PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE HEART OF NEOLITHIC ORKNEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE BUFFER ZONE

This report has been developed as advised by the UNESCO Operational Guidelines (2012) and details a minor modification to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Buffer Zone.

1. **Area of Property**

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<th>Property Description</th>
<th>Area (Ha)</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site proposed Sensitive Area</td>
<td>45267</td>
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</table>

2. **Description of Amended Buffer Zone**

The monuments on the Brodgar and Stenness peninsulas were deliberately situated within a vast topographic bowl formed by a series of visually interconnecting ridgelines stretching from Hoy to Greeny Hill and back. They are also visually linked to other contemporary and later monuments around the lochs. They thus form a fundamental part of a wider, highly complex archaeological landscape which stretches over much of Orkney. The current open, and comparatively undeveloped, landscape around the monuments allows an understanding of the apparently formal connections between the monuments and their natural settings. The wealth of contemporary burial and occupation sites in the surrounding area constitute an exceptional relict cultural landscape that supports the value of the main sites.

There follows a description of the boundaries of the two parts of the proposed Buffer Zone:

**Brodgar-Stenness Area (Map 6)**

The proposed Buffer Zone encompasses the immediate setting of the Brodgar-Stenness monuments, and includes the area within which it is considered that there could be potential impact from individual buildings of any size, structures, roads or other features or any alterations to them.

To the north of the Ring of Brodgar, the Buffer Zone boundary crosses the B9055 (Brodgar Road) at Ness and follows the line of the access road north-east; then it is drawn in a straight line across the Loch of Harray to Langamow, where it follows the access road here north-east and joins the Netherbrough Road which it follows until this meets the A986. The boundary then runs south along the A986 until it reaches the A965 (the main Kirkwall-Stromness road) which it crosses, proceeding south along the line of an
access road to Stymilders and then continuing across rough pastureland to the point at which the Heddle Road and Burn of Lyradale meet near Breck. Here it turns south-west and runs for approximately 1.7km to a point just beyond the end of the access road to Bigswell where it turns west at the 75m contour line, passing between Bigswell and Stoursdale and proceeding to a point just south-west of Anderswick. Here it turns south-west again for c. 0.75km to a point on the moorland slopes before turning again to follow the track/access road past Sunnydale to Fea near Clouston.

The boundary then runs due west, crossing the low slopes south of the Loch of Stenness and then the outlet of The Bush, the narrows where the channel connecting the Loch of Stenness at Brig o Waithe to the sea opens into the Bay of Ireland. West of this it touches the shore below Howe, runs along the coast south-west then turns inland to the north-west at Congesquoy. Here it turns south-west again on the Howe Road, then almost immediately north-west over the small hill at Maraquoy and Bruna Fea, crosses country to Stairwaddy and there joins the unnamed road to Cauldhame and then Garth to the north-north-west.

At Garth the proposed Buffer Zone boundary follows a track then a field boundary almost due north for c. 0.5km then turns north-east to follow another field boundary to the farm road here at Hutter; it then zigzags along these small roads to the east until it meets the A967 at Arion. At this point it leaves the road and cuts straight across the north-western arm of the Loch of Stenness to Lyking and thence east along the Lyking Road to the B9055 or Brodgar Road where, a few metres south, this description began.

Skara Brae and Bay of Skaill (Map 7)

The proposed Buffer Zone here describes an irregular arc around the Bay of Skaill. The coastline between its southerly and northerly terminals can be considered to represent the western stretch of the boundary.

Beginning in the south at Row Head the boundary follows the high ground south-east between the coast and the Loch of Skaill, then drops down the slopes just south of Yeladee and meets the B9056 at West Clumly, just north of which it then cuts cross-country to Bain on the B9055. It then follows the B9055 north for c. 400m before running almost north through low-lying land c. 1km to meet the Vetquoy Road (B9057) between Linday and Oakbank. Here it again goes north through Newgarth over the slopes on the west of Kier Fiold, to Pow, where it follows the access track north-east before turning back north-west. The boundary then runs north-west and near north using farm access roads, following the high ground on the eastern side of the hills here, through farms at Tronston and North Unigarth and up onto the Hill of Cruaday. It follows the outer slopes of Cruaday round to the west until it meets the B9056 north of a disused quarry, follows this road a very short distance north to Vestrafiold farm, then climbs west to the summit of Vestra Fiold hill and then takes a line west-north-west to the coast at Outshore Point.

