

Site Collections Development Policy

Name of Museum: English Heritage – Byland

Abbey Name of Governing Body: English Heritage

Trust

Date on which this policy was approved by the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Committee: 17 March 2021

Policy review procedure:

The Site Collections Development Policy is owned by the Senior Curator for the geographical area. It will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of a cyclical process managed through Registry.

Date at which this policy is due for review: March 2026

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the Site Collections Development Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the collections.

1. Management Arrangements and scope

- 1.1. This policy covers all the museum artefacts managed by English Heritage from or associated with the site whether they are held on site, at another English Heritage site or store, or on loan to a third party. This policy does not cover artefacts associated with other English Heritage sites which are stored or displayed at this site.
- 1.2. The site and its collections form part of the National Collection of English Heritage.
- 1.3. Byland Abbey was placed into guardianship on 29/8/1921 by the then owner: Lady Julia Wombwell of Newburgh Priory, the current owners are the Wombwell Estate, Newburgh Priory. The guardianship area includes land immediately around the abbey ruins and a detached outer gatehouse on Oldstead Lane.
- 1.4. Byland Abbey Inn stands opposite the abbey, within the original monastic precinct on the site of former monastic buildings. It is in the freehold ownership of HMBCE (since 2005). The building and its contents are not considered part of the English Heritage collections. It is grade II listed. The land it stands on is part of the wider scheduled area.
- 1.5. Byland Abbey is located in the village of Byland Abbey, near Wass, North Yorkshire. Byland abbey is a grade I listed building, list no; 1315790, grid reference: SE 54951 78959. The outer gatehouse is grade II listed, list no 1149576. Byland Abbey was one of the largest Cistercian communities in

Yorkshire, its plan is exceptionally complete. It stands on an extensive area of scheduled monument land, list no 1013403, grid reference SE 54653 78822, SE 54679 79184, SE 55226 78250, SE 55274 79116 which includes the remains of the Cistercian monastery, the monastic precinct, water management earthworks, enclosures, ancillary buildings and quarries. The scheduled area does not include the whole original monastic precinct.

- 1.6 Byland Abbey is in the Ryedale District Council area and is within the North Yorkshire Moors National Park. The southern boundary of the guardianship area is also the southern boundary of the national park. The adjacent council area to the south and east is under Hambleton District Council. All three areas have different planning controls, the NYMPA is the main planning authority for the guardianship area and most of the scheduled area. The Hambleton District Council area encompasses some of the scheduled area.

2. Relationships to other relevant policies/plans of the organisation

- 2.1. The national *Collections Development Policy* approved by the Board of Trustees on 9 November 2016, (together with any amendments to, or replacements for, the policy approved by Trustees), apply to the site. In the event of any disagreement between this site policy and the national policy the national policy will apply.
- 2.2. Without limitation to the above all the procedures, all ethical and legal considerations set out in the national policy apply to acquisitions, disposals and loans from or to the sites collection.
- 2.2. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

3. History of the collections

- 3.1. There have been over 50 recorded interventions ranging from excavation to watching briefs and surveys over the wider monastic precinct since the early 19th century to present. Almost all of the collections are archaeological and are from the scheduled area, and mostly from the guardianship area having been excavated in several antiquarian campaigns, starting with then site owner Martin Stapylton in 1820, and then under the Ministry of Works clearances in the early 20th century once the site was placed in guardianship. Most are poorly contexted. There is also a small quantity of archives from the modern watching briefs within the guardianship area.
- 3.2 A museum was established on site in the early 1920's, firstly it was an adapted works shed set on unexcavated land in the lay brothers cloister, then in the 1950s a purpose-built museum was erected on the southern

boundary of the site, made out of abbey stone.

3.3 Gifts to the collection include a watercolour of Byland Abbey gifted by Mary and Elizabeth Holthouse in 2005, surface finds from Mowbray House garden opposite the abbey (not scheduled but surrounded by scheduled land) collected over 20 years, gifted in 2019.

3.4 A tenancy agreement referring to monastic landholdings at Old Byland Grange, dated 1534, was transferred into EHT collections from Louth Museum in 2018.

