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Strategic Approaches to Buildings at Risk

1 Introduction

The data collected and maintained by the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland or through local surveys and monitoring is crucial in identifying, encouraging and proactively pursuing the restoration and re-use of individual buildings in need of attention. The information also supports more strategic and area based initiatives. Local authorities, owning organisations and others can use this as a starting point for developing local strategies in response to the buildings at risk challenge. Through tabulation and analysis of the data, key buildings at risk problems can be identified and flagged, priorities set, recommendations made and action programmed and reviewed.

Local authorities have adopted a variety of methods in devising their strategies. Some maintain buildings at risk lists for internal service use only while others report on the matter, including details of key buildings, to committees and publish the findings. Councils can often be highly sensitive about the information fearing potential adverse political, press and public criticism of their record in the field or affects on perception of their area's image. Nevertheless, buildings at risk matters are regularly reported on and are increasingly being built into Single Outcome Agreements, Service Plans and the Development Plan. Several councils have adopted Historic Environment Strategies as supplementary planning guidance with relevant policies while others have dedicated Buildings at Risk Strategies.

A strategic approach to understanding, prioritising and progressing buildings at risk cases can also be an integral part of asset management of other public bodies and of private estates with large numbers of listed buildings.

2 National Strategies and Priorities

Historic Scotland's Key Performance Indicators were set by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs. They were developed to flow from the Scottish Government's five strategic priorities and fifteen national outcomes to support delivery of the Scottish Government's Purpose:

> To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

The principal relevant national outcome in relation to buildings at risk is Outcome 12:

We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.

Within its key performance indicators set for 2011/12, Historic Scotland included the strategic priority to improve the condition of the historic environment that will see it:

Continue to work in partnership with Local Authorities and the sector to reduce the percentage of A-listed buildings at risk long term, maximising opportunities to tackle the problems of buildings at risk across Scotland by the creation of a Buildings at Risk Stakeholder Forum.

The organisation's key performance targets measure progress towards delivering five strategic priorities set out in its Corporate Plan. In relation to the priority 'Championing Scotland's Historic Environment', Target 1 for the period 2012/13 was set to:

Reduce the percentage of A-listed buildings at risk in partnership with Local Authorities and the historic environment sector from 8.2%.

The production of this Toolkit, and associated initiatives, is part of the response to that challenge.

3   Single Outcome Agreements

The purpose of a Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) is to identify areas for improvement and to deliver better outcomes for the people of each local authority area and for Scotland through specific commitments made by the council and the Scottish Government. The agreement focuses upon the results for, and impacts on, the community (outcomes) rather than specific processes or initiatives. The agreement between the council and Scottish Government establishes what needs to be achieved, rather than how to achieve it and is based on commitments made in a concordat between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). The main principles of the concordat include shared outcomes, mutual accountability and joint responsibility, reduced ring fencing of funding, reduced monitoring and reporting better partnership working. It contains the Scottish Government's five strategic objectives and fifteen national outcomes that form the National Performance Framework. The SOA establishes the specific contribution that a council will make towards achieving the National Outcomes based on local circumstances.

It is a relatively recent concept and therefore it is not surprising to find that where local authorities have included buildings at risk within their Single Outcome Agreements they each do so differently.

Example: Perth and Kinross Council, Single Output Agreement May 2010

Buildings at Risk
Buildings at Risk have been identified as a measure of the condition of the historic environment through the SOA (Single Outcome Agreement) framework with a target set locally to reduce them by 3% per annum. The council adopted a framework for evaluating and prioritising action on these buildings on the basis of their architectural and historic importance, condition and location to provide a systematic approach for initiating action and meeting targets.

Example: Aberdeen Council, Single Output Agreement 2009 – 2010

Local Outcome: Aberdeen's unique granite heritage is protected (VD&FL) and promoted.
Indicator: Number of listed buildings at risk.
Progress: In Aberdeen the numbers of buildings at risk excluding those that have been demolished, with one under restoration.

Example: East Lothian Council, Single Output Agreement 2008/9

Local Outcome: East Lothian will be recognised across Scotland / Europe for its food and local produce, coast and countryside, heritage, sporting and cultural attractions.
Target: Reduce the number of buildings at risk.

West Lothian Council notes progress on buildings at risk in its Single Outcome Agreement reporting but it does not carry any specific targets, measures or indicators.

