust and key stakeholders (e.g. archaeological survey), through support for ongoing independent research projects (e.g. the St Kilda Soay Sheep Project) and through support for one-off research opportunities (e.g. university fieldwork and PhDs). The Trust is committed to enabling research opportunities on St Kilda, recognising that the ongoing development of knowledge and understanding of the site will underpin and inform our future approach to protection and management.

However, research on St Kilda presents a series of challenges. Access is usually limited to a short summer season due to the extreme weather conditions of the site. Research opportunities that require fieldwork to be undertaken on St Kilda are limited by the accommodation and facilities available, and the logistics of carrying out research in such a remote place. The unique environment of St Kilda, along with its international status as a dual UNESCO World Heritage Site, means the Trust frequently needs to prioritise a range of competing research interests, whilst ensuring the research undertaken does not damage or put the heritage at risk. As a conservation charity and membership organisation, the Trust must also ensure that research aligns with its own priorities for the protection of the site and that the outcomes fulfil the Trust's core purpose: to protect, care for, share and speak up for Scotland's heritage.

During the preparation of this management plan, the **St Kilda Research Guidelines** have been established both to ensure future research is appropriate and to allow for objective prioritisation. During the period of this management plan, the Trust will develop a strategy that will identify priority areas for research across a number of disciplines. These will fulfil national research frameworks such as the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework as well as the Trust's own strategic goals. This research strategy and the St Kilda Research Guidelines will be used by the Trust to determine whether to undertake, commission or collaborate in research associated with St Kilda World Heritage Site. The guidelines are available in Appendix 4.

Plan objective:

Objective 5.3 Enable more research that supports our understanding of the World Heritage Site, guided by the St Kilda Research Guidelines.

Objective 5.4 Develop a research strategy to identify key areas of research and establish relationships to aid their delivery.

4.2.2 Sustainable tourism

Visitors should have an extraordinary experience on St Kilda, and tourism presents significant opportunities for economic, social and conservation benefits for the Trust and the wider community. However, high visitor numbers concentrated in peak periods can have an impact on infrastructure, buildings, habitats and species, as well as the sense of place. Current numbers are largely within manageable levels, but we must consider our approach in order to deliver a sustainable future for tourism. It is the Trust's ambition to promote the positive benefits of tourism, lessen the potential negative effects, and for St Kilda to become an exemplar of sustainable tourism. This will require a good understanding of the impact of tourism on St Kilda while developing measures to mitigate negative impacts.

Plan objectives:

Objective 1.7 Ensure current and future human activities do not pose a threat to the World Heritage Site.

Objective 4.3 Develop and implement a sustainable tourism strategy.

4.2.3 Operational resources

With additional focused resources, we can increase our level of activity across all areas. We could engage with visitors more often; have an improved interpretation programme offering authentic experiences; and undertake more outreach work with local stakeholders, including schools, tour operators and proposed visitor centres in the Hebrides. We could also monitor more seabird (and other) species and develop partnerships with researchers to better understand the natural heritage. Our cultural heritage would be better maintained and we could develop a skills programme in cultural heritage management and maintenance. Conversely, resource constraints within the Trust and key stakeholder organisations pose an issue for future management, as delivery of this plan depends on a level of resources and staffing. Changes to the management of the MoD facility could affect operational management and skills requirements for Trust staff. A lack of on-island staff to inform and regulate may increase the likelihood of invasive non-native species introduction, theft of artefacts or damage to the built heritage.

Plan objectives:

Objective 6.1 To be more financially secure, ensuring that income will support our core operations, through identifying and maximising income streams.

Objective 6.4 Work collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan.



Gannets diving
© Mc2 Photography



Section 5

Outcomes and operational objectives

Outcomes and operational objectives

Outcome 1

The biodiversity, habitats and ecological functions of the World Heritage Site will be conserved.

The biodiversity, habitats and ecological functions of St Kilda must be our priority for conservation in order for management to be most effective. Marine ecosystems and biodiversity are already changing in the face of a changing climate, and we must seek to understand these changes and impacts.

The elements that make up the natural heritage of St Kilda are inextricably linked together, but for ease of management they have been broken down into different areas so that specific targets can be set for the conservation of each. There is a presumption that natural processes will be allowed to take their course without intervention. The biggest threats to the natural heritage of St Kilda are climate change and the introduction of new non-native species.



Puffin
© NTS

Biosecurity

The introduction of new non-native species to the archipelago poses a significant threat to the natural heritage of St Kilda, threatening not just individual species but entire ecosystems. The seabird and mouse populations are most vulnerable to introduced mammal species, but introduced plants, marine species and pathogens may upset local ecosystems and affect all aspects of the islands' natural heritage. We will continue to implement a biosecurity plan, and review and enhance procedures as required.

Seabirds

The seabird colonies on St Kilda are of global significance but they are under a great deal of stress in our changing world. Sea temperature change, pollution and fishing all have had an impact on seabird populations and breeding success. To understand these effects and inform policy and management decisions, we will continue to monitor the breeding colonies and share information with national recording schemes. We will ensure human activities within the World Heritage Site do not pose a threat and we will support research that helps us understand the seabirds' behaviour and habitats. The Trust will support measures that further safeguard habitats and species. Through our continued commitment to biosecurity, monitoring and advocacy, we will contribute to our aspiration of maintaining the internationally important populations of breeding seabirds in statutory favourable condition, but we recognise that many factors are outside our control.

Marine World Heritage Site

The marine environment around St Kilda, which makes up over 90% of the World Heritage Site, is in near-pristine condition, with very little impact from local human activities. Anchoring is limited to Village Bay, where the soft seabed provides good holding ground and results in minimal damage. There is a small amount of creel fishing in the area, but the catch levels are not known. Transfer of diesel from ship to shore is a permitted activity under regulation, as is any discharge from the septic tank on Hirta. The oceans are under enormous stress from rising sea temperatures, pollution and over-fishing, yet their health is key to the protection of ecosystems on St Kilda. The Trust will support and advocate for measures that protect the marine environment. Through our continued commitment to monitoring and advocacy, we will contribute to our aspiration of maintaining the marine environment in statutory favourable condition, but we recognise that many factors are outside our control.

Sheep populations

The Soay and Boreray blackface sheep on the archipelago are an important part of St Kilda's heritage, a remnant of the community that once lived there and a key part of the human story of the islands. The persistence of the primitive breed of Soay sheep, free from genetic input from modern breeds, is one of their remarkable features, and marks them out as a potentially significant genetic resource. The Boreray blackface sheep are also classed as a critically endangered rare breed. Across the archipelago, the sheep will continue to be treated as feral animals with a presumption against intervention, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. a serious outbreak of disease that threatens the sheep populations). The sheep were confirmed by the Scottish Government as non-native species in 2020. The Trust will continue to comply with Scottish Government legislation relating to St Kilda's sheep populations.



Soft coral and kelp
© NatureScot



Soay sheep
© Mc2 photography

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives



St Kilda mouse
© Mc2 Photography

Endemic and near-endemic species

The isolation of St Kilda has led to a divergence among some species, which are now recognisably distinct: the St Kilda wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes hirtensis*), the St Kilda field mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus hirtensis*) and the St Kilda dandelion (*Taraxacum pankhurstianum*) – only identified in 2012. Also of note are the weevil (*Ceutorhynchus insularis*) – currently only recorded on Dun and the Westman Islands of Iceland; the rare fly *Calliphora uralensis*; and 10 ichneumons (parasitic wasps), which are unique to St Kilda among the Western Isles. A key priority in this management plan is to better understand the role of each species and its interaction with other species and the environment, as well as monitoring species numbers. This will ensure future management can be targeted in the most appropriate way.

Plant communities

Due to its geographical isolation, St Kilda has a relatively low number of vascular plants. Each island is influenced by salt spray, and the plant communities are dominated by maritime vegetation typical of Scotland. Roseroot (*Sedum rosea*) and Scots lovage (*Ligusticum scoticum*) are present on many of the vertical, salt-spray-drenched cliffs, with sea campion (*Silene uniflora*) and thrift (*Armeria maritima*) present in abundance. Diversity is increased by the presence of arctic-alpine plants, such as purple saxifrage (*Saxifraga oppositifolia*) and moss campion (*Silene acaulis*). St Kilda has some of the most extensive and best examples of this extreme form of Atlantic maritime vegetation in Europe, which are designated Natura 2000 plant communities by the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation.

Hirta has nationally important bryophytes and lichens. Surveys in 2013 added a new bryophyte record for Scotland and identified a nationally scarce and globally rare liverwort. Hirta, Boreray and Soay are grazed by sheep, but Dun is un-grazed. This approach to grazing (present at the time of SAC designation) will be maintained over most of the archipelago, although there may be cases where specific vegetation patterns are aimed for in small areas.

Through our continued commitment to biosecurity, monitoring and advocacy, we will contribute to our aspiration of maintaining maritime cliff and slope plant communities in statutory favourable condition, but we recognise that many factors are outside our control.



A busy summer's day
© NTS

Impact of human activity

People live and work on the main island of Hirta, and many more come to visit. While most work and leisure activities will have little or no impact on the site, some activities could have a negative impact on habitats, wildlife, cultural remains or enjoyment of the place. We will identify activities that have the potential to cause harm and, where possible, they will be excluded or measures put in place to mitigate them. This presumption shall underpin all our activities on island.

- Objective 1.1** The islands will be free of potentially damaging new non-native species.
- Objective 1.2** Through our continued commitment to biosecurity, monitoring and advocacy, we will contribute to our aspiration of maintaining the internationally important populations of breeding seabirds in statutory favourable condition.¹³
- Objective 1.3** Work with stakeholders to ensure all the features of the Marine World Heritage Site are safeguarded appropriately.
- Objective 1.4** Through our continued commitment to monitoring and advocacy, contribute with stakeholders to our aspiration of maintaining intertidal and underwater habitats in statutory favourable condition.¹³
- Objective 1.5** Have a greater understanding of, and maintain the presence of, endemic and near-endemic species and sub-species.
- Objective 1.6** Through our continued commitment to biosecurity, monitoring and advocacy, contribute to our aspiration of maintaining maritime cliff and slope plant communities in statutory favourable condition.¹³
- Objective 1.7** Ensure current and future human activities do not pose a threat to the World Heritage Site.

¹³ Statutory Favourable Condition criteria provide target conservation conditions for habitats and species within St Kilda World Heritage Site. The condition criteria are set and monitored periodically by NatureScot. Statutory Favourable Condition criteria and monitoring data is held by NatureScot.

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives



Loading tweed and wool for market
© NTS

Outcome 2

The cultural heritage of the World Heritage Site will be conserved.