3.5 A watercolour painting of a lost building of Byland Abbey by Sandby Munn was acquired by purchase in 2013

4. An overview of the collections

4.1 There are 750 current object records in the Byland Abbey collection. They represent a fairly typical monastic 1920s site clearance assemblage being majority architectural stonework, bulk floor tiles and bulk ceramics. There is a general paucity of small finds with just 21 coins and jettons, and a handful of other small finds reflecting the methodology of clearance on site. Of particular note are the internationally significant 12th century stone lectern and the thousands of 12th-15th century floor tiles forming a unique assemblage alongside those still set in the monument and kiln waste evidence. Of national significance is a 14th-15th century inkstand and an aludel.

4.2 There are 8 works on paper, 6 antiquarian prints and two 19th century paintings, one tenancy agreement with wax seal. The site paper-based archive dating from c. 1921 to present includes correspondence, finds book, plans, visitor books, research papers and catalogues noting the medieval floor tiles and the extensive dispersed architectural stonework collections.

4.3 There is a limited social history collection associated with the mid-20th century management of the site with a custodian's hat and satchel.

5. Themes and priorities for future collecting

5.1. The assemblage from Byland Abbey is biased towards architectural stone and floor tiles yet what is listed in the permanent collections are only a proportion of a much larger assemblage represented by floor tiles set on site, buried architectural stone and dispersed architectural stonework now in private ownership. Priority should be given to safeguarding the in-situ floor tiles, which may be accessioned in future, and the collecting of key diagnostic architectural stonework and sculpture in the dispersed collections. Collections reflecting aspects of land management and industry should also be considered a priority, for

example kiln evidence and water management.

5.2 Archaeological material

5.2.1 EHT seeks to set a geographical collecting area that respects the original monastic precinct and associated water engineering and technological activity around the guardianship area whilst recognising a need to limit collecting from this wider area to material deemed of key interest in our ability to curate and interpret the guardianship site.

5.2.2 In terms of a collecting area it is sensible to consider this area as a focus, limited to the scheduled area and extending to the north to Hambleton Lane and the southern boundary of Abbey Bank Wood; to the East, Wass Bank Road and the track extending south of Wass Bank Road to the scheduled area, enclosing the original cemetery; to the south from Low Pasture House directly north west to meet the scheduled land on the South west; to the West a north-south line running south from the extended scheduled area on the west. This area concords with Jeacock's survey¹ of the later monastic precinct. Additionally, consideration would be given to collecting outside of this geographic area if from the outer mural area and closely associated with monastic activity, for example water management, fishing or tile manufacture.

5.2.3 We would seek to collect, through negotiation, all known and future archaeological archives (artefactual and paper-based) from the scheduled monument area and wider boundary identified above. Where interventions lead to potential deposition with English Heritage all periods of finds will be considered for acquisition, with a pre-deposition disposal policy for repetitive and non-diagnostic material. Archaeological archive resulting from large scale excavations would only be accepted following negotiations with the excavator/developer, including the issues of capacity and costs.

5.2.4 We would also seek to collect, through negotiation, all known and future chance discoveries (single or small group) from the collecting area (which should be reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme), including items which fall under the Treasure Act 1996. These will be limited to monastic related finds with clear provenance.

5.3 Detached architectural material which is diagnostic and non-repetitive will be collected if it cannot be adequately recorded for

¹ Jeacock, M, Burn, A, Brown, G, Oswald, A, Byland Abbey, Ryedale, North Yorkshire, Archaeological Survey and investigation of part of the precinct and extra-mural area HE Research Dept Report Series no.4-2011, pp89