4   Local Authority Service Plans

Local authorities also include buildings at risk objectives, targets and performance measures in their service and improvement plans. Orkney Islands Council's Development and Environment Services Service Improvement Plan 2009-11 includes provision that the Strategic Development service area will 'Reduce Buildings at Risk and monitor care of listed buildings and conservation areas.' West Lothian Council's Development Planning and Environment service has among its Service Standards the promise to:

> Maintain lists of all listed buildings at risk and liase with the owners of those buildings that are in urgent need of repair or other action to ensure their survival.

The City of Edinburgh's Planning and Building Standards Service Improvement Plan 2012-13 includes buildings at risk within its Priority 4: Community. This aims to maintain the condition of the city's heritage asset and reduce the number of buildings at risk against the ambitious target to 'be the best performing local authority in Scotland' using a measure of the percentage of Category A listed buildings on the Buildings at Risk Register. The Service Plan report also contains notes on progress and commits the service to an annual review including benchmarking with other Local Authorities to be published as an information bulletin each May.

5   The Development Plan

The development plan is a document that sets out how places should change and what they could be like in the future. It says what type of development should take place where, and which areas should not be developed. It sets out the best locations for new homes and businesses and protects places of value to people including the built heritage. In the four main cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow) and their surrounding areas the development plan is made up of:

- The strategic development plan
- The local development plan
- Supplementary guidance

In all other areas, the development plan comprises:

- The local development plan
- Supplementary guidance.

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, requires Councils and national park authorities to prepare a development plan for their area. These plans must be updated every five years. In addition to setting out a vision for the long-term development of the city regions and dealing with region wide issues, local development plans include policies that will guide decision making on planning applications. Supplementary guidance provides detailed guidance on specific issues and can include development briefs or master plans, strategies or frameworks on specific issues and detailed policies, including heritage and buildings at risk.

The Edinburgh City Local Plan 2010, for example, takes a light touch approach to the buildings at risk challenge when it notes:

> 4.9   Edinburgh does not have a legacy of derelict listed buildings, and only a small number are on the Scottish Civic Trust's Buildings at Risk Register, which could justify intervention…

West Lothian Council, on the other hand, has a policy on buildings at risk linked to a priority list within its local plan:

Example: West Lothian Local Plan

Adopted in January 2009 Policy HER 8 of the West Lothian Local Plan states:

> The council will take appropriate action, as necessary, to preserve buildings of architectural or historic interest through the use of powers including compulsory purchase, Repair Notices, Building Preservation Notices or other statutory procedures. Appendix 4.1 lists cases for priority action, and this will be reviewed as necessary.

Other local authorities have developed or are developing specific historic environment and buildings at risk strategies as supplementary guidance.

Historic Scotland also has a role in the plan making process. Local authorities should involve Historic Scotland when they bring forward local and strategic development plans and related documents. Engagement with Historic Scotland during preparation of the Main Issues Report helps councils ensure that their plans properly reflect national planning policy and guidance in relation to the historic environment. It also reduces the potential for challenge through the subsequent stages of the plan's development. In this way Historic Scotland's role can help authorities to ensure the historic environment supports wider land-use planning objectives. In considering when to involve Historic Scotland planning authorities should decide when its advice on certain issues would add value. Such issues should include:

- Demolition of buildings;
- Substantial alteration of Category A or B listed buildings;
- Development affecting a scheduled monument;
- Significant development within an Inventory landscape; and
- Significant development within the setting of a Category A-listed building or a scheduled monument.

In addition, though not within their statutory locus, Historic Scotland may also usefully advise on:

- Significant development within or affecting a world heritage site;
- Major developments within a conservation area;
- Buildings at risk; and
- Local development strategies and briefs.

6 Historic Environment Strategies

A number of local councils have prepared or adopted strategies for the historic environment and most include attention to buildings at risk.

Falkirk Council was pioneering in its Built Heritage Strategy (2006) which noted that the operation of the Buildings at Risk Register had been important in highlighting listed buildings under threat. The strategy contained the initial proposal for action to:

- Monitor Buildings at Risk Register;
- Undertake regular liaison with the Register;
- Develop a procedure for tackling buildings at risk, setting out duties, powers, responsibilities and options for action;
- Circulate extracts from the Buildings at Risk Register to relevant Building Preservation Trusts, the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Association of Preservation Trusts; and
- Work to monitor and review the status of protected buildings, to better promote conservation action, to identify buildings at risk or to identify further buildings or areas which may merit protection has also been limited.