In contrast to the Brodgar-Stenness area, the Bay is tightly enclosed
by surrounding low hills, the ridgelines of which are almost continuous around the bay. Despite being relatively low there are very few views, from within the bay, over these ridges, to more distant hills. The proposed Buffer Zone here reflects this.

A wider, ‘Sensitive Area’ has also been proposed in order to add an extra layer of protection to the Property. The proposed Buffer Zone and Sensitive Area can be found in the maps located in Annex A of this report.

A series of photographs showing key views in and around the World Heritage Site and its Buffer Zone can be found in the Atkins Study (Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS Setting Project, 2008, Plates 1-8, page 49).1

3. Justification for the Amended Buffer Zone

Geographically-speaking, the World Heritage Site is composed of two groups of monuments: the Brodgar–Stenness group and, 6.5 km to the north-west, Skara Brae. Each of these groups has a quite distinct setting. The Brodgar-Stenness area of the World Heritage Site has a highly distinctive and important setting. Its geographic location and its relationship with the wider topographic landscape is a fundamental aspect of its setting. These features help define the modern experience of the site and seem to have been inextricably linked to the reasons for its development and use in prehistory.

In terms of the modern experience of place, the strongly rural character of the landscape around the monuments is important to their setting, as is the changing and often dramatic weather. The Ring of Brodgar feels far more isolated and separate than Maeshowe or the Stones of Stenness and this sense of isolation is vital to that monument. Relationships with the wider archaeological landscapes are also important both for modern visitors and in terms of understanding the function and significance of the Property. Key relationships include the views to and from monuments around the shores of the lochs, e.g. the Knowe of Unstan; the visual relationships between the monuments in and around the World Heritage Site and the backdrops to those views; and wider views from the distant barrow groups. Finally, the alignment of the midwinter sunset at Maeshowe is an integral part of the World Heritage Site and its setting.

Skara Brae is geographically separate from the other parts of the World Heritage Site and is also typologically different as it is a domestic rather than ceremonial site – it therefore has a different setting. Its setting is far more about the modern experience of place rather than the physical manifestation of past relationships. This is characterised by the well-defined ridgelines and higher ground that define the edges of the visual envelope around the site; the working pastoral landscape around the site; the sensory experience of the site and, in particular, its relationship with the sea; and the small number of visual links to other archaeological monuments in the wider landscape.

1 http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/orkney-setting-report.pdf
The revised Buffer Zone covers the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site and the key visual connections between the Brodgar-Stenness group of monuments.

The intention of the Sensitive Area is to indicate areas where policies’ relating to the potential affects on the World Heritage Site and its setting should be taken into account. Protection is afforded in the Supplementary Planning Guidance through the identification of ‘sensitive ridgelines’ within the Sensitive Area (see The Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Guidance, Figure 2, and also Appendix 2). It is accepted in the Supplementary Planning Guidance that outwith the proposed Buffer Zone “certain developments … have the potential to have a significant negative impact upon the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site, especially where large scale developments are proposed. Of particular significance are the ridgelines which frame the topographical landscape bowl of the West Mainland.” Introducing a Sensitive Area will help avoid developments that would break the skyline at key points thereby having a detrimental effect on the outstanding universal value.

Overall, the proposed revision to the buffer zone aims to:

(i) Simplify the overlapping and confusing Buffer Zones found in the Nomination Document and 2001 Management Plan, and Zones of Visual Influence in the previous Local Development Plan;

(ii) Ensure consistency between the Buffer Zone, present Management Plan and forthcoming Orkney Local Development Plan and recently adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for the World Heritage Site; and

(iii) Through (i) and (ii), improve the protection offered to the outstanding universal value of the designated Property (see Section 4).

Background to Proposed Modification of Buffer Zone

At the time of nomination in 1998, effectively two layers of Buffer Zone were proposed for the Property:

1) an Inner Buffer Zone (IBZ); and
2) an Outer Buffer Zone (OBZ).

These were described in the Nomination Document (pages 3 and 4) and can be seen on Map 1.

These buffer zones were aligned with existing cultural and natural heritage designations. In the case of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney that encompassed the Hoy and West Mainland National Scenic Area, the Brodgar Rural Conservation Area, the Lochs of Harray and Stenness Site of Special...
Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, Buffer Zone Modification Proposal.
January 2013.

