

# Boundary of Conservation Importance Commentary & Criteria

## 1 Introduction

The current protection legislation may miss many boundary structures, leaving them at risk from destruction because of its reliance on scheduling. Dorset's historic records for planning was set up in the late 1970's. The landscape features section has only one classification of interest to the planning system: scheduled monument. Thus it is crucial for a feature to be scheduled. This is analogous to the situation in conserving wildlife where SSSIs were the only classification recognised. Because Dorset Wildlife Trust realised there are many sites worthy of conservation not designated, it set up a project to notify the planners of these in advance of an application to minimise the work following from the inevitable objection during statutory consultation. This system is now recognised by the authorities as a valuable tool in preventing further loss of biodiversity and is a good model on which to base a scheme to conserve the historic boundaries.

The Scheduled Monuments criteria are decided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and set out in Annex 1 (DCMS 2010). They are described as not definitive, but indicators which contribute to a wider judgement. They only apply to archaeological sites of national significance and even then, only when scheduling is thought to be the best way of preserving them. Thus it is easy to see that features of a county importance would not necessarily be scheduled and as a consequence, not considered in any planning application.

## 2 Criteria for a BCI at county level (provisional)

The criteria below are adapted from the DCMS criteria:

- a. Not scheduled or otherwise protected by legislation or regulation. This includes regulations not primarily concerned with historic features, such as the Hedgerow Regulations and agri-environment schemes).
- b. Period – examples of types that can be referred to a period by historic evidence.
- c. Rarity – lengths of a type that represent .... % of the total. Define 'type specimens' (sensu botany).
- d. Documentation – contemporary accounts or reports of investigation is helpful. If none, see 'potential'
- e. Condition of the earthworks – extent, state of preservation, visibility of features. (the condition of any hedge or veteran tree is excluded because these are the concern of other systems).
- f. Fragility – vulnerability to permanent destruction. The commonly translates into the risk of destruction by development, in its broadest sense, especially when the boundary has lost its function.
- g. Potential (to contribute to understanding) –sites where there is a reasonable likelihood of informative physical remains to be uncovered.
- h. Group value – associated with related, contemporary monuments (not necessarily boundary features like 'gates', veteran trees) or with later features that have arisen due to the presence of the boundary feature.
- i. Landscape context – its visual or structural value in the scene.

- j. Cultural association – folk tales, ancient customs, historic figure, literary and media locations etc.

Information available:

Historic record: charters, grants of land, OS remarks books.

Visible features: recent surveys recorded in a hercological record form (HRF)

Assessment of potential:

Complexity: greater potential to contribute to an understanding of history.

Likelihood of physical features being found by excavation.

### 3 Procedure

The decision to recognise a length of a boundary as of conservation importance in Dorset will be by a panel of members of the Dorset County Boundary Group and be based on the criteria. The draft criteria set out above will be refined as experience is gained and data become available to enable the best examples to be selected. An up to date copy of the criteria will be publically available.

The decision will be derived from objective evidence so far as possible. As a minimum there should be an HRF and some historic documents, or a summary of them, available to the panel. The attached checklist lists the information required and the panel's decision. Surveys for the purpose of listing a length of boundary as of conservation importance should be done with the permission of the owner of at least one side of the boundary.

The panel will maintain a list of boundary lengths of conservation importance (BCI). A copy will be held by the county archaeologist and the planning authorities in the counties separated by the boundary. Any lengths boundary thought to meet national guidelines for scheduling will also be notified to English Heritage. A copy of the HRF and a summary form will also be sent to the owner(s) of the land adjoining the boundary. If appropriate, advice on maintaining or enhancing the boundary features will be offered.

### 4 References

	date	Title	Notes
EH		What can be scheduled, EH website	English Heritage
EH		Scheduled Monuments; a guide to owners & occupiers	English Heritage
DCMS	2010 b	Principles of selection for listed buildings	Dept. Culture, Media & Sport
DCMS	2010 a	Scheduled Monuments	Dept. Culture, Media & Sport
DCMS	1990	Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Dept. Culture, Media & Sport
DCMS	1979	Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979	Dept. Culture, Media & Sport

## Annex 1: Criteria for assessing the national importance of monuments

---

The following criteria (which are not in any order of ranking), are used by the Secretary of State for assessing the national importance of a monument and considering whether scheduling is appropriate. They should not be regarded as definitive; but as indicators which contribute to a wider judgment based on the individual circumstances of a case.

- **Period:** all types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation.
- **Rarity:** there are some monument categories which are so scarce that all surviving examples which still retain some archaeological potential should be preserved. In general, however, a selection must be made which portrays the typical and commonplace as well as the rare. This process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of a particular class of monument, both in a national and a regional context.
- **Documentation:** the significance of a monument may be enhanced by the existence of records of previous investigation or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary written or drawn records. Conversely, the absence of documentation can make the potential of a monument more important as the only means of developing our understanding.
- **Group Value:** the value of a single monument (such as a field system) may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments (such as a settlement and cemetery) or with monuments of different periods. In some cases, it is preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group.
- **Survival / Condition:** the survival of a monument's archaeological potential both above and below ground is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition and surviving features.
- **Fragility / Vulnerability:** highly important archaeological evidence from some field monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature would particularly benefit from the statutory protection which scheduling confers. There are also existing standing structures of particular form or complexity whose value can again be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment, and which are similarly well suited by scheduled monument protection.
- **Diversity:** some monuments may be selected for scheduling because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute.
- **Potential:** on occasion, the nature of the evidence cannot be specified precisely, but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating its existence and importance and so to demonstrate the justification for scheduling. The greater the likelihood that

such evidence will be revealed through archaeological investigation, the stronger will be the justification for scheduling.