More recently, strategies have been adopted by both Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council:

Example : Highland Council, Supplementary Guidance Historic Environment Strategy 2013

This Strategy was prepared as Supplementary Guidance to the Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage. The purpose of the strategy is to define the council's approach to the protection of the historic environment through the planning process and, through the implementation of its strategic aims, to ensure that there is a proactive and consistent approach. The Strategy is a material consideration when proposals for development are being considered and is intended to support development management officers and the elected members of the Council's Planning committees in their determination of applications for development in historically and archaeologically sensitive areas. The Strategy should be taken into consideration by developers, owners, agents and applicants when proposals for development that will impact on the historic environment are being considered. It requires that future development should take account of the historic environment and be of a design and quality to enhance the historic environment bringing both economic and social benefits.

The Strategy contains a number of strategic aims relating to buildings at risk, particularly:

- To identify those historic buildings within the Highland Council area which are at risk from neglect and disuse and continue to record and monitor known buildings at risk through annual updates to the national buildings at risk register; and
- To develop a Highland Buildings at Risk Strategy to take forward a consistent approach to implementing appropriate action to encourage the restoration and re-use of identified buildings at risk.

Example: Aberdeenshire Council, Historic Environment Strategy

In reviewing progress, the strategy recognises the number of buildings on the Buildings at Risk Register and that work on these has generally followed an ad hoc, reactive approach. It notes that intervention action is proceeding on four properties and that early contact is being made with the owners of others where the condition of the building is starting to give concern. The time intensive nature of this work is noted and that there is still a need for priorities to be more clearly defined. The strategy also notes that partnership working with the North East Scotland Preservation Trust to repair buildings at risk is still in its infancy but it is expected that continued discussion and partnership working in this field will create more opportunities.

The strategy proposes:

- Further work with the Buildings at Risk Register to ensure that the list of buildings at risk is continually updated;
- A more systematic approach to buildings at risk, integrating action under the Planning Acts with other priorities such as conservation area reviews, establishing a grant scheme, regeneration agenda and work on asset management; and
- Continue partnership working with the North East Scotland Preservation Trust to enable restoration of further buildings at risk.

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7   Area-based Strategies

It can be appropriate to develop buildings at risk strategies relating to specific areas of special significance or those identified for regeneration or conservation. Thus, such work can have a central role in the activities of Scotland's City Heritage Trusts, in Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) and in projects under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site Action Plan 2012-2013 commits, through Objective 11, to conserving and enhancing the fabric of the World Heritage Site. This is supported by Action 11.2 which states that the 'Buildings at Risk Register will be used as a tool for highlighting and prioritising buildings for restoration.' Short-term targets have been set to:

> **11.2.1**
> Develop local priority ratings for Buildings at Risk and assess buildings in terms of this and co-ordinate monitoring of buildings with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) on behalf of Historic Scotland;
> **11.2.2**
> Assess Buildings at risk in terms of the National Performance Indicator; and
> **11.2.3**
> Serve Urgent Works Notices and Enforcement Notices when required to protect the built heritage of the World Heritage Site.

8   Priority Setting

A strategic approach to buildings at risk involves the most efficient deployment of scarce resources (time, money, expertise etc.) and should be based on a thorough understanding of the issues at hand. The importance of prioritising buildings at risk underpinned key recommendations in the ECOTEC Study of Building Preservation Trusts in Scotland[1] where the value of frameworks and the need for local authorities to take a leading role was stressed. The data on the Buildings at Risk Register and that collected and maintained locally through survey and monitoring can be tabulated, analysed and scored. Buildings can then be given priority weightings. This scoring systems employed vary from council to council in their levels of sophistication and adjustment to suit local circumstances.

North Lanarkshire Council has used a system which recognises four levels (Critical, High, Moderate or Low risk), Glasgow City Council has used a scoring system which identifies buildings for 'prompt action' when they hit a certain score, and others, such as the City of Edinburgh, find that the simplest and most convenient method is to adopt the risk categories allocated by the Buildings at Risk Register. The Register places each property into one of five categories based on perceived risk:

> **Critical**
> The building is threatened with demolition, and a real or perceived conservation deficit now makes rescue unlikely. It is suffering from an acute structural problem that could lead to full or partial collapse, and there is an immediate threat of further deterioration.
> **High**

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[1] Ecotec *Study of Building Preservation Trusts in Scotland: Final Report* (2010). http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/studyofbuildingpreservationtrustsinscotland

There is no immediate danger of collapse but condition is such that unless urgent remedial works are carried out the building will sharply deteriorate.