- archiving or it is of display quality.
- 5.3.1 The architectural material buried in the clamp in the 1920s-30s outside the north wall of the nave is partially recorded through excavation in 1988. As such it is currently an unmanaged resource. The material should be integrated into EHT catalogues. This task could only adequately be completed by re-excavation.
 - 5.3.2 Loose tiles should be collected, even if repetitive, as they form part of an internationally significant assemblage.
- 5.4 Dispersed collections: We seek to unify split assemblages whether through acquisition or disposal. English Heritage would collect known archaeological material currently held by organisations or private individuals originating from the collecting area if it was to be offered to English Heritage and fulfilled all other criteria for collecting, this includes:
- 5.4.1 Architectural stonework and sculpture removed from the site in the 19th century campaigns by Stapylton and now in a private garden at Myton Hall, Boroughbridge.
 - 5.4.2 Architectural stonework in private gardens in Wass village
 - 5.4.3 Architectural stonework at Low Pasture House.
-
- 5.4.4 Oldstead Grange archaeological archive (Fisherman's Hut) currently held at Ryedale Folk Museum Holy Trinity sculpture and altar table at Ampleforth Abbey, English Heritage would accept these collections if their future was otherwise in jeopardy.
 - 5.4.5 A split archive of 34 ceramic sherds held by Dorman Museum, Middlesbrough. English Heritage would transfer to EHT to unite the split archive if possible.
 - 5.4.6 English Heritage would seek to integrate stolen items (polychrome architectural fragments) back into the collection if they were recovered.
 - 5.4.7 Potential finds from clearance spoil placed in the fields south of the abbey guardianship area in the 1920s.
- 5.5 Prints, paintings and maps: We would seek to acquire prints, paintings and maps that show key views of Byland Abbey, and antique maps of the monastic precinct, in particular those with a detailed level of recording which aid our understanding of the history of the site and discoveries.
- 5.6 Photographs and postcards: We would seek to acquire photographs and postcards that show key views of Byland Abbey; in particular those which show detailed views of excavated features, site layout, the historic museum and collections, lost buildings as well as events held at Byland Abbey which relate to the history of the site.
- 5.7 Books and manuscripts: At least 27 manuscripts survive from the

abbey's original collection and these are dispersed between public institutions such as the British Library and private owners including the Wormsley Library (Byland Bede). In the late 16th century 150 books from Byland were in private ownership and it is possible that more will be found to have survived. EHT would seek to help locate the most appropriate public repository for any manuscripts if they become available and would only seek to collect if they are able to be curated within the capacity of EHT facilities.

6. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 6.1. Assessment of stonework in 2005 by an architectural consultant revealed that the collection retained in storage is key diagnostic material. Only a small quantity is repetitive. Options to rebury that repetitive material in a clamp on site were financially unviable given the small quantity involved. Currently there are no further plans for rationalising or disposing of architectural stone.
- 6.2 There are 1000's of plain square mosaic floor tiles from the late 12th-early 13th century. They are repetitive, many worn but they represent part of an unparalleled assemblage of medieval floor tiles in Europe. They are bulk accessioned but given that the re-laid in situ tiles are now weathering they remain a desirable, unusual and important resource, but consideration might be given to alternative use in the future, whether that be re-laying on site or using as part of an installation or permanent feature.