Scientific Interest, the Loch of Stenness Special Area of Conservation, the scheduled area of Skara Brae, and the protection afforded by the A-listing of Skaill House.

UNESCO’s Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2012, paragraph 103–7) state that a Buffer Zone should be considered where it would help to protect the World Heritage Site effectively by defining an area around it which has ‘complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development’. The area should include the immediate setting of the WHS, ‘important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the Property and its protection’ and its precise boundaries should be mapped.

In 2000 / 2001 Tyldesley & Associates were commissioned by Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage to consider the landscape capacity of the area around the World Heritage Site. Their report described three areas of ‘Setting’ and mapped two of them. The area called the ‘Intermediate Setting’ was used as a basis for an area delineated in the 2004 Local Plan. It was called the ‘Zone of Visual Influence’ (ZVI) and was also referred to in the 2001 Structure Plan. The Local Plan also included policy wording which referred to large-scale developments outwith the ZVI which may impact on the WHS.

This means that there existed in Orkney a complex situation of overlapping Buffer Zones as well as the ZVI in the Local Development Plan, which effectively functioned as a Buffer Zone.

To address this complicated system, in 2007–8 Historic Scotland commissioned Atkins Ltd to describe the ‘setting’ of the World Heritage Site, consider the Buffer Zone situation in Orkney and make recommendations for its revision. The report formed Appendix B of the consultative draft of the Management Plan (2008-13) and the proposed way forward was set out in Chapter 2 of the draft Plan. Following public consultation, Atkins Ltd’s report was revised to make its recommendations clearer. 3

In the draft Plan, it was proposed to introduce two local Buffer Zones (similar in extent to the 2004 Local Plan ZVI) in order to manage small-scale change around the World Heritage Site and one large Buffer Zone to manage large-scale change in the wider area. Analysis of the public consultation responses indicated that this layered solution seemed to cause confusion. The intention of a UNESCO-defined Buffer Zone is to provide a line on a map and associated policy to indicate an area where development may adversely affect the setting of a World Heritage Site. Therefore a Buffer Zone can be used to highlight an area where potential impacts need to be given careful consideration by developers and decision-makers.

As recommended by the revised Atkins Ltd report, it is proposed that a single Buffer Zone (made up of two areas) replaces the IBZ and OBZ to control development which may adversely impact on the World Heritage Site and its

setting. This single Buffer Zone, as proposed in this report, is shown on Map 5. The Atkins report also recommended that, as at present, local development plan policy wording should be used to control large scale or tall development outside the Buffer Zone which may adversely affect the setting of the World Heritage Site.

The proposed Buffer Zone system for the Property:

- Introduces a less complicated system ensuring the protection of the Property;
- Is sensitive to change, particularly in terms of large or tall developments which would almost certainly impact upon the Property if located within the Buffer Zone, and could still impact upon the setting of the Property if located outside the Buffer Zone;
- Represents a balanced response to complex local factors surrounding the management of change in the setting of the World Heritage Site; and
- Introduces the ‘Sensitive Area’ which creates a wider area around the Property where the outstanding universal value and the setting need to be considered as part of any proposed developments.

4. Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value

All the monuments lie within the designated boundaries of the Property. However the boundaries are tightly drawn and do not encompass the wider landscape setting of the monuments which provides their essential context, nor other monuments that can be seen to support the outstanding universal value of the Property.

The proposed amendment to the buffer zone, centred on Skara Brae in the west and on the central west Mainland monuments, will help to protect the relationships and linkages between the monuments and the wider open, almost treeless landscape, and between the monuments that comprise the Property and those in the area outside it that support the outstanding universal value.

The proposed amendment of the Buffer Zone will offer a less complicated system of protection for the World Heritage Site and its setting as set out in the Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.

Simplifying the Buffer Zone will ensure there is better understanding of the way in which the Property is protected, and will ensure there is increased awareness of the outstanding universal value of the site and the reasons for its protection.

Officially amending the Buffer Zone will ensure it reflects the approach developed in the new Orkney Local Development Plan and accompanying the Supplementary Planning Guidance (2011), providing effective protection for the Property.
The proposed Buffer Zone does not encompass the entirety of the setting of the World Heritage Site, but it does encompass the immediate setting and defines a sensitive area where development, of all types, has a higher potential to adversely alter the setting, and the outstanding universal value, of the