Moderate
The building is in a fair condition but is deteriorating. There are concerns that the building could suffer further decay leading to more serious problems.
Low
The building is in a relatively stable condition, but there is a risk of slow decay. Although there is a possibility of reuse, the condition of the building still gives cause for concern.
Minimal
The building is vacant but in good condition. At this stage, there is no immediate threat of deterioration.

Because a building in a very poor state of repair may be in a stable state, the assessment of risk is not always directly associated with condition.

A truly effective response should therefore be one that is tempered by local circumstances and information. Although a scientific approach would be the ideal, scoring and priority setting will always involve a degree of value judgement, ideally informed through local knowledge and appropriate professional experience. As stressed by one authority that has been using a prioritisation system for some time, it is highly important that the scoring method and implementation is the responsibility of a suitably qualified and experienced conservation officer with an understanding of the local context. In identifying priorities councils are also advised to involve people from different relevant services and to engage with the expertise of Historic Scotland, building preservation trusts and local amenity groups.

Scottish Borders Council has pioneered buildings at risk prioritisation in Scotland and has developed a more sophisticated system that allocates each building a priority score based on a combination of factors:

Example: Scottish Borders Council prioritisation of buildings at risk

The Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland identifies over 150 buildings at risk in the Scottish Borders. In recognition of such a large proportion of such buildings the council worked closely with the Buildings at Risk Register to develop a prioritisation system. The process is undertaken by a specialist conservation officer and is based on a range of factors including planning and building standards, access, listing category, category of risk and building condition. The scoring system gives weight to buildings in conservation areas, close to the Core Path Network, in town centres and in more urban locations.

Relative risk is measured as:

> **Score 5 Critical Risk:** The building is threatened with demolition and a real or perceived conservation deficit now makes rescue unlikely. It is suffering from an acute structural problem that could lead to full or partial collapse and there is an immediate threat of further deterioration.
> **Score 4 High Risk:** There is no immediate danger of collapse but condition is such that unless urgent remedial works are carried out the building will sharply deteriorate.
> **Score 3 Moderate Risk:** The building is in a fair condition but deteriorating. There are concerns that the building could suffer further decay leading to more serious problems.
> **Score 2 Low Risk:** The building is in a relatively stable condition, but there is a risk of slow decay. Although there is a possibility of reuse, the condition of the building still gives cause for concern.
> **Score 1 Minimal Risk:** The building is vacant but in good condition. At this stage there is no immediate threat of deterioration.

The relative condition identified in the survey is factored in:

> **Score 5 Ruinous:** The building is a roofless shell. Little of the original fabric remains other than the external walls.
> **Score 4 Very Poor:** The building is either extensively fire damaged, partially collapsed, or is suffering from major structural problems. It may be totally or partially roofless but retains a little more fabric than just the external walls. Very little of the interior remains.
> **Score 3 Poor:** The building has been vacant for a number of years and does not appear to be maintained. Most of the external fabric remains but there are obvious signs of deterioration such as slipped slates, vegetation growth, broken windows, vandalism or blocked rainwater goods.
> **Score 2 Fair:** The building is only recently vacant but there is no identified new use. Although previously well managed, it now requires minor repairs. There are some signs of neglect.
> **Score 1 Good:** The building fabric is generally sound and its overall condition does not necessarily place it at risk. However, it is under threat of demolition, or its future sustained use is in doubt.

To these are added further scores based on a number of other factors resulting in each achieving a priority score from a range between one to 20. The results are tabulated in a spreadsheet in which different priorities are given different colours for ease of interpretation. Council officers have found this managed database valuable in making decisions about where resources should be

channelled. The authority notes that:

- The prioritisation of buildings on the Register enables more effective, joined-up working between the various organisations involved in the restoration of historic buildings, including the council's work with building preservation trusts which operate in its area;
- The prioritisation process needs to be undertaken by suitably qualified professionals that have a full understanding of the conservation of the historic environment, the local area and the operational processes for undertaking such projects; and
- Involvement or support of the local authority through this process is critical if a prioritised building is to be strategically recognised and progressed.

While the results of the prioritisation is prepared and used by officers it is not referred to committee or incorporated into adopted council strategies and policies.

