

Review of Advice on Conservation Area Management

Historic Environment Scotland Consultation

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland.
For information only: England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

1 Executive Summary

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is seeking views on the future of advice and guidance for the management of conservation areas in Scotland, following the Scottish Government's withdrawal of Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71: Conservation Area Management in 2025.

The consultation seeks views on the future role, purpose and scope of advice on conservation area management. It is intended to help HES understand the needs of practitioners, stakeholders, communities and decision-makers and inform the development of future guidance.

The consultation will be of particular interest to local authorities because planning authorities have an important role in the designation, appraisal, and management of conservation areas and in managing development and change within them. It provides an opportunity for councils to highlight the practical issues they face and to identify what national guidance could do to support effective conservation area management. Responses are due by **31 October 2026**.

[Click here](#) for further information and to submit your response.

2 Overview

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest where it is desirable to preserve or enhance their character or appearance. There are more than 600 conservation areas across Scotland, covering a range of urban, rural and village settings.

Planning Advice Note (PAN) 71: Conservation Area Management ([Part One](#) and [Part Two](#)) was published by the Scottish Government in 2004 and provided advice on the management of conservation areas. It covered areas including designation and review, managing change, funding and resources, knowledge and skills, and monitoring and review. It also included a checklist for conservation area appraisals.

The Scottish Government withdrew PAN 71 in December 2025 as part of a wider review of its planning advice, stating that the material may be out of date. Historic Environment Scotland is now considering what future advice on conservation area management should cover and is seeking views through this consultation.

2.1 Purpose of the review

The withdrawal of PAN 71 provides an opportunity to consider whether national advice on conservation area management continues to meet the needs of those responsible for managing these areas.

HES is seeking views on what future advice should cover and how it can best support those involved in conservation area management. This includes considering the practical needs of practitioners and decision-makers and ensuring that future guidance reflects current approaches to the historic environment.

The review also provides an opportunity to consider how conservation area management can support wider objectives around the quality of places and the sustainable use and adaptation of existing buildings and areas.

2.2 Implications for local authorities

The review may be of interest to local authorities involved in the management of conservation areas, particularly those responsible for planning and the historic environment. Future guidance could help provide a more up-to-date national reference point for councils following the withdrawal of PAN 71.

The consultation also gives local authorities an opportunity to highlight the practical issues they encounter in managing conservation areas and to identify what they would find useful from future national guidance. This could include areas such as conservation area appraisals, managing change, access to appropriate skills and resources, and engagement with local communities.

More broadly, the review provides an opportunity to consider how conservation area management can be balanced with wider local priorities, including regeneration, place-making and the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings. Local authority input could therefore help ensure that any future guidance is practical and reflects the circumstances in which councils are working.

3 Consultation Questions

The consultation questions are categorised as follows:

Topic	Questions
About you	2
Purpose and scope	6

HES Circular – Annex 3	3
Final comments	1

The consultation questions are available in full below:

The withdrawn PAN 71 ([Part One](#) and [Part Two](#)) contains relevant information for this consultation. You may find it useful to read or refer to while responding.

1. What is your role?
2. How familiar are you with PAN 71 (Conservation Area Management)?
Very familiar; Somewhat familiar; Aware of it but barely used it; Not familiar
3. Have you used PAN 71 in the last five years?
Frequently; Occasionally; Once or twice; Not at all
4. What works well in the withdrawn PAN 71 and should be reflected in future guidance
This may include any aspect of the guidance that you consider valuable and would like to see reflected in a revised document.
5. Is there anything currently absent from PAN 71 that should be included in future guidance?
This could relate to any topic or practical guidance that is not currently addressed but would be helpful to include in future guidance.
6. Are there any elements in the withdrawn PAN 71 that should not be carried forward?
This could relate to any aspect of the document, including its content, structure, recommendations or overall approach.
7. Which topics should be prioritised in a revised PAN 71? Please pick three topics.
Climate Adaptation and Resilience;
Retrofitting and Energy Efficiency;
Accessibility and Inclusivity;
Community Engagement and Participation;
Placemaking;
Permitted Development Rights and Article 4 Directions;
Biodiversity and Nature Recovery;
Streetscape and Public Realm Design;
Regeneration and Economic Development;
Conservation Area Monitoring;
Other (please specify)
8. Which supporting resources would be most valuable in future guidance?
Appraisal checklists;
Flowcharts;
Good practice case studies;
Strategic management frameworks;

Templates;
Selection criteria for conservation areas;
Other (please specify)

9. Annex 3 of the Historic Environment Scotland Circular sets out exemptions from demolition control in conservation areas. Were you aware of Annex 3 of the HES Circular?
Yes; No; Not sure
10. Do you use this reference in your work?
Yes; No; I used to but I don't anymore
11. Do you have any comments on Annex 3 and its contents?
12. Do you have any final comments or recommendations regarding the review of PAN 71: Conservation Area Management?
This may include comments on the content, scope, format, structure or presentation.

4 APSE Comment

The withdrawal of PAN 71 provides an opportunity to consider whether national advice on conservation area management remains appropriate for the current planning and local government context. The development of updated guidance could provide greater clarity for local authorities and help ensure that advice reflects the practical circumstances in which councils are managing conservation areas.

The consultation is particularly relevant given the range of issues that can arise when managing conservation areas, including balancing the protection of historic character with appropriate development and change, maintaining up-to-date conservation area appraisals, and ensuring that councils have access to the skills and resources required to support effective management.

APSE encourages local authorities with experience of conservation area management to consider responding to the consultation and highlighting the practical issues they face. This will provide an opportunity for councils to help shape the scope and content of future guidance and ensure that it is useful, proportionate and relevant to local authority needs.

5 How can APSE help?

APSE Scotland's Parks, Grounds and Street Services Network provides a forum for local authorities to share good practice, discuss current challenges and consider developments affecting the management and maintenance of local environments and public spaces. Network meetings are free to attend for APSE members. Previous presentations are available online [here](#) and upcoming meetings are listed [here](#).

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Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all in-person meetings end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE Network meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area, please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

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- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
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- Veterans and Military Champions Network
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