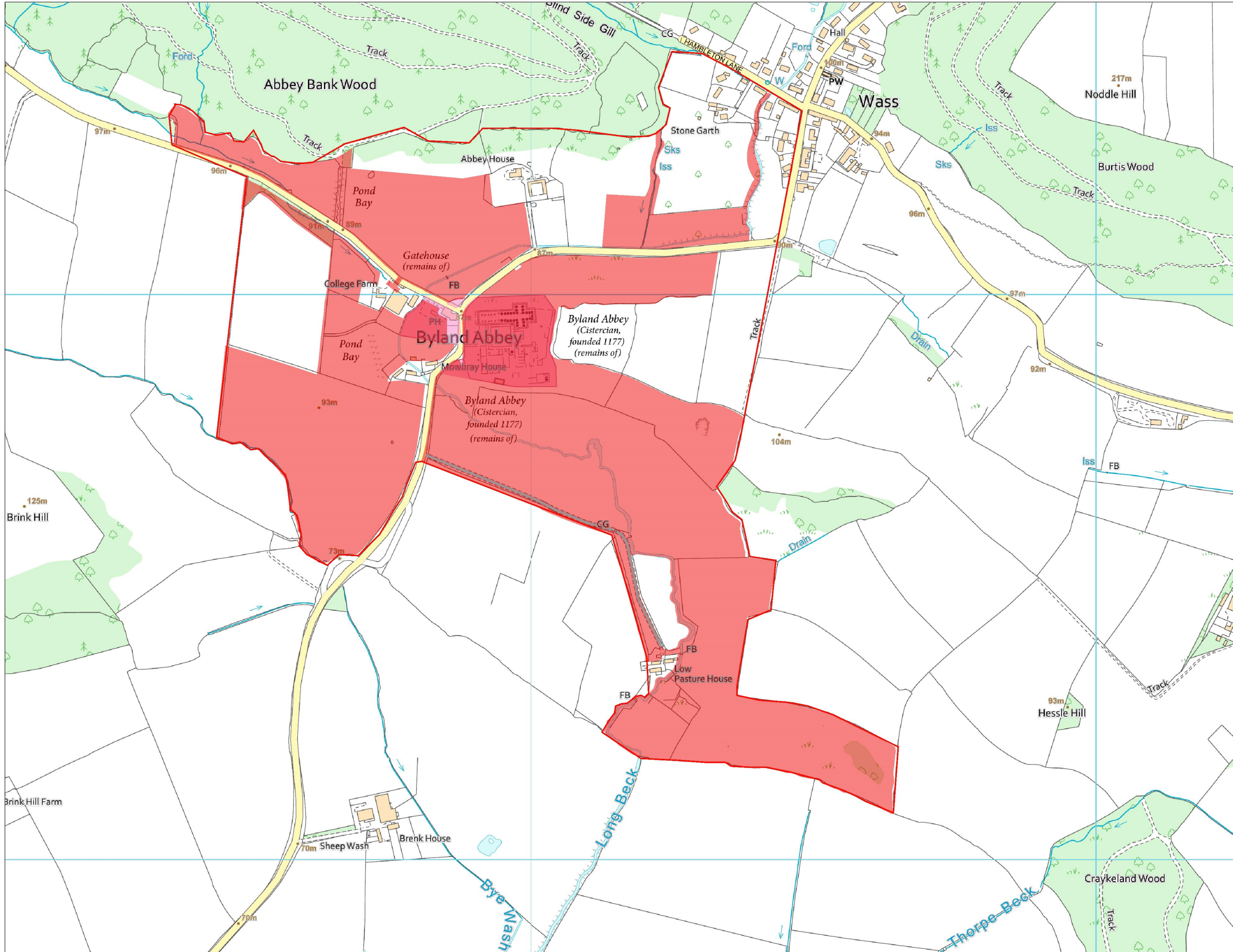
7. Collecting policies of other museums

- 7.1. English Heritage will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related subject areas or fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.
- 7.2. Specific reference is made to the following museums and organisations:
 - 7.2.1 The Historic England Archives- with reference to archive material which includes plans and photographs of the site.
 - 7.2.2 Ampleforth Abbey holds an alabaster of the Trinity, the high altar stone and a 19th century map of the estate. It does not have an active collecting policy for Byland Abbey nor any specialist staff.
 - 7.2.3 British Library holds medieval manuscripts from Byland Abbey. It does not have an active CDP for Byland Abbey but does have a national remit for nationally and internationally significant manuscripts.
 - 7.2.4 British Museum holds medieval floor tiles from Byland Abbey

acquired in the 1920s. The British Museum does not have an active CDP for Byland Abbey but has a national remit of last resort for significant archaeological finds and treasure.

- 7.2.5 The Dorman Museum, Middlesbrough holds 34 ceramic sherds from Byland Abbey. It does not have a current CDP for Byland Abbey.
- 7.2.6 The National Archives holds dissolution papers, works 14 and works 31 files.
- 7.2.7 The North Yorkshire County Record Office holds parish archive papers, charters, deeds and maps and has an active collecting policy for North Yorkshire records.
- 7.2.8 Ryedale Folk Museum: currently holds part of the Oldstead Grange Fisherman's hut archive in their permanent collection, and the remaining part as 'entry in' pending unification of the archive. Ryedale Folk Museum collect from within a 10 mile radius (as the crow flies) from Hutton-le- Hole, but do not have an active collecting policy for archaeology. The museum is currently seeking to transfer some of their archaeological archives to more appropriate repositories.
- 7.2.9 St Mary's Church, Thirsk holds a 16th oak Flemish altar table from Byland Abbey. It is not a recognized collecting body and does not have specialist staff.
- 7.2.10 York Minster Library holds a 12th book of psalms ref XVI.1.7. It does not have an active CDP for Byland Abbey.
- 7.2.11 York Museums Trust has a county remit for the collecting of archaeological archive, but only if another institution is unable to accept the archive. Additionally, YMT seek 'to strengthen the research potential and significance of the nationally designated archaeology collection through prioritised...acquisition within.... peculiar, particular and significant objects that are outstanding on a national level' (York Museums Trust, Collections Development Policy, April 2013)

WebGIS Map



Red shading: Scheduled area
 Dark red and pink shading:
 English Heritage managed area
 Red line: boundary of collecting
 area

Date	05/03/2021
Map Scale	1:6,495
Map Centre	455163,478675



HistoricEngland.org.uk



www.english-heritage.org.uk