Perth and Kinross Council, a local authority that regularly reports to its committees on its buildings at risk situation, uses a similar scoring system to achieve a priority ranking, in this case up to a maximum score of 12:

Location of buildings at risk
Conservation Area = 3
Town Centre = 3
Urban (in other areas of town or in villages) = 2
Rural = 1

Buildings located in conservation areas and town centres are given the highest ratings due to the impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area, higher economic value and the visibility from well used public places or streets.

Listed status of buildings at risk
Category A = 3
Category B = 2
Category C(S) = 1

Category A listed buildings are given the highest rating due to their national importance.

Condition of buildings at risk
Poor = 3
Moderate = 2
Fair = 1

Buildings classed as being in poor condition are given the highest score. However, buildings which are ruinous and largely beyond repair are given a zero rating as the potential for taking action would be limited and could have large financial resource implications.

In setting priorities recognition should, of course, be paid to achieving the most effective use of scarce resources including issues of potential deliverability and economic, social, amenity and political benefits.

The system developed for use by Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk, uses their information gathering and analysis methods described in Toolkit text *4 Building at Risk Surveys and Monitoring* to arrive at an individual score for each of its buildings at risk.

Example: Buildings At Risk Grades used by Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk

Extreme Risk
Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no immediate solution obvious?

Grave Risk
Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; way forward possible but not implemented.

At Risk
Slow decay; no way forward.

Medium Risk
Slow decay; way forward possible but not implemented.

Low Risk
Under repair or in fair to good repair, but no obvious user identified, or under threat of vacancy with no obvious new users (applicable only to buildings capable of beneficial use).

No Risk
Repair scheme in progress and (where applicable) user identifiable and building in good repair.

The council has also included a buildings at risk section in the Ipswich Annual Conservation Management Statement reviewed each May. The 2011-12 statement, for example, included the following provisions and targets:

1.1.2
Prepare and review biannually entries for the joint Suffolk local authorities Buildings at Risk Register. Consult affected owners about the relevant individual entries. Maintain a computerised Ipswich Listed Buildings database. Access and review annually all buildings against nationally established criteria for condition and occupancy to assess the appropriate building condition/buildings at risk status. Update other database information on an occasional basis as resources permit. Regularly inspect buildings at risk with frequency dependent on the degree of risk identified in each case. Institute appropriate action to ensure proper repair and maintenance or disposal for refurbishment.

1.9.3
Maintain a photographic archive and adequate records including photographs of alterations to historic buildings, structures and changes in conservation areas to enable prompt response to technical enquiries; offer advice on appropriate standards and techniques of repair and maintenance and to assist enforcement action.

1.9.7
Maintain an emergency stand-by service in accordance with the Council's Emergency Plan; attending at short notice and/or after-hours when required, large-scale or serious man-made or natural disasters involving damage to historic buildings; offer on-the-spot advice to emergency services and associated professionals such as building control officers on the safeguarding of historic fabric etc.

1.10.3 Target A3

All Ipswich listed buildings to be reviewed annually for condition and occupancy, for the purposes of the Ipswich Historic Buildings Database and biannually for the Suffolk Buildings at Risk Register as a basis for monitoring and action prompting repair. Review Borough Council buildings twice annually and liase with spending departments on repair programmes.

1.10.19 Target A19

Maintain an effective photographic record of all Listed buildings and all buildings subject to Article 4 Directions and other buildings in conservation areas as resources permit.

Priority setting will inevitably result in the identification and grouping of a number (sometimes a large number) of properties which are deemed to be of low priority. Often this will include structures, ruins and small buildings in obscure locations such as doocots that do not offer any social, economic or townscape opportunities. Such structures, as listed buildings, should not be simply dismissed or recommended for demolition but may require to be the subject of special initiatives, such as community adoption[2] or preservation as a ruin. Due attention should also be paid to those lower priority buildings which can benefit from monitoring and modest intervention or maintenance to stop them becoming at risk.

Some councils, such as the City of Edinburgh, are exploring how their building at risk databases might be integrated with other, more widely used, information systems such as used for development management purposes. If implemented this would be an effective means of flagging up to a case officer dealing with an application that a building involved is at risk and requires specific handling. Standard letters to owners and applicants could also be stored and easily generated as required.

