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Cover image: View from Dugald Stewart Monument, Calton Hill
Introduction

This short guide is intended as an introduction to the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site (WHS), its inscription on the World Heritage List, and its management and governance. It is one of a series of Site-specific short guides for each of Scotland’s five World Heritage Sites.

For information outlining what World Heritage status is and what it means, the responsibilities and benefits attendant upon achieving World Heritage status and current approaches to the protection and management of World Heritage Sites in Scotland, please see the World Heritage in Scotland short guide.

More information can be found via the Further Information and Contacts section.
The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh: Key Facts

- Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995 as a cultural World Heritage Site.
- The Site contains nearly 4,500 individual buildings, of which over 75% are listed due to special architectural or historic interest.
- The Site also contains Scheduled Monuments, the best known being Edinburgh Castle.
- The Site ‘represents a remarkable blend of two urban phenomena: the organic medieval growth and the eighteenth and nineteenth century town planning’.
- The Site has retained its historic urban form and character to a remarkable extent.
- In the New Town the integrity of the street layout is a key defining factor of its character. In the Old Town the ‘spine and ribs’ pattern of the High Street and its closes and wynds maintains the medieval street and its associated land holding pattern.
- The Old Town was overlaid in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century with wide streets as a result of the City Improvement Acts and commercial ventures.
- There are many open spaces and graveyards throughout the Site.
- The Old Town contains two twelfth century burghs with two early royal palaces (one within the castle), a medieval abbey, and a wealth of early buildings.
- The New Town contains a high concentration of world-class neo-classical buildings, remarkably intact.
- The Site contains the dramatic river valley of the Water of Leith. The valley contains the original mill settlements of Bell’s Mill, the village of Dean and part of Stockbridge.
The World Heritage Site

THE OLD AND NEW TOWNS OF EDINBURGH

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site is located at the heart of Scotland’s capital city, covering some four square miles of the urban area. It includes certain areas where World Heritage status might be used to inspire careful redevelopment (such as the St James Centre) and excludes other areas that act as natural buffers (such as Holyrood Park and the Meadows).

There is no formal buffer zone around the Site. The main objective outside the World Heritage boundary is to protect the iconic skyline, and the key views in and out of the Site, as well as its setting. National guidance, alongside conservation areas and listed building designations and a Skyline Study offer sophisticated layers of protection beyond that which a traditional buffer zone could offer. The Skyline Study defines the dramatic topography of Arthur’s Seat, Calton Hill, the Firth of Forth and surrounding hills as the additional attributes critical to the understanding and therefore the protection of the World Heritage Site.
Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Each WHS has a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) which provides a clear understanding of the reasons for the Site’s inscription on the World Heritage List, and of what needs to be managed in order to sustain the OUV for the long term. The SOUV describes the WHS and its importance, lists the Criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List, explains how the WHS satisfies UNESCO’s requirements for Authenticity and Integrity, and summarises the management requirements. See Further Information & Contacts for a link to the full SOUV document for the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS.

CRITERIA

To be included on the World Heritage List, Sites must meet at least one out of ten selection criteria, as explained in UNESCO’s Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The Criteria under which the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS is inscribed on the World Heritage List are:

Criterion (ii): Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.

The successive planned extensions of the New Town, and the high quality of its architecture, set standards for Scotland and beyond, and exerted a major influence on the development of urban architecture and town planning throughout Europe, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Criterion (iv): Be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

The Old and New Towns together form a dramatic reflection of significant changes in European urban planning, from the inward looking, defensive walled medieval city of royal palaces, abbeys and organically developed burgage plots in the Old Town, through the expansive formal Enlightenment planning of the 18th and 19th centuries in the New Town, to the 19th century rediscovery and revival of the Old Town with its adaptation of a distinctive Baronial style of architecture in an urban setting.

John Knox House, Royal Mile
St Bernards Well, Dean Village
Managing The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh

KEY MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

The Partners in managing the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS are the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), Historic Scotland (HS), and Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH). A Steering Group composed of representatives of all the Partner organisations coordinates and implements the aims and objectives set out in the WHS Management Plan.