People have travelled to and settled on St Kilda for thousands of years. Each generation has left their mark on the landscape, and in turn they have also been influenced and shaped by the landscape and climate. Today, the evidence of human occupation is clear in the landscape across all the islands but particularly Hirta, which has been the focus of human settlement throughout. Our priority is to conserve and interpret the cultural landscape associated with the communities who occupied St Kilda up to the point of its abandonment in 1930. As noted within the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, some modern interventions (e.g. buildings and coastal defences constructed post-1930) do have an impact on the integrity of the site. Over the course of this management plan, such interventions will be reviewed in accordance with the Trust's Conservation Principles, with a view to removing those that are no longer required and are of low significance. This will allow us to pare back and reduce the impact of modern interventions on the integrity of the landscape.

The cultural heritage of St Kilda includes not only the tangible artefacts and monuments of past and current societies on St Kilda but also the intangible heritage. Intangible heritage refers to the diversity of cultural practices created by communities over time and recognised by them as part of their heritage¹⁴ – this includes language, music, cultural spaces and skills. The abandonment of St Kilda in 1930 means that the majority of the intangible heritage is no longer part of a living culture, although some aspects (such as local building techniques) are still carried out. The interpretation of other aspects can be supported by the cultural landscape, artefacts and collections.

The process of conservation can raise many challenges. For St Kilda, it is the balance of conserving many of the physical structures in a way that ensures the history of the communities that once lived there can still be interpreted, whilst intervening as little as possible to maintain the authenticity of the abandoned cultural landscape. It is important to retain local building techniques, particularly the drystone work that imparts a strong sense of place. The current approach to the conservation of the cultural landscape is based on the identification of geographical zones, time periods and typologies, as well as operational limitations, set out in a management agreement with Historic Environment Scotland. This focuses conservation efforts on key areas like the village and on building types across Hirta, like the cleits. Over the course of this management plan, the existing agreement and approach will be reviewed and, if necessary, other approaches considered, to ensure our approach is sustainable, reflects significance and interprets the story of St Kilda's community for visitors. The density of the remains, particularly upstanding ruinous buildings, does present a management and conservation challenge. However, we are in a strong position, having produced a comprehensive survey and database of all sites in a partnership programme with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) and the Scottish Ten project. The database provides an accurate map location, description, photograph and condition statement for each site, enabling easy access to multiple data sets in order to make informed management decisions.

Intangible cultural heritage

The particular Gaelic of St Kilda is no longer spoken but the Gaelic language itself is still in widespread use throughout the Western Isles, although recognised as being in a precarious position.¹⁵ Wherever relevant, Gaelic will be used in the interpretation and promotion of St Kilda to help people experience the place and lives of its inhabitants.

The historic recordings from St Kilda of both songs and spoken word are a resource that can enrich the experience of the islands, and these should be made more widely available. The Trust's revised Gaelic Policy (due for publication in 2022) will recognise the key role of language in cultural identity and offer guidelines for its appropriate use. Partnership working will be key to delivering aspects of St Kilda's intangible heritage.

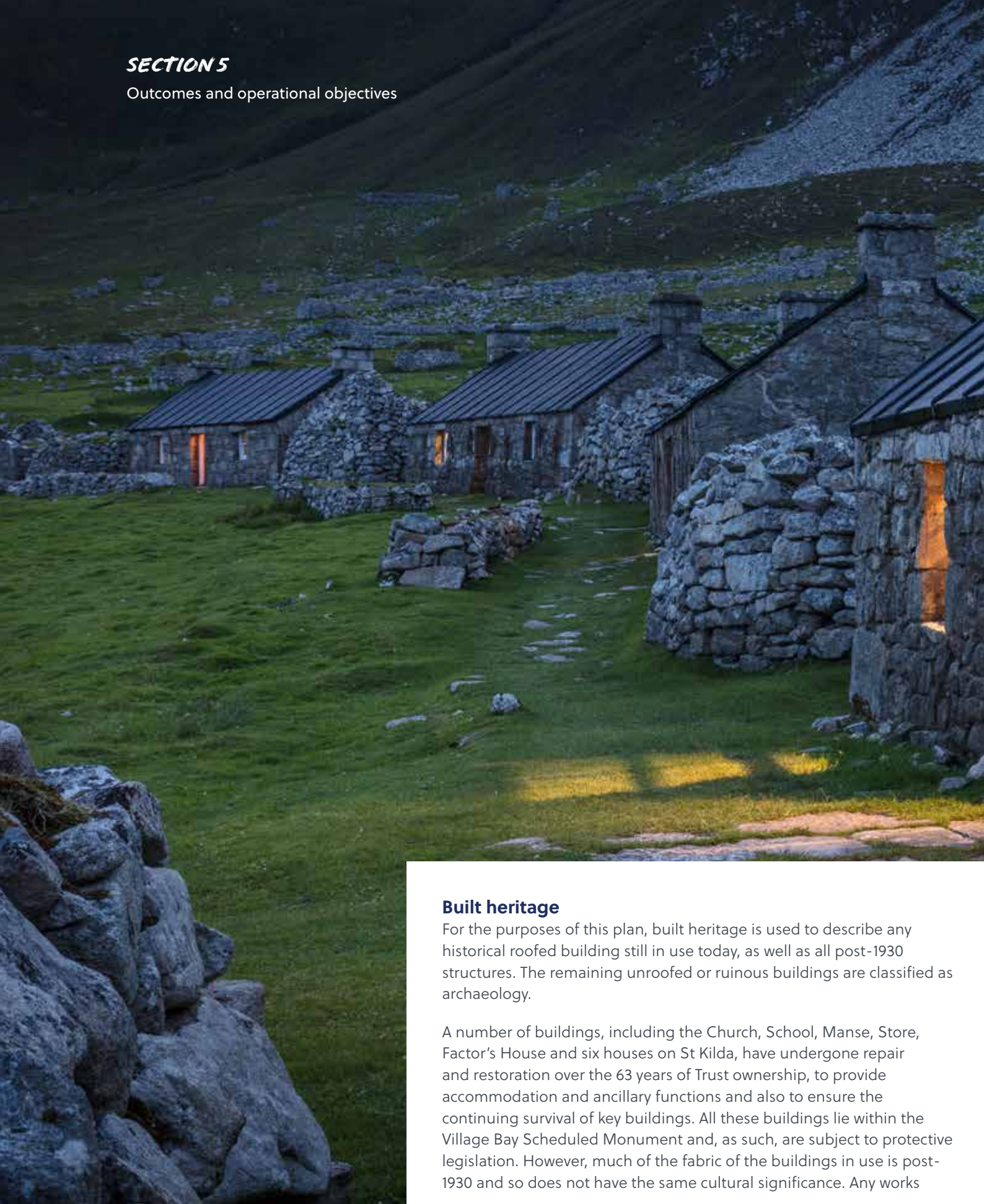
The drystone dyking and some building forms, such as the cleits, on St Kilda are visible evidence of the skills and traditions of the community, uniquely formed by the geology, landscape and people. We will strive to retain that unique quality of expression through our understanding and knowledge of St Kilda, and through the development and safeguarding of traditional craft skills.

¹⁴ The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013

¹⁵ Dualchas Do Dhaoine (Heritage for People), Place-based Heritage Strategy, Outer Hebrides, 2021–2031

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives



Built heritage

For the purposes of this plan, built heritage is used to describe any historical roofed building still in use today, as well as all post-1930 structures. The remaining unroofed or ruinous buildings are classified as archaeology.

A number of buildings, including the Church, School, Manse, Store, Factor's House and six houses on St Kilda, have undergone repair and restoration over the 63 years of Trust ownership, to provide accommodation and ancillary functions and also to ensure the continuing survival of key buildings. All these buildings lie within the Village Bay Scheduled Monument and, as such, are subject to protective legislation. However, much of the fabric of the buildings in use is post-1930 and so does not have the same cultural significance. Any works



carried out to the buildings should be sympathetic to the original fabric and to the overall setting within the landscape. We will intervene as little as possible and strive to retain as much original fabric as possible, assessing new interventions on a case-by-case basis. The location of the Feather Store on the shore of Village Bay means that it is susceptible to coastal erosion and storm damage. For this, and other buildings, we will continue to monitor condition and risk, and we will implement adaptation and mitigation measures where necessary. Prior to any interventions, an assessment of significance will be carried out, informed by historic building surveys. The coastal defences, in the form of gabion baskets, are beginning to fail – this will be addressed within the first few years of this plan.

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives

Archaeology

The archaeological resource on St Kilda comprises both above – and below-ground features on all islands in the archipelago as well as the evidence recovered from excavation, including artefacts, biofacts and soil samples. We will continue to monitor site condition, including coastal erosion, and build up more detailed information on the threats and processes of change.

A number of excavations and surveys were carried out in the late 20th and early 21st century. While much of this has been published, the focus for this management plan will be to better understand and interpret the material culture of St Kilda through collating information on the numerous collections of artefacts. The historic use of the landscape outside Village Bay will also be considered, together with other topics identified in an archaeological research strategy.

Collections

The Trust has an extensive collection of documents and images relating to St Kilda as well as a number of artefacts, including those recovered from archaeological excavations. Some of the artefact collection is on loan to other museums; other items are held by the Trust, some in store and others on display in the small museum on St Kilda. However, the majority of items are not in Trust ownership at all but in private or other collections. The collections have important stories to tell about life on St Kilda, how the St Kildans were viewed by the outside world, and how their day-to-day lives were lived. As noted above in relation to archaeology, an overall view of the artefact collection and the relationship to images and documents would enable a fuller picture of St Kilda to emerge and different stories to be told.

Objective 2.1 The cultural significance of St Kilda will be retained and interpreted through a selective, zoned approach to conservation of buildings and structures.

Objective 2.2 The authenticity and integrity of the cultural landscape of St Kilda World Heritage Site will be safeguarded. Modern buildings and infrastructure that are no longer required and are of low significance will be removed, paring back and reducing the impact of modern interventions.

Objective 2.3 Collections and artefacts will be identified, cared for and used to tell the stories of St Kilda.

Objective 2.4 A longer-term solution to coastal defences shall be implemented.

Objective 2.5 The use and interpretation of Gaelic language will be promoted.



After heavy rainfall
© NTS

Outcome 3

Global challenges (such as climate change) and other risks to St Kilda will be identified, and mitigation and adaptation implemented.

As noted in section 4.1.1, climate change is a significant threat to the OUV of St Kilda World Heritage Site. A climate emergency was declared by the Scottish Government in May 2019,¹⁶ and the Trust recognises that urgent action is required to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change on St Kilda. Whilst St Kilda cannot be immune from these threats, the Trust is committed to increasing resilience through the introduction of adaptation measures and by reviewing our own operations to mitigate future impact. We will also use our understanding of the impacts on St Kilda to challenge activity by others and support larger-scale efforts to mitigate climate change.

The Trust co-ordinates an extensive ongoing programme of monitoring and research on St Kilda (e.g. monitoring seabird numbers, habitat condition and coastal erosion), all of which supports our understanding of climate change and allows us to clearly communicate its impacts. The priority for the Trust in the first year of this management plan (by 2023) is to synthesise existing data and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the threat of climate change through

¹⁶ www.gov.scot/publications/global-climate-emergency-scotlands-response-climate-change-secretary-roseanna-cunninghams-statement/

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives

the Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI).¹⁷ Completion of the CVI will equip the Trust with a much clearer understanding of what the impacts are likely to be, enabling more detailed operational objectives to be set that will allow us to address the following key areas during the lifespan of this management plan:

Adaptation: By understanding and implementing the steps we can take to adapt to climate change, we can make the World Heritage Site more resilient. This may include reviewing our approach to management and intervention in some aspects of the cultural and natural heritage of the archipelago.

Mitigation and reviewing our own operations: We will establish a clear understanding of the impact and sustainability of our own operations, setting measures and targets to reduce our impact, ensuring what we do is as sustainable as possible.

Engaging and challenging others: The Trust recognises that threats from climate change are overwhelmingly due to practices which happen outside the World Heritage Site and outside our control. The status of St Kilda as the UK's only dual World Heritage Site and its compelling story of 'life on the edge' present significant opportunities for engagement. There is potential to influence and advocate mitigation by others, as well as challenge unsustainable practices, bringing about positive change both for St Kilda and more widely – this could be achieved through the delivery of an innovative communication strategy. The understanding gained through the CVI process will be the foundation upon which such communication can be based. The Trust will work collaboratively with key stakeholders and others (including the Outer Hebrides Climate Change Group) to achieve this.

Objective 3.1 Develop and implement objectives for climate change adaptation and mitigation, based on the outcomes of a Climate Vulnerability Index assessment (CVI).

Outcome 4

Enhance access to St Kilda in a sustainable way and present more people with more opportunities to experience the World Heritage Site, understand its significance and support its protection.

To experience St Kilda is to experience one of the most remote and distinctive cultural landscapes in the world. For many visitors, St Kilda's sense of place evokes a strong emotional reaction, which often reflects a sense of loss and abandonment. The islands are a 'bucket list' destination for many. Our ambition is that every visitor to St Kilda has a memorable, enriching and immersive experience. We will improve the visitor experience on the island, ensuring it is underpinned by exceptional infrastructure and interpretation, as well as knowledgeable staff. We will also develop ways to enhance the experience of those who are not able, or choose not, to travel to

¹⁷ The Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) is a rapid assessment tool to assess climate impact on World Heritage Sites, which has been endorsed by UNESCO, ICOMOS and IUCN. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has committed to supporting completion of the CVI for all World Heritage Sites in Scotland by 2023.



On a boat tour
© NTS

St Kilda. We will do this through enhanced digital experiences and outreach with communities and organisations that seek to tell the many stories of St Kilda, particularly those communities in the Western Isles involved in the Slighe Hiort project.¹⁸ There are opportunities to engage visitors through authentic experiences (e.g. through the use of collections, artefacts and Gaelic language) so that people will continue to be interested in and support St Kilda long after their visit, and be a foundation for the continuing conservation of the islands.

However, Hirta is a small island with finite resources. A high volume of visitors (particularly during a short time period) could potentially affect the site in many ways: erosion, use of limited resources such as water, increased risk of introducing new invasive species, and also an altered sense of place and visitor enjoyment. The Outer Hebrides have experienced a notable increase in leisure visitors in recent years,¹⁹ which is also reflected in the number of visitors to St Kilda. Numbers began to increase markedly from 2005, when day trips started, together with an increase in visits from cruise ships. Since 2015 (excluding 2020) the average number of visitors each year was 5,112; however, the season only runs from mid-April to mid-September, with most visitors (on average 58%) arriving in the months of May and June. The weather plays a significant role in determining visitor numbers, with poor sea conditions resulting in cancelled trips. Day boats to St Kilda departing from Lewis, Harris and Skye are an important part of the local economy, not only providing direct employment but also supporting accommodation and hospitality across the Hebrides. Cruise ships visit as part of a UK or North Atlantic itinerary and, despite the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the industry is still predicting longer-term growth.²⁰ All visitors come ashore at the small pier in Village Bay, Hirta.

18 Slighe Hiort is a proposal to develop a number of projects across the Outer Hebrides to form a St Kilda Way visitor experience.

19 Visit Scotland recorded an increase of almost 16% in leisure visitors in 5 years: from 128,316 in 2013 to 148,641 in 2017.

20 Cruise Tourism in Scotland: Review and Sustainable Development Opportunities, VisitScotland, October 2020

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives



Pictured left to right: Surveying Soay sheep; Meeting visitors; Viewpoint
© NTS

Whilst World Heritage Sites across the globe have identified problems with over-tourism, few have found solutions. Due to limitations associated with the location and prevailing weather conditions on St Kilda, we have not experienced many of the problems commonly associated with over-tourism at the current visitor levels. We are therefore ideally placed to be proactive in our approach to this potential issue, to ensure a sustainable future for visitors. Over the next ten years, we will work to lessen the negative impacts and promote the positive benefits of tourism, managing St Kilda as an exemplar of sustainable tourism. The Trust recognises that collaboration is key and will work in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver a sustainable tourism strategy. St Kilda is also part of Scotland's UNESCO Trail, which unites UNESCO designated sites to promote both sustainable tourism and UNESCO values.

Objective 4.1 Share our knowledge and understanding of St Kilda to provide an exceptional visitor experience and promote opportunities for people to understand and care for the World Heritage Site.

Objective 4.2 Provide alternative opportunities to experience St Kilda, through the development of online interpretation and outreach.

Objective 4.3 Develop and implement a sustainable tourism strategy.

Objective 4.4 Improve the landing and welcome facilities at the pier to provide visitors with an appropriate gateway to the UK's only dual World Heritage Site.



Outcome 5

Enhance opportunities for research and knowledge sharing, and use research to underpin our management and interpretation of the World Heritage Site.

St Kilda's natural and cultural heritage is globally significant. There is a great deal of interest in ocean and climate science, and St Kilda is ideally placed to provide opportunities to carry out research. The relatively pristine ocean and stable political system make it an attractive option. Research outcomes will be used to inform and influence management as well as increase public understanding and appreciation of the World Heritage Site, which in turn will lead to more support for conservation locally and internationally. In addition to the Trust's own monitoring and research, we will also collaborate with stakeholders. The provision of research facilities on St Kilda could enhance opportunities for research, as well as being a source of income.

As noted in section 4.2.1, to ensure that future research is appropriate and to allow for objective prioritisation, the **St Kilda Research Guidelines** have been developed during the preparation of this management plan. These guidelines will be used by the Trust to determine whether to undertake, commission or collaborate in research associated with St Kilda World Heritage Site. The guidelines are available in **Appendix 4**. In addition, during the period of this plan, the Trust will develop a strategy to identify research topics and priorities. This will be achieved through appropriate consultation and collaboration, and by referencing established strategies (e.g. the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework, the UK marine science strategy and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy).

Objective 5.1 The results of our recording and monitoring programme will be shared with national recording schemes.

Objective 5.2 Researchers will input into interpretation and help deliver the visitor experience.

Objective 5.3 Enable more research that supports our understanding of the World Heritage Site, guided by the St Kilda Research Guidelines.

Objective 5.4 Develop a research strategy to identify key areas of research and establish relationships to aid their delivery.

SECTION 5

Outcomes and operational objectives

Outcome 6

Achieve effective management of the islands that is transparent, collaborative and underpinned by sustainable practices.

The protection of St Kilda, with the associated benefits to the local community and wider world, can only be achieved if it is well-managed with the strategic direction and resources available. Management of St Kilda can be complex, not only due to its remoteness and difficulties of access but also because of the many statutory designations and potential conflicting priorities. Effective management matters not only to the Trust but also to many others, including both the UK and Scottish governments, key stakeholders (HES, NS, the MoD and its agents, and the CnES), the international community represented in UNESCO, and the local community, many of whom have strong historical connections to St Kilda and gain a living from it. The Trust will be responsible for the delivery of this management plan, but to deliver its wide remit we will need to work together with stakeholders – we will continue to strengthen and develop these relationships. This will be achieved through the Strategic and Operational Management Groups, through formal agreements with stakeholders and through informal understandings with other key supporters.

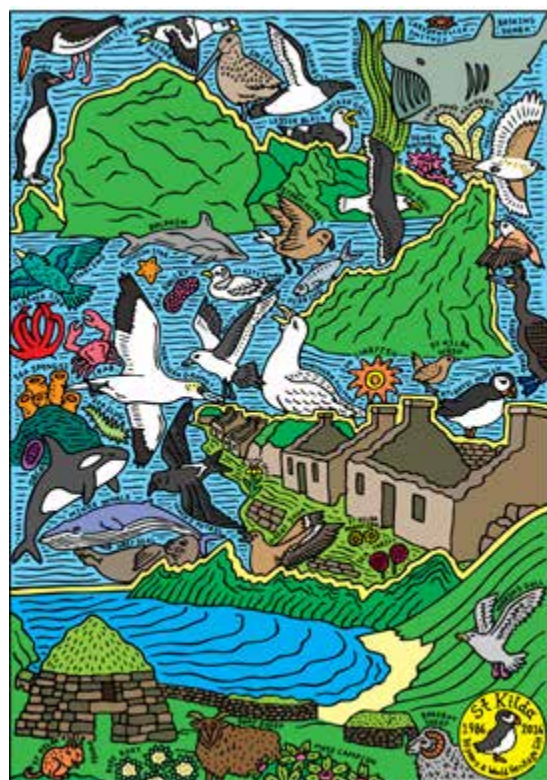
Effective management requires resources. To deliver the outcomes of this management plan, we need to focus on financial security and sustainability, through identifying key partnerships, more diverse income streams (e.g. philanthropy, grants, tourism, and rental and commercial income) and maximising those income streams we have – thereby reducing drawdown from the Trust's General Income Fund (GIF). Financial sustainability will support the staffing and resources required to deliver the conservation and visitor experience outcomes. To deliver the conservation, learning, visitor experience and research outcomes, additional accommodation capacity is required on St Kilda. This may be achieved through new construction or through redevelopment of existing buildings, but it will not compromise the authenticity or integrity of the cultural landscape. Financial sustainability cannot be achieved without environmental and social sustainability; all management decisions on St Kilda will take this into account.

Objective 6.1 To be more financially secure, ensuring that income will support our core operations, through identifying and maximising income streams.

Objective 6.2 Develop additional accommodation and facilities to support research, conservation and the visitor experience.

Objective 6.3 Investigate opportunities to benefit from global carbon markets and payments for management of terrestrial and ocean habitats.

Objective 6.4 Work collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver the St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan.



Pictured top: Deliveries arriving;
Bottom: Painting the Factor's House
© NTS

Celebrating World Heritage
© HES



Appendices

Appendix 1	55
Statement of Outstanding Universal Value	
Appendix 2	59
Review of the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan	
Appendix 3	67
Background information	
Appendix 4	70
St Kilda Research Guidelines	
Appendix 5	73
Maps	

Appendix 1

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Adopted by UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 37th session, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, June 2013

1.0 Brief Synthesis

The tiny archipelago of St Kilda, lying off the west coast of mainland Scotland, is breathtaking. Formed from the rim of an ancient volcano associated with the opening up of the North Atlantic some 65-52 million years ago, the intensely dramatic, jagged landscape of towering cliffs – some of the highest sea cliffs in Europe – and sea stacks present stark black precipitous faces plunging from steep grass-green slopes in excess of 375m. Scenically, every element appears vertical, except the smooth amphitheatre of Village Bay on Hirta with its relict historic landscape. Exposure to some of the greatest wave heights and strongest wind speeds in Europe plays a major role in shaping the coastal ecology.

With nearly one million seabirds present at the height of the breeding season, St Kilda supports the largest seabird colony in the north-east Atlantic, its size and diversity of global significance making it a seabird sanctuary without parallel in Europe. The very high bird densities that occur in this relatively small area, conditioned by the complex and different ecological niches existing in the site and the productivity of the surrounding sea, make St Kilda unique. Of particular significance are the populations of Northern Gannet, Atlantic Puffin and Northern Fulmar. The sight and sound of these myriad seabirds adds significantly to the scenic value and to the experience of the archipelago during the breeding season.

The islands' isolation has led to two outstanding examples of remote island ecological colonisation and subsequent genetic divergence in the two endemic sub-species, the St Kilda Wren and St Kilda Fieldmouse. The feral Soay sheep, so much a feature of the landscape, represent an ancient breed, descendants of the most primitive domestic sheep found in Europe. They provide a living testament to the longevity of human occupation of St Kilda and, in addition, are a potentially significant genetic resource.

The combination of oceanic influences (proximity of deep ocean currents along the continental slope, extreme exposure to waves and oceanic swell, high water clarity) and local geology around the archipelago has created a marine environment of unparalleled richness and colour. The seabed communities are outstanding in terms of biodiversity and composition, including 'northern' and 'southern' species at the extremes of their range. The plunging underwater rock faces are festooned with sea life – a kaleidoscope of colour and form kept in constant motion by the Atlantic swell, creating an underwater landscape of breathtaking beauty. The complex ecological dynamic in the marine environment is essential to maintenance of both the terrestrial and marine biodiversity.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Overlaying the spectacular natural landscape and giving scale to it all, is a rich cultural landscape that bears exceptional testimony to millennia of human occupation. Recent research indicates that the archipelago has been occupied on and off for over 4000 years. The landscape including houses, large enclosures and cleits – unique drystone storage structures found, in their hundreds, across the islands and stacks within the archipelago – culminates in the surviving remains of the nineteenth and twentieth century cultural landscape of Village Bay. The time depth, preservation and completeness of the physical remains, provides a tangible and powerful link to the islands' past history, its people and their way of life, a distinctive existence, shaped by the St Kilda's response to the peculiar physical and geographic setting of the islands.

The islands provide an exceptionally well preserved and documented example of how, even in the most extreme conditions of storm-swept isolated island living, people were able to live for thousands of years from exploiting natural resources and farming. They bear physical witness to a cultural tradition that has now disappeared, namely reliance on seabird products as the main source of livelihood and sustenance, alongside subsistence farming. These age-old traditions and land uses that have so shaped the landscape, have also unquestionably contributed to its aesthetic appeal.

St Kilda represents subsistence economies everywhere – living off the resources of land and sea and changing them over time, until external pressures led to decline, and, in 1930, to the abandonment of the islands. The poignancy of the archipelago's history, and the remarkable fossilised landscape, its outstanding and spectacular natural beauty and heritage, its isolation and remoteness, leave one in awe of nature and of the people that once lived in this spectacular and remarkable place.

2.0 Criteria for inscription

Criterion (iii): St Kilda bears exceptional testimony to over two millennia of human occupation in extreme conditions.

Criterion (v): The cultural landscape of St Kilda is an outstanding example of land use resulting from a type of subsistence economy based on the products of birds, cultivating land and keeping sheep. The cultural landscape reflects age-old traditions and land uses, which have become vulnerable to change particularly after the departure of the islanders.

Criterion (vii): The scenery of the St Kilda archipelago is particularly superlative and has resulted from its volcanic origin followed by weathering and glaciation to produce a dramatic island landscape. The precipitous cliffs and sea stacks as well as its underwater scenery are concentrated in a compact group that is singularly unique.

Criterion (ix): St Kilda is unique in the very high bird densities that occur in a relatively small area, which is conditioned by the complex and different ecological niches existing in the site. There is also a complex ecological dynamic in the three marine zones present in the site that is essential to the maintenance of both marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

Criterion (x): St Kilda is one of the major sites in the North Atlantic and Europe for seabirds with over 1,000,000 birds using the island. It is particularly important for gannets, puffins and fulmars. The maritime grassland turf and underwater habitats are also significant and an integral element of the total island setting. The feral Soay sheep are also an interesting rare breed of potential genetic resource significance.

3.0 Integrity

The islands encompass exemplary and well preserved remains of the distinctive way of life that persisted in this remote area, unaltered after the St Kildans abandoned the islands. They encompass the complete fossilised cultural landscape. The natural heritage of the archipelago is the result of natural processes coupled with its long history of human occupation and, more recently, external human influences. The marine environment is largely intact.

Ownership and stewardship of the archipelago by the National Trust for Scotland, the statutory designations in place, the archipelago's remote location, the difficulty of accessing it and human activities almost entirely centred upon Hirta, have significantly contributed to retaining the integrity of the archipelago's heritage.

However, both natural and cultural attributes are threatened to a degree by a range of remote and local environmental and anthropogenic factors such as climate change and unsustainable tourism. Climatic conditions and coastal erosion remain the main threat to the abandoned houses, cleits and other archaeological remains across the archipelago. Large-scale off-shore developments could pose a potential threat to the pristine setting of the islands. Accidental introduction of invasive species poses a significant threat to the natural heritage; and probably the most severe potential threat to the integrity of the marine environment comes from variations in the marine ecosystem, especially the plankton, caused by climate change. Lack of strong protection of the marine environment, unsustainable fishing methods and oil spills also pose a threat to the marine environment and seabird colonies.

The modern installations, the radar base and related buildings, associated with the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) operations on Hirta, take up a relatively small footprint, although they do still have an impact on the landscape, as do the coastal defences.

4.0 Authenticity

The challenge for conservation of the cultural landscape is to keep a balance between the principle of minimum intervention and active conservation work necessary to minimise decay, whilst keeping records of all the work that is done. With few exceptions this has meant re-using fallen materials, with little introduction of new materials. Where new materials have necessarily been required these have largely, and as far as possible, been like-for-like replacements. A representative sample of the 1400 cleits is monitored and actively maintained.

5.0 Protection and management requirements

The primary legislation that protects the archipelago and surrounding seas and their key attributes are: The Conservation (Natural Habitats. & C.) Regulations 1994, as amended; The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; The Land Reform Act 2003; Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004; The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979; The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006; and The Environmental Liability (Scotland) Regulations 2009. The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) sets out the primary policy guidance on the protection and management of the historic environment in Scotland.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

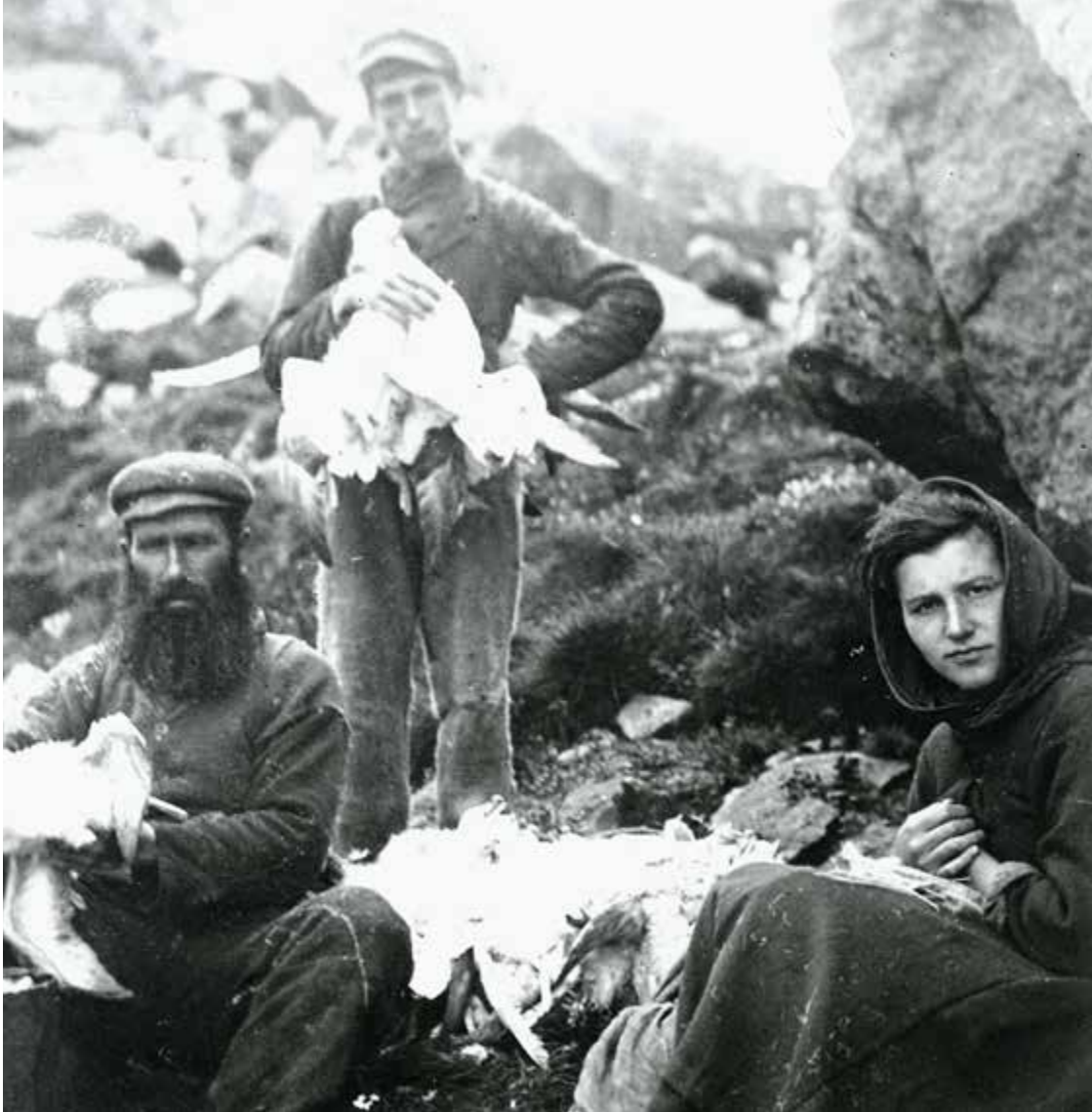
The archipelago and surrounding seas are protected by a number of national and international designations, both statutory and non-statutory. For the natural values, the property is designated as a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, National Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Scenic Area, Marine Consultation Area and Geological Conservation Review Site. For the cultural values, selected areas of Hirta are designated as Scheduled Monuments. These designations are backed up by UK, Scottish and local policies, plans and legislation.

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS), a charity, owns and manages the archipelago of St Kilda. Management is guided by a Management Plan which is approved and its implementation overseen by the major stakeholders.

Currently, the MOD has the only full time presence on the islands, although NTS and other conservation bodies/researchers are there for a significant part of the year. The current management regime is vulnerable to the withdrawal of the MOD and to resource constraints within the NTS.

Management of the cultural heritage will proceed on the basis of the minimum intervention required to sustain the attributes of the property's Outstanding Universal Value, underpinned by the recent intensive and systematic archaeological survey of the whole archipelago, carried out by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Conservation of the marine environment, at present, lacks the strong protection of the terrestrial heritage, and ensuring its greater protection in the future will be critical. Management of the natural heritage is and will continue to be one of non – intervention, allowing natural processes to take their course, except where a feature of greater heritage significance is under threat.

Many of the challenges facing St Kilda and/or the NTS in its management of the archipelago – e.g. the threat of invasive species, unsustainable tourism or fishing practices, coastal erosion, etc. – are tackled through working closely with relevant stakeholders, undertaking systematic research and monitoring, providing adequate resources and implementation of the approved and endorsed Management Plan for the property.



Appendix 2

Review of the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan

The 2012–17 St Kilda World Heritage Site management plan set out to deliver 12 outcomes. To achieve those outcomes, 38 objectives and 128 prescriptions were set and agreed. As the plan was extended, the following is an assessment of the extent to which those outcomes have been achieved up to the end of 2021.

Brief summary: St Kilda remains free of invasive non-native species; we have collected excellent data on the population and productivity of some of the key seabird species; the cultural heritage is maintained to a rigorous standard; visitor numbers increased by nearly 60% from the previous six years; and income increased by 18%.

APPENDICES

Appendix 2 - Review of the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan

The following section sets out the main achievements under each of the outcomes from the previous management plan.

Outcome 1: Continued conservation of the outstanding historic and natural features of the archipelago through monitoring and appropriate action to maintain them in favourable condition

The conservation of the key features of the site is the prime focus of both the management strategy and work on the island. A better understanding of the site has been achieved through monitoring and research, which has enabled maintenance of the site to an international standard.

The Geographic Information System for cultural heritage has been enhanced and data added over the years, to produce an effective management tool. Annual work plans were produced to cover monitoring, repair and maintenance of the built heritage, supported by a management agreement with HES. Conservation Statements for the Church, Amazon's House, Calum Mor's House, the Munitions Store, the World War One Gun and the Storehouse were produced to inform appropriate conservation repair. The aircraft wreck sites were surveyed; and marine wrecks were identified and added to a national database.

The archive was enhanced through donations and purchases of photographs, letters and journals. These included an early 20th-century photo album of a trip to St Kilda, photographs and other documents relating to Operation Hardrock in 1957, and a journal describing a trip in 1976.

The focus of the natural heritage monitoring on St Kilda was on the internationally important seabird colonies, and the Trust continued an intensive monitoring programme of population and productivity of key species. In addition, we developed artificial nest boxes for Leach's storm petrels, which are beginning to show signs of success. A 'whole island' seabird count was undertaken over three seasons, finishing in 2019.

Marine-based litter was collected annually from Village Bay and analysed to determine type and origin.

Bryophyte and lichen surveys were commissioned. The reports highlighted 39 new bryophyte species to St Kilda, including one new species to Scotland, which influenced our management decisions in some areas of Village Bay. A new species of dandelion (*Taraxacum pankhurstianum*) endemic to Hirta was discovered in 2012.

Intensive research on the St Kilda field mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus hirtensis*) was undertaken and published as a PhD thesis: *Ecology of an Island Mouse*. Monitoring of nesting and transient terrestrial birds on Hirta was carried out annually by staff, and a survey of St Kilda wren territories in Village Bay was carried out in 2016. Research has also included the smallest island residents: the Trust has facilitated research into invertebrates, including tardigrades.

Outcome 2: Marine World Heritage Site safeguarded appropriately

The total area of the St Kilda World Heritage Site is 24,201ha, of which over 90% is the marine element. Following representations from the Trust, management measures for the St Kilda marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the marine component of the Special Protection Area (SPA) were drawn up by the Scottish Government and put out for consultation. The Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods) (Scotland) Order 2015 came into force on 8 February 2016. This imposed a complete ban on the use of mobile fishing gear (trawls and dredges) and static set nets throughout the site. The only fishing methods that are currently legal within the site are creels and line fishing.

Cetacean and other marine sightings are monitored on a casual basis throughout the season and results reported to the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust. An underwater survey of the sea caves, the qualifying features of the SAC, was undertaken by NS in 2015.

Outcome 3: Action to successfully mitigate, urgent and potential threats to key features

The focus of action was the completion of an accurate baseline survey of key features, to ensure both a record of natural and cultural features but also to monitor change. The coastline in Village Bay was accurately surveyed as part of a quinquennial coastline survey, and annual monitoring of the coastline in Village Bay is also undertaken to record change and identify any archaeological deposits.

A five-year project to digitally document Scotland's World Heritage Sites and create accurate 3D data was undertaken by the Scottish Ten. The island of Hirta was the focus of the 3D survey efforts. An airborne LiDAR survey of all of St Kilda's islands gave the team a wealth of point cloud data and aerial photography.

A photographic record of every built structure and identified archaeological site in the archipelago was completed as well as a detailed survey of the Feather Store.

The biosecurity policy was reviewed and revised annually, or after a significant change. It now includes mitigation for marine species. The Trust is now a key partner in the Biosecurity for LIFE project, which aims to raise awareness of the issue of invasive non-native species, enhance plans and develop response preparedness.

The consultation process for the rebuilding of the MoD accommodation facility and energy centre was rigorous and comprehensive, to ensure no key features were threatened.

Outcome 4: Enhanced knowledge and understanding of the islands and their cultural and natural features

The focus of this outcome was to develop links with academic institutes, researchers and other similar sites, to enhance our understanding and management of St Kilda.

The Trust built on existing relationships and established new links with research institutions across Scotland and Europe. The Soay Sheep Project, run by researchers at the universities of Edinburgh and Imperial College London (with several other participating universities and research institutes), continues to collect information that has enabled ground-breaking research into topics including population dynamics, evolution and genetics, ageing, and parasite infection.

The Trust has worked with the Centre for Archaeology, Technology and Cultural Heritage and the School of Geography and Sustainable Development at the University of St Andrews; the Department of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Edinburgh; the University of Aberdeen's Lighthouse Field Station; the University of Manchester's Archaeology Department; the James Hutton Institute; and the Scottish Association for Marine Science, among others, to investigate a range of topics concerning both the natural and cultural features of the islands.

To gain from the experience of others and share best practice, the Trust has established links with other heritage sites across the world, including contributing to the transnational project PROWAD, funded by the European Union via the Interreg IVB North Sea Program, to investigate sustainable tourism. Working with Fornverkaskólinn Heritage Craft School in Skagafjörður, Iceland to develop traditional building skills, and contributes to the UNESCO World Heritage Marine Programme, a platform to share best practice as well as access expert advice.

Outcome 5: Enhanced provision of informed, responsible and enjoyable access, including virtual access

The Trust focused on understanding visitors and enhancing their visit. A system to accurately record visitor numbers and method of travel has been developed. All visitors can access updated information on visiting St Kilda on the website, and new leaflets on the site and its birdlife were produced. Cruise ships are required to book in advance and are given guidelines to help their passengers get the most from their visit. Special guidelines were also produced for climbers and campers.

Opportunities for artists were provided through two residencies, and other artistic opportunities were facilitated. This resulted in many local exhibitions, an international art exhibition and the production of new folk music inspired by the islands and their wildlife.

For those not able to travel to the archipelago, the Trust worked with partners in Taigh Chearsabhagh, North Uist and Aros Centre, Skye on exhibitions exploring life on St Kilda. Working with the Scottish Ten project and the University of St Andrews, contemporary and historical virtual landscapes were produced.



4th World Heritage Marine Managers Conference
© UNESCO/ Daniel Correia

Outcome 6: Further development of education and interpretation programmes that promote a greater understanding both of St Kilda and of sustainable conservation management amongst visitors and non-visitors

Opportunities to work with others to interpret St Kilda were taken throughout the period of the plan and resulted in the delivery and progression of several successful projects. The Trust has provided advice, information and archive material for exhibitions in Lewis, North Uist and Skye. There has been active participation in conferences on a range of subjects, from archaeology and conservation of historic buildings to seabirds and managing world heritage.

The Trust has worked with stakeholders and communities in the Western Isles towards providing more permanent off-site interpretation.

A successful NS/Trust partnership supported a visit to St Kilda by local children, who also participated in a UNESCO Youth Summit in Greenwich.

The Trust has made progress in making its archive more accessible, through the digitisation of images and documents, including the 1906–09 diary of Alice MacLachlan, which is available online.

APPENDICES

Appendix 2 - Review of the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan

Outcome 7: Regular liaison with local communities and stakeholders to understand each other's aspirations for St Kilda and to contribute to best practice of World Heritage Sites everywhere

St Kilda interests many people, including local communities and businesses in the Western Isles, descendants of islanders, the St Kilda Club, visitors and the World Heritage community.

Links with tourism providers were maintained through regular email and telephone contact, to ensure that information about the archipelago and its activities was shared. Online content was updated regularly with information, including weekly updates from the island throughout the season. Talks were given to local groups in the Highlands & Islands and further afield, including annual reports to the St Kilda Club AGM. There is Trust representation at the regular Scottish World Heritage Site Coordinators meetings. St Kilda participated in events to mark the 30th anniversary of UK sites being inscribed on the World Heritage List, and Trust staff attended the Marine World Heritage Site managers' conferences in 2016 and 2019.

Outcome 8: A greater awareness of the value of St Kilda internally and externally

We wanted to ensure that information about St Kilda reached a wide audience. Over the eight years of the plan, intense interest in St Kilda continued, with over 60 articles in the local, national and international press; book publications; radio and television interviews; and even an online game inspired by the striking landscape of Boreray.

There have been a number of books published, both fact and fiction, for adults and younger readers. HES published *St Kilda: The Last and Outmost Isle* in 2015, which updated archaeological information from the extensive collaborative survey undertaken between 2007–09 and reviewed historical information, challenging the isolated image of the islands.

A St Kilda Twitter account was launched in 2018 and an Instagram presence the following year, which have now both gained a good following.

Outcome 9: Greater environmental sustainability in all operations on the archipelago

All building works on St Kilda are subject to an environmental assessment. All works on pre-1930 buildings are carried out on the basis of minimal intervention, and the re-use of existing materials is preferred. The new MoD facility on St Kilda was subject to a rigorous environmental assessment during the design stage, which was applicable to both the construction phase and the completed buildings. The new buildings have been built to exceed minimum energy and thermal requirements. Water consumption will be reduced through upgrading existing systems and using modern appliances.

All other operations have been assessed, with small gains. For example, we have replaced cotton towels with hand dryers, banned plastic bags in 2014 and are using environmentally sensitive cleaning products throughout our operations.

Outcome 10: Continued collaborative working to implement the management plan

The key stakeholders met every six months to discuss operational management and to review progress on the management plan, with additional single-issue meetings arranged to consider strategic issues when necessary. Through these meetings, the key stakeholders were able to ensure that common interests were discussed; where appropriate, collaborative working was agreed to deliver objectives. Annual work plans were agreed, and issues that required statutory or landlord's consent were discussed, as were operational or policy changes that would affect one or more key stakeholders, such as the introduction of mandatory Helicopter Underwater Emergency Escape Training. The biosecurity plan was developed through input from the Trust, NS, the MoD and its agents (QinetiQ) to ensure understanding and compliance across the board. The same approach was taken for other common procedures, such as recycling and the use of drones.

Outcome 11: Adequate staffing and financial resources in place to meet the operational needs and vision of the property

Income to St Kilda increased by 18% between 2012/13 and 2016/17, contributing to a more secure and sustainable future for the property. HES continues to financially support the conservation of the cultural heritage, and the St Kilda Club continues to be a significant donor with funds raised primarily from the souvenir shop. Income from commercial boat operators and researchers also made important contributions, as did the annual rent from the MoD.

A staff review was undertaken to identify more effective ways of delivering the objectives of the management plan. Volunteering opportunities (in the form of work parties) continued and other opportunities were developed including longer-term visitor services placements. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 had a big impact on both the Trust's finances and the income to St Kilda. The immediate outcome of this was that no seasonal staff or volunteers were employed during 2020, and a review and reduction in staffing was undertaken.

APPENDICES

Appendix 2 - Review of the previous St Kilda World Heritage Site Management Plan

Outcome 12: A contingency plan in place should the MoD and its agents significantly alter their St Kilda operations

An assessment of the condition and significance of the MoD buildings in Village Bay was undertaken. In 2016 planning permission was sought to demolish the existing accommodation and service buildings and to erect a new facility. Works began on this development in 2017, which were scheduled to be completed by autumn 2021, providing a new accommodation block and energy centre. The new energy centre should significantly reduce fuel consumption and emissions by operating more efficiently. The design and location of the new accommodation units will lessen the impact on the landscape and partly restore the visual relationship between the Manse and village. Reinstatement of the area after the demolition of the old buildings was completed in October 2021 and will be monitored for the next 5 years.

This significant investment in the Hebrides Range indicates a commitment to the facility on St Kilda. The Trust and key stakeholders continue to work together on the operational impacts of these changes.

Appendix 3

Background information

1.0 Relevant legislation, policies and guidance

Protection of the archipelago, the surrounding seas and their key attributes is provided by a range of UK, Scottish and local policies, plans and legislation. The primary legislation in place is:

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, as amended
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005
- The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006
- The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007
- The Environmental Liability (Scotland) Regulations 2009
- The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010
- Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2011
- The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011
- The Scottish Marine Regions Order 2015
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- The Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020

2.0 Relevant National Trust for Scotland policies and guidelines:

- National Trust for Scotland Conservation, Learning, Access & Enjoyment Principles, 2018
- National Trust for Scotland Building Conservation Guidelines, 1997
- National Trust for Scotland Advancing Access: A Policy for Audiences and Collections Policy, 2018
- National Trust for Scotland Developing Collections: A Policy to Reflect and Enrich Lives, 2018
- National Trust for Scotland Caring for Collections: A Policy to Protect Significance, 2018
- National Trust for Scotland for Info: A Policy to Build and Share Information about Collections, 2018
- National Trust for Scotland Landscape Policy, 2016
- National Trust for Scotland Renewable Energy Policy, 2016
- National Trust for Scotland Turning the Tide: A Policy for Protection and Use of the Marine and Coastal Environment, 2019
- National Trust for Scotland Biosecurity Guidelines, 2013
- National Trust for Scotland Climbing Policy, 2014
- National Trust for Scotland Small Unmanned Aircraft at Trust Properties Policy, 2020
- National Trust for Scotland Gaelic Policy, 2005
- National Trust for Scotland Environmental Policy, 2015
- National Trust for Scotland Community Engagement Policy, 2020
- National Trust for Scotland Risk Management Policy, 2019
- National Trust for Scotland Partnership Guidelines, 2015

APPENDICES

Appendix 3 - Background information

3.0 Relevant regional policies and guidelines:

- Dualchas Do Dhaoine (Heritage for People), Place-based Heritage Strategy, Outer Hebrides, 2021–2031
- Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan, 2018–23

4.0 Relevant national policies and guidelines:

- The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) sets out the primary policy on the protection and management of the historic environment in Scotland.
- HES's *Our Place in Time* (2014) is Scotland's national historic environment strategy, which seeks to investigate, record, care for, protect, share and celebrate our historic environment assets.
- The Scottish Government's *Cultural Strategy for Scotland* (2020) sets out how culture can inspire, enrich and transform people's lives.
- Scotland's Archaeology Strategy (2015)
- The Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig, National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023
- NatureScot's Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

5.0 Relevant international policies and guidelines:

- The UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972
 - The UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, 2019
 - The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, 2015.
- The following goals have been identified as most relevant, and have been used in the development of this management plan:



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

- The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013

6.0 The role of the National Trust for Scotland and key stakeholders

The National Trust for Scotland (the Trust)

As owner of the St Kilda archipelago, responsibility for implementation of the management plan sits with the Trust and is entrusted to Trust staff, both on St Kilda and in support centres. They will continue to lead on this, liaising with key stakeholders, visitors and members of the wider community.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES, formerly Historic Scotland)

HES is an executive agency of the Scottish Government and is charged with safeguarding the nation's historic environment and promoting its understanding and enjoyment on behalf of Scottish Ministers. It is also responsible for providing advice and guidance in relation to World Heritage and for ensuring compliance with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. HES coordinates the compilation of any reports or requests for information received from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

HES will continue to maintain its regulatory and advisory role, ensuring that the management of St Kilda's historic environment is undertaken as agreed, and fulfilling the requirements of Scheduled Monument legislation as well as obligations set out under the World Heritage Convention. HES is also a statutory consultee in the planning system where development may have an impact on the setting of Scheduled Monuments.

NatureScot (NS, formerly Scottish Natural Heritage)

NS will continue to maintain a regulatory and advisory role, fulfilling its duty to monitor the management of the islands in respect of their natural heritage conservation designations, in particular the NNR, SSSI and Natura 2000 interests. NS is also a statutory consultee in the planning system where development may have an impact on Scotland's nature or landscapes.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)

The archipelago is within the local authority area of CnES, giving them a range of regulatory and planning responsibilities as well as responsibility for the provision of some services.

Ministry of Defence (MoD) and its agents

The MoD lease areas of land on Hirta from the Trust as part of the wider Hebrides Range facility. Their agents, QinetiQ, operate this facility on their behalf. The current lease (2003–28) was agreed on the basis of a series of management principles to inform activities on St Kilda and retains the condition that obligations/agreements therein will apply equally to the MoD and any of its contractors.

The MoD base on St Kilda greatly facilitates the logistics of conservation on the islands. All services provided to the Trust by the MoD and their contractors are agreed on an annual basis in the Service Level Agreement. The assistance provided includes transport of materials, supplies and personnel; communications; infrastructure, including electricity, water and waste water; and a year-round presence on the island.

St Kilda Club

The St Kilda Club is a registered charity that was founded to help conserve and protect the islands of St Kilda, as well as raise public awareness of their outstanding beauty, animal and plant life, artefacts, archaeology and the buildings, culture and natural history. The club organises an annual reunion with guest lecturers and a photo competition at their AGM, publishes an annual magazine (*The St Kilda Mail*) and runs the souvenir shop on the main island of Hirta (staffed by Trust staff and volunteers). All profits from the shop are donated to the Trust to fund a variety of projects.

Appendix 4

St Kilda Research Guidelines

1.0 How the National Trust for Scotland approaches research associated with St Kilda World Heritage Site

Research by us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is research undertaken or commissioned directly by the Trust.• This is research that informs our activities and seeks to address existing research priorities or gaps in knowledge.
Research with us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whilst we have identified our own research priorities for St Kilda World Heritage Site, we also engage with research communities to collaborate in the production of work that contributes to our understanding and appreciation of St Kilda, as well as contributing to wider research fields.• Examples include collaborative PHDs and joint research projects with other bodies.
Independent research related to St Kilda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• St Kilda World Heritage Site attracts significant research interest, which researchers may undertake independently and for their own purposes.• Whilst this is not research that we directly endorse or collaborate in, we may engage (if appropriate) to encourage transfer of knowledge and wider dissemination, where the research contributes to our understanding and appreciation of St Kilda World Heritage Site.

2.0 St Kilda World Heritage Site Research Guidelines

When the Trust is determining whether to undertake, commission or collaborate in research associated with St Kilda World Heritage Site, the following research guidelines will be used:

2.1 The research is appropriate

The research fulfils a specific outcome and will clearly contribute to our understanding and appreciation of St Kilda World Heritage Site. Future research proposals should be cognisant of existing research and fill a gap in knowledge which does not already exist

The research does not damage or put the heritage at risk. An assessment of measures including, but not limited to, appropriate biosecurity, monitoring and mitigation will be required.

Research proposals should give a positive answer to the question '*Does this research have to be undertaken on St Kilda?*'. This is to ensure that research cannot be undertaken in a less sensitive environment.

2.2 Resources and prioritisation

The research should not take up an unreasonable amount of Trust resources. Any resource that the research does require should be taken account of in the research funding, either as agreed revenue or in-kind contributions. Due acknowledgement of support received by the Trust should be made, which should be agreed with the Trust in advance.

The level of Trust resource required (e.g. if accommodation is required on the island) may be used to prioritise which research is supported by the Trust.

Where there are competing priorities, research will be prioritised based on urgency (e.g. where there is evidence that heritage may be lost).

2.3 Competency and research standards

Researchers should be able to provide evidence of scrutiny and approval from a reputable ethics committee.

Research should be conducted or supervised by appropriately qualified staff (e.g. archaeological research carried out by qualified archaeologists [registered with ClfA] or recognised archaeology research departments at universities).

2.4 Accessing and sharing research

The research should align with the Trust's charitable status and purpose: to protect, care for, share and speak up for Scotland's heritage. Research should be shared in a timely way and be communicated so it can be understood by a wide audience. The methodology for communication of the research should be agreed with the Trust in advance.

Research undertaken by or in collaboration with the Trust should, where possible, be made available in an accessible depository, which is appropriate to the nature of the research undertaken and accords with the UKRI Common Principles on Data Policy. The specific depository and the duration that research will be available for should be agreed with the Trust in advance.

APPENDICES

Appendix 4 - St Kilda Research Guidelines

3.0 Guidance and specific considerations for researchers

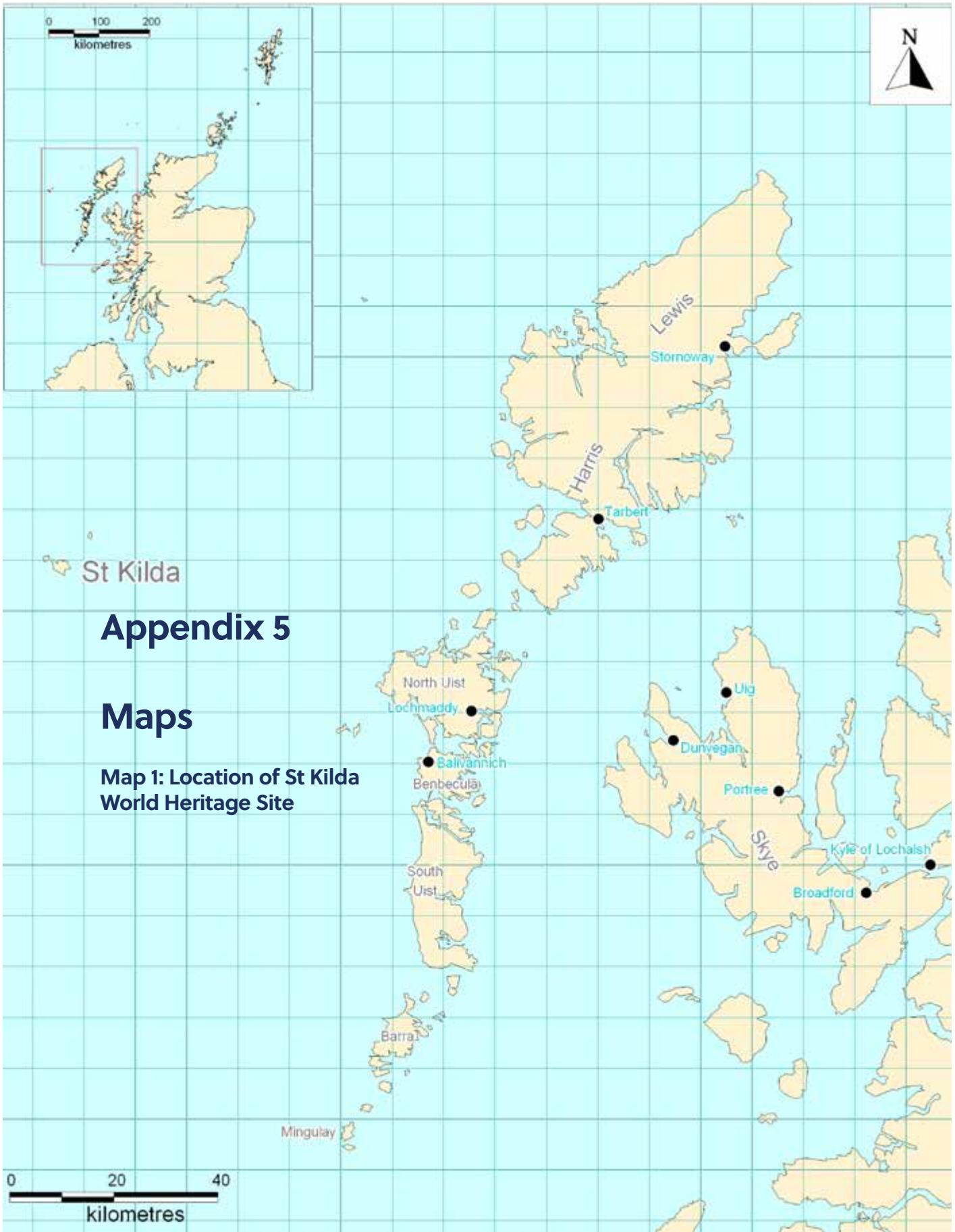
The above guidelines will be used by the Trust to guide and prioritise all research proposals associated with St Kilda World Heritage Site.

Access to St Kilda is primarily by charter boat. Access to St Kilda can be challenging due to weather and sea conditions, particularly during winter months (from September to April). All equipment must be transported to St Kilda by boat, and internet access on island can be intermittent. Researchers should consider these logistical factors when developing their proposals.

St Kilda is a sensitive and highly designated environment. As noted in the above guidelines, research must not damage or put the heritage at risk. In developing proposals, researchers should consider how their research will accord with the Trust's biosecurity and pollution plans (available on request), as well as statutory consent regimes and other relevant legislation.

4.0 National Trust for Scotland Research Priorities

The Trust is in the process of developing its own research priorities for the natural and cultural heritage of St Kilda World Heritage Site, in the form of a research strategy.



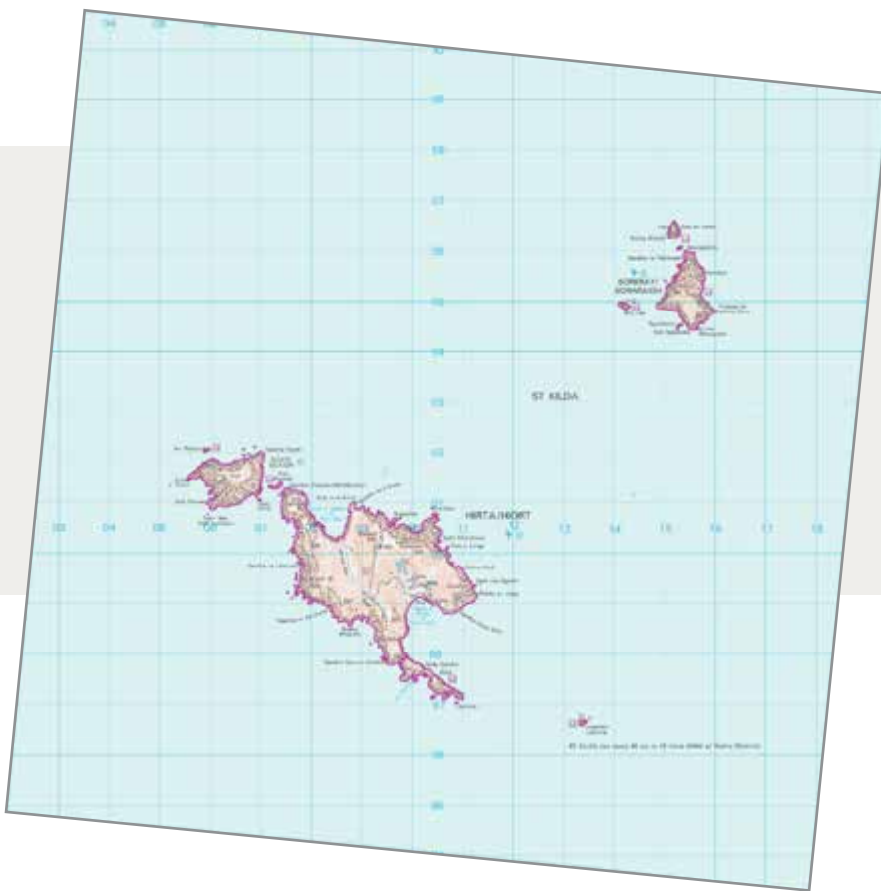
Appendix 5



Maps

Map 1: Location of St Kilda World Heritage Site

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
National Trust for Scotland ownership boundary



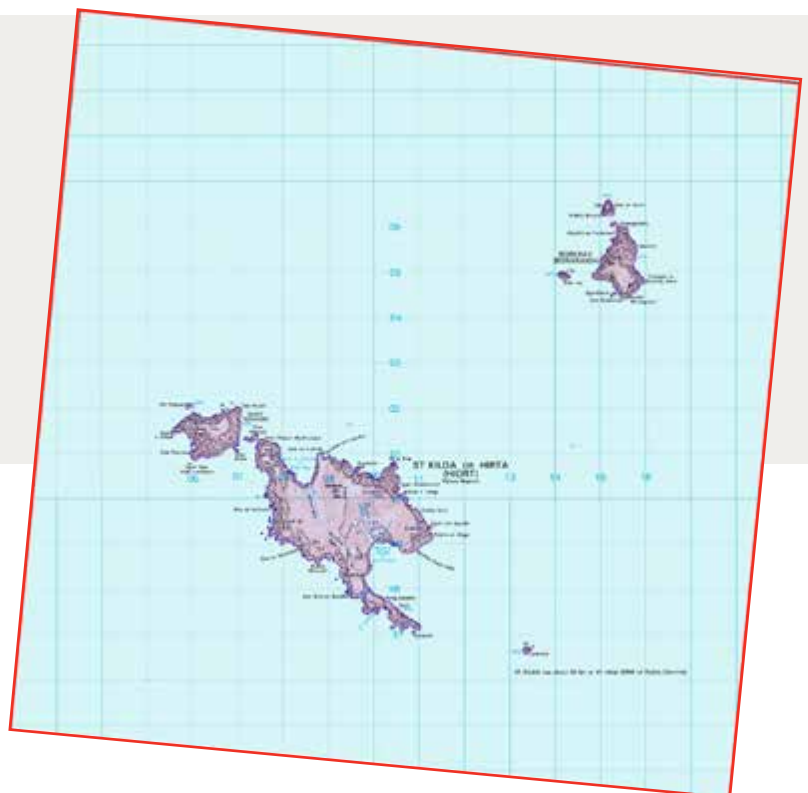
-  NTS Ownership boundary
-  St Kilda World Heritage Site Boundary

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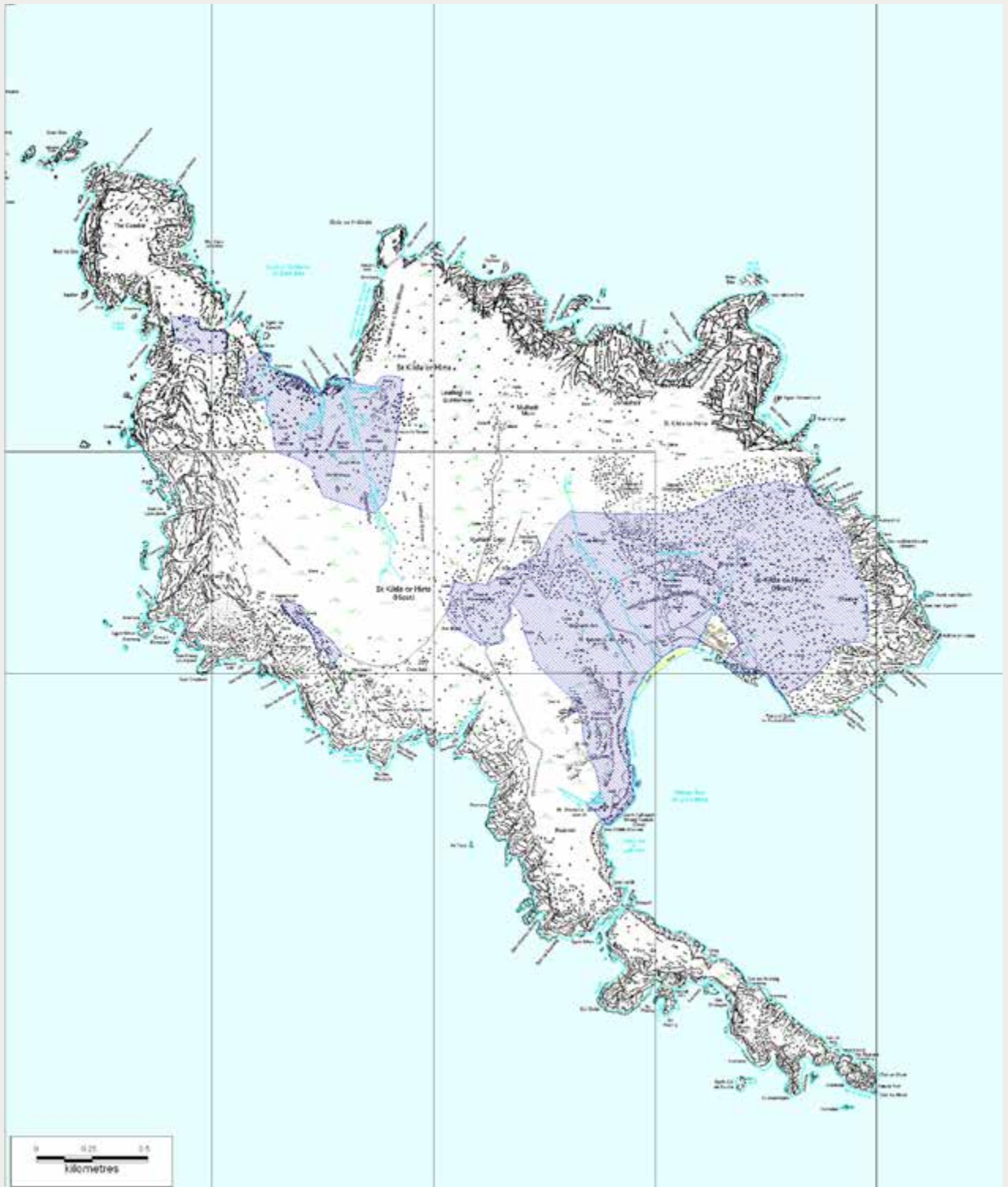
St Kilda Site of Special Scientific Interest

-  SSSI boundary
-  St Kilda World Heritage Site Boundary

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St Kilda Scheduled Monuments

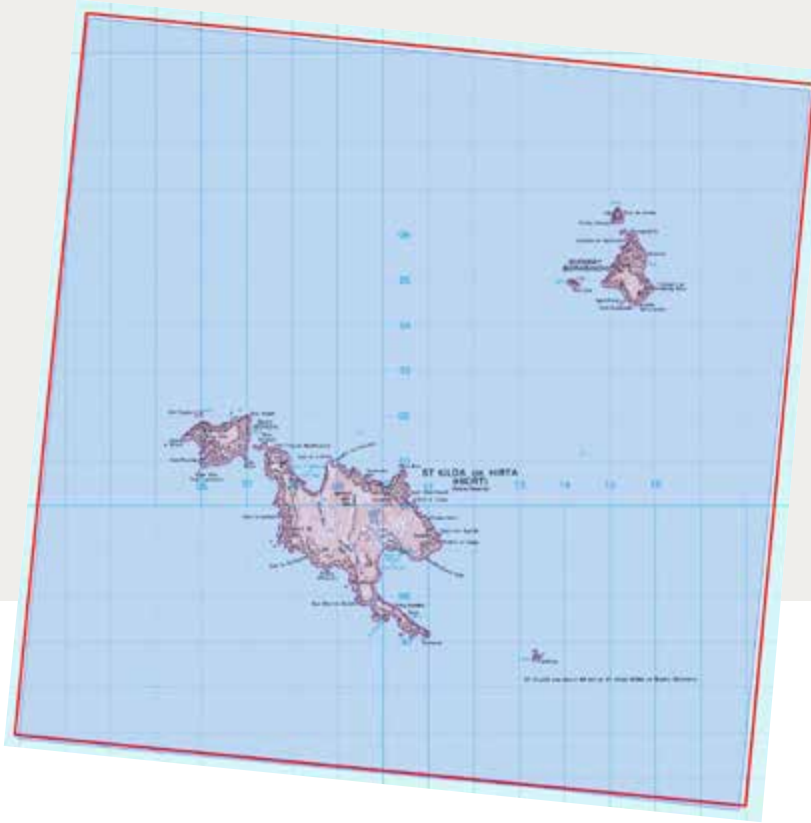




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APPENDICES

Appendix 5 - Maps




Special Area of Conservation



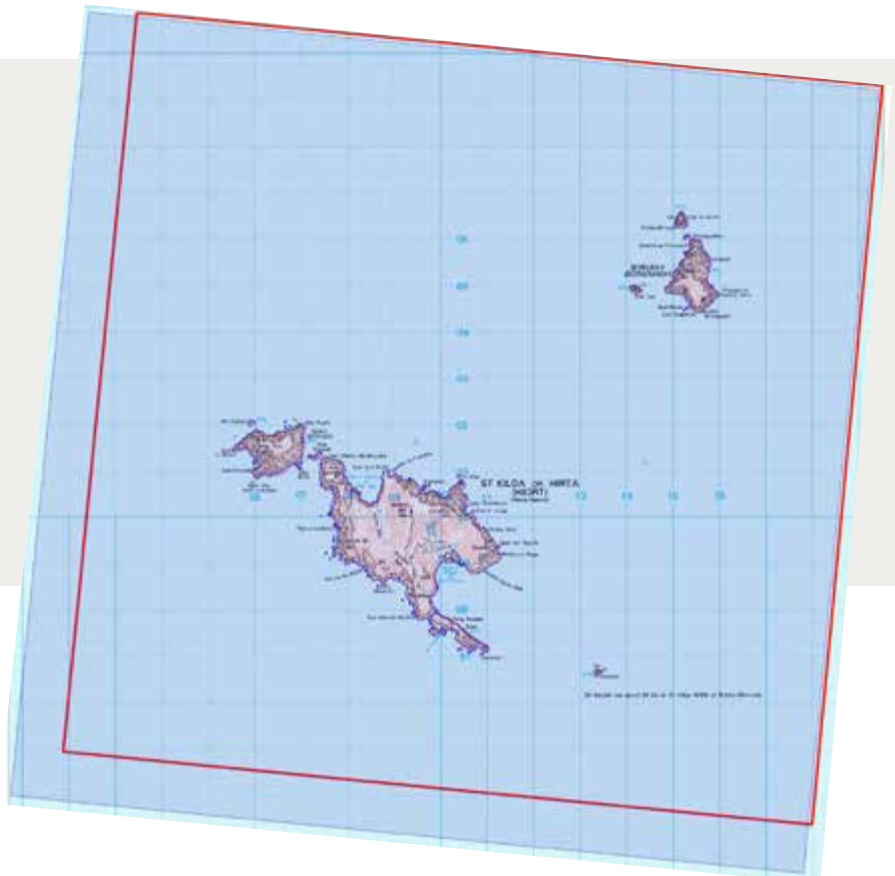
-  SAC boundary
-  St Kilda World Heritage Site Boundary

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Special Protection Area


-  SPA boundary
-  St Kilda World Heritage Site Boundary
-  NTS Ownership boundary

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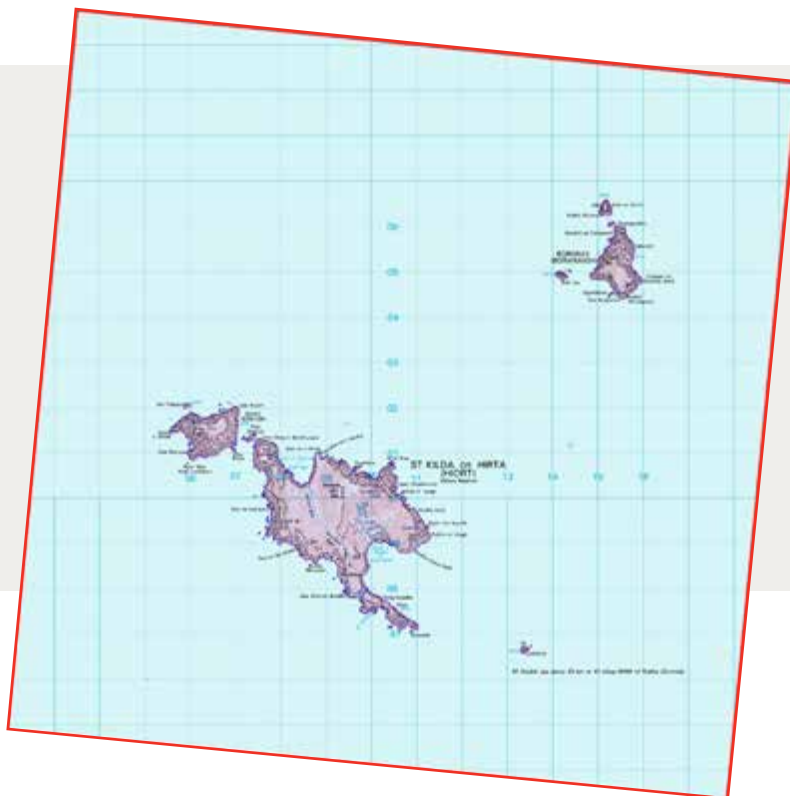
National Scenic Area



 NSA boundary

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National Nature Reserve



 NNR boundary

 St Kilda World Heritage Site Boundary

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