9 Measuring Change and Progress

Understanding the buildings at risk challenge and the setting of priorities are clearly important components of any strategic approach. It is also important to measure and report on progress over time. The basic measure of improvement is whether a building remains on the Buildings at Risk Register or not and, as a consequence, the number of buildings at risk in a council's area. While a convenient measure for inclusion in service plans etc. this rather crude approach which can mask change, including good progress across a number of sites, although only a small number of cases have been 'resolved'. Similarly, projects can be complex or simple, but are almost always time consuming so that annual reporting can result in apparently lean years which does not reflect the level of investment of proactive work going on. It is therefore recommended that consideration be given to more sophisticated measurement systems that recognise and record incremental progress and contain descriptive, qualitative reporting as well as scoring. An effective measurement approach might include any of the following, as a starting list:

- Buildings subject to inspection in the past 12 months
- Notices served in the past 12 months
- Letters served (these can be further divided into type and function)

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[2] Here initiatives such as the Adopt-a-Monument co-ordinated by Archaeology Scotland can have a role.

- Buildings inspected or surveyed
- Buildings where physical intervention has been instructed
- Buildings mothballed
- Buildings where the owners have engaged in discussions
- Buildings where a building preservation trust has become involved
- Cases where a feasibility study or options appraisals commissioned
- Number and type of meetings held with owners
- Briefs Prepared
- Proposals lodged

There may be merit in the Scottish local authorities developing collectively a measurement system in partnership with Historic Scotland and the Buildings at Risk Register in the interest of establishing a consistent approach which might be applied nationally.

10   Strategies for Action

Any priority setting should also be the prelude to a systematic approach to action. This requires to be informed by wider input including structural and legal expertise. Other crucial factors include access to funding to support the serving of notices or other intervention and political commitment. All buildings at risk work requires resilience, a consistent approach and adequate time. A number of the recent high profile successes in Scotland have involved buildings at risk initiatives which have taken over a decade to prepare and implement and some have taken even longer.

The City of Leeds offers an interesting example of a council that has devised a methodology approach to taking action that, although not fully applicable to Scotland, demonstrates how one might be structured:

Example: Leeds City Council, buildings at risk stages of action
In pursuing privately-owned buildings at risk, the City Council has developed the English Heritage recommended 'stages of action' into the following series of 'steps' included in its own strategy.
1. Written warnings expressing the Council's concerns, the need for protection and the Council's intent.
2. Request a site meeting, to discuss the circumstances of the case and Health & Safety issues.
3. Request access to the site and building, for the purpose of survey and making a dated photographic record, if necessary using Section 88 power of entry.
4. Prepare a draft Schedule of Repairs. The form of the Schedule will be concisely written and in plain English; will state why works are necessary, in terms of performance; will list specific works capable of being implemented by an owner who decides to act of his own volition; will set out alternative works, if any; and will state standards of work to be achieved.
5. Meet the owner or agent again, so that they are aware of the process. This may be sufficient to make the owner provide written confirmation of their intention to carry out the works on the draft schedule, with a start date.

6. Request English Heritage for grant support. English Heritage may possibly 'underwrite' a Council's costs with an 80% grant in pursuing the service of a statutory notice. This is provided that the Council intends to recover the costs from the owner (if necessary using a Section 55 Notice) as the grant is repayable to English Heritage. To qualify, the building would have to be on the Council's BAR Register, and, in the case of a Section 54 Urgent Works Notice, vacant / unoccupied, and the grade of the building would have to be Grade I or Grade II* (but not a Scheduled Ancient Monument), or Grade II within a CA.

7. Appoint a project manager for the Section 54 Urgent Works Notice. This is normally the Council's Conservation Officer.

8. Seek the support of senior management and elected members.

9. Prepare a costed Schedule of Repairs. The maximum administrative cost of preparing a schedule should typically be £1,000. The maximum cost of the Urgent Works should typically be £25,000, including the costs of renting equipment. Items in a typical schedule should include: site barriers, propping, making services safe, removing rubbish & asbestos & vegetation, repairs to roofs and rainwater goods, provision of ventilation.

10. Meet the owner or agent again, so that they are aware of the process and are not tempted to deliberately damage or destroy the building out of desperation.

11. Consider whether other Notices might be more appropriate: such as:
- Section 9 of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 – criminal offence
- Section 38 of ditto – listed building enforcement notice
- Section 77 of the Buildings Act 1984 – dangerous structure
- Section 78 of the Buildings Act 1984 – immediate danger
- Section 79 of the Buildings Act 1984 – dilapidation
- Section 215 of the T&CP Act 1990 – amenity
- Section 29 of the Loc. Govt. Act 1982 – public health.