A WHS Coordinator ensures effective coordination between Partners, coordinates and drives forward implementation, monitoring and revision of the Management Plan and associated action plans/objectives, promotes the OUV and public benefit of the WHS, increases awareness and understanding among partners, stakeholders and the public, and serves as a central point for advice.

For more information about World Heritage governance in Scotland see the World Heritage in Scotland Short Guide.

Old Town and Castle

Outside The People’s Story on the Canongate
Managing The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS Management Plan (2011-2016) is a framework document for the preservation of the OUV of the WHS. It sets out how the Site will be managed by identifying a series of key issues and devising specific objectives or actions to address these issues. It was developed consensually by the Partners, bodies who have a role in actively managing the Site and access to it. ICOMOS advises that Management Plans for WHSs should be based on a strategic view over 30 years. The vision provides the basis to develop long-term aims.

The long-term aims for the World Heritage Site are:

• Protect its outstanding universal values and promote its harmonious adaptation to the needs of contemporary life in a modern city.
• Ensure that its unique qualities and its global significance are understood in order to conserve and to safeguard the inherited cultural and historic assets.
• Agree and co-ordinate action between interest groups through the medium of a Management Plan containing all necessary principles and policies.
• Ensure that it continues to be a thriving, living, contemporary city with services and facilities which meet users’ needs and respect the World Heritage Site’s cultural and historical significance.
• Build strong partnerships with local, national and international communities and organisations in order to bring people together to deliver the vision.
• Foster pride, awareness and understanding, and make it accessible, inclusive and enjoyable for all.
• Strive to make it an exemplar in urban heritage management and conservation, using the highest standards of design and materials.

THE VISION

Developed from the Management Plan workshops, which involved the many stakeholders with an interest in the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh. It can be found in the Executive Summary of the current Management Plan and reads as follows:

We share an aspiration for the World Heritage Site to sustain its outstanding universal value by safeguarding and enhancing the remarkable and beautiful historic environment. This supports a confident and thriving capital city centre, its communities, and its cultural and economic life.
World Heritage Site designation does not result in additional direct legal protection. Nevertheless, the WHS is protected through the planning system by identifying listed buildings and conservation areas. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) requires that planning authorities protect World Heritage Sites and their settings from inappropriate development by including relevant policies in the Local Development Plan (LDP). The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) sets policy specifically for the historic environment.

**Listed buildings** are buildings of architectural or historical interest. They listed as category A (national or international importance), B (regional or more than local importance), or C (local importance). Around 75% of the buildings within the World Heritage Site are listed.

**Conservation areas** protect the historic character of an area, not only buildings but also features such as trees, parks, paving and street furniture. The whole of the WHS is protected by the Old Town, New Town, Dean Village and West End Conservation Areas.

There is no specific Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for the City of Edinburgh based on the WHS Management Plan. There is, however, a policy in the Edinburgh City Local Plan that recognises the importance of protecting the OUV of the Site. There is also specific guidance on the protection of key views, which is critical to protecting the value of the Site. There is guidance listed in the Monitoring Report with information from documents that have been approved by CEC and provide specific policies additional to the development plan. Information on the local and strategic development plans for Edinburgh can be found on the CEC website.

**SUMMARY OF RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE:**
- Our Place in Time – The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland (March 2014)
- The Town and Country Planning Act (Scotland) 1997 as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006
- Scottish Planning Policy (2010)
- Planning Advice Note 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology
- Historic Environment (Amendment) Scotland Act 2011, which amends three pieces of primary legislation
  - The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953;
  - The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979; and
  - The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), December 2011
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes, Historic Scotland, various dates
Further Information and Contacts

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KEY LINKS

Edinburgh World Heritage http://www.ewht.org.uk/

UNESCO World Heritage Centre - World Heritage List: Old and New Towns of Edinburgh:
http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/728/

Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS on the HS website: here you can find links to the Management Plan and SOUV:

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS leaflet can be downloaded at:

For planning policies and guidance see the City of Edinburgh Council local and strategic development plan pages:
http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_strategic_development_plans/1019/local_and_strategic_development_plans/1