12. Consider whether the building is so neglected that the need for permanent repair accumulates to 'risk of serious harm' (regardless of whether the building is occupied or not, and of the owner's means). If so, and if the Council has a partner such as a Building Preservation Trust lined up and committed to take over ownership of such a difficult building at risk, then the Council will consider pursuing not only a Section 54 Urgent Works Notice but also, with confirmation of the Secretary of State, a Section 48 full Repairs Notice involving Compulsory Purchase for 'the proper, long term preservation of the building'. Only the owner can carry out repairs specified in a Section 48 full Repairs Notice. Such cases are complex, so the Council would need to appoint a Project Manager, ideally a conservation-accredited Registered Architect or Chartered Surveyor, whilst also pursuing Urgent Works in the short term.

13. Prepare a project plan with target dates, and a strategy for the long-term future of the building, and seek Member support. The Council will be 'resolved but fair' in its actions.

14. Request tenderers for the contract to submit a lump fee for the works, accompanied by a methodology, and agree a time-charge for any additional work.

15. The chosen tender will not necessarily be the lowest but will instead have the best methodology.

16. Arrange access to the site and building for the contractor, who will keep their own dated photographic record.

17. Have the contractor lined-up and committed to start work at the end of a 7-day period, being the normal period of an Urgent Works Notice.

18. The correctly-delegated officer of the Council will authorise the Urgent Works Notice, and it will be served legally on all relevant parties.

19. The form of the notice will contain:
- A summary of Section 54
- Reference to cost recovery under Section 55
- A separate Schedule of Works
- Plans and location map
- Council contact details.

Several of these steps can act as stages for measuring buildings at risk improvement as discussed above. Guidance on relevant stages of such a strategy can be drawn from throughout this Toolkit.

11 Publicity

Some local authorities, such as Renfrew Council and Perth and Kinross Council produce periodic reports on buildings at risk for elected members. Others share information publicly in other ways. Whatever the approach, making information known locally can be an effective means of ensuring that buildings at risk remains on the political and community agendas.

Example: North Lanarkshire Council, Rescuing a Listed Building SPG05

This high-quality, illustrated leaflet aims to help explain the issues around maximising the value of any listed building. It offers basic advice on listing, listed building consent, repairs and maintenance, risk, grant aid, new uses, demolition and enabling development. Of importance is the fact that the council adopted it in 2009 as Supplementary Planning Guidance after public consultation.

Example: Shetland Islands Council, Community Profiles

The council publishes documents that set out social, economic, environmental and cultural information for parts of its area. This information is gathered from statistical data available nationally and locally and from the views of communities and the basis that effective planning for the future depends largely on a good understanding of what already exists. Each profile aims to provide a baseline of information from which service providers, agencies, voluntary and community organisations in the area can develop a shared understanding of the needs and issues. They are intended as a working document to stimulate debate discussion and through which to support and inform action and developments which seek to improve the local planning and delivery of services. These include identification of buildings at risk. For example, the North Mainland Community Profile notes that there are three buildings at risk in the North Mainland: Lunna Fishing Booth, Vidlin, Neap Old Manse, Brettabister and Nesting and Grobsness Haa, near Voe.

The City of Edinburgh has reported on buildings at risk matters for over 10 years. This was originally via an annual or biannual committee report but since 2011 the process has been changed to through a dedicated Planning Information Bulletin as the reports are for information rather than action. There is no guarantee, however, that the bulletins are read by decision makers, managers and the public and it could leave the council open to criticism that it is not acting proactively in relating to cases that come forward.

Example: City of Edinburgh, Planning Information Bulletins No. 3 (2011) and No. 9 (2013)

The City of Edinburgh publishes online a series of Planning Information Bulletins to provide information on current planning issues. Two editions have concentrated on buildings at risk and the bulletins are to become the principal means of reporting publicly on progress on buildings at risk in the city.

12   Aligning Buildings at Risk with other Strategies

As stressed in the ECOTEC Study of Building Preservation Trusts in Scotland, many successful individual buildings at risk projects have had, at their core, a very close working relationship between a council and a building preservation trust. The report also suggests that it should be recognised that building preservation trusts can successfully contribute to wider strategic priorities, that 'there is added value from working together' and that both the trust and the local authority need to identify a strategic plan that effectively meets both organisations' priorities. This should go beyond shared interest in individual buildings and could embrace survey, analysis and prioritisation also.

In the past, the Highland Building Preservation Trust had a very a close relationship with Highland Council, although current procurement requirements have since affected this. Aberdeenshire Council formally recognises the potential role of the North East Building Preservation Trust and there are more formal links with trusts in Glasgow and in Fife. Argyll and Bute Council has had fruitful links with Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust.

Alignment between a council and a trust can also be informal. One council meets periodically with a local building preservation trust to informally talk over particularly complex, difficult or seemingly intractable cases to gain valuable insights and explore ideas. The Scottish Redundant Churches Trust has a Scotland wide remit but would welcome a more even level of engagement with council's across the country.

13   Joint Working Agreements

Scottish Ministers expect planning authorities and Historic Scotland to work in partnership to deliver their objectives for the historic environment as part of their commitment to supporting the modernisation of the planning system. In this context, Joint Working Agreements set out the basis for an effective partnership between planning authorities and Historic Scotland. The agreement is separate from the Single Outcome Agreement that planning authorities have with the Scottish Government. Its purpose is to set out how the outcomes relating to the historic environment will be delivered by planning authorities and how Historic Scotland will help with this. Among the aims of the Joint Working Agreement is to:

- Manage Scotland's historic environment effectively and efficiently;
- Improve performance in handling statutory casework;
- Empower planning authorities to provide advice and make decisions locally;
- Add value to the development planning and management processes by encouraging planning authorities to engage Historic Scotland where appropriate and as early as possible;

- Protect the outstanding universal values of Scotland's World Heritage Sites; and
- Encourage partnership between Historic Scotland and planning authorities.

These contracts offer the potential for the shared integration of buildings at risk commitments, including target setting and the preparation of strategies for implementation, and it is anticipated that these matters will be included in future agreements.

14 Local Authority Buildings at Risk Working Groups

A strategic approach to buildings at risk can benefit from by specially convened internal groups representing different local authority service interests and expertise.

West Lothian Council established a working group bringing together planning, conservation, property, education and other services to meet quarterly to consider a list of buildings in both council and private ownership that give rise to concern. This allowed sharing of information, identification of responsibilities and allocation of actions. Renfrewshire Council has a special group led by the Council Leader:

Example: Renfrewshire Council, Building Repair Task Group

Established in 2013 with representatives from Development & Housing (which includes Planning, Building Standards & Housing), Community Facilities and Legal the group meets monthly. Its first task was to prepare a baseline report that is now being finalised. This will consider the existing legislation, council initiatives aimed at encouraging owners to take action and a desktop review of other initiatives across the country. It will also look at the council resources and expenditure in this area. The baseline study has suggested that encouraging owners, perhaps with grant assistance, might be more cost effective than intervention through the use of legislation as this often leaves the council having to do the work and undertake a debt recovery action in the long term. The council is currently considering a funding model to support this work.

It is understood that both The City of Glasgow Council and Argyll and Bute Council are currently establishing a working group involving a wide range of service representatives.

15 Other Strategies

The principles of the strategic approaches discussed above also have direct applicability in property asset management, whether administered by local authorities, other public bodies or private organisations with substantial estates. This is considered in more detail in the Toolkit text *6 Property Asset Management Planning*.

16 Steps towards an effective Strategic Approach to Buildings at Risk

- Supplement information from the Buildings at Risk Register with up to date local surveys.

- Integrate buildings at risk data into planning development management information systems.
- Involve all relevant council services in developing the strategy and setting priorities.
- Establish a cross-service buildings at risk working group for the local authority.
- Incorporate strategies into the development plan, supplementary planning guidance, heritage or historic environment strategies and joint working agreements.
- Integrate strategies with council asset management plans and service plans.
- Integrate buildings at risk strategies into Single Outcome Agreements using meaningful targets.
- Employ locally relevant scoring and weighting systems in developing priorities.
- Incorporate local community opinion into priority setting.
- Appropriately qualified and experienced professionals should undertake priority setting.
- Make periodic reports on buildings at risk to appropriate council committees.
- Include recommendations for action as well as position statements in reports.
- Develop systems to measure progress and improvement and share the results of this.
- Measure progress in relation to both the National Outcomes and locally set targets and indicators.
- Include programmes for action into the strategy.
- Involve building preservation trusts in strategy development and review.
- Privately owned estates should also adopt a strategic approach.

The text contains references to legislation and its interpretation that may contain inaccuracies or be out of date. Ensure you take appropriate professional advice before making decisions relating to property. Feedback, relevant case studies and suggested changes are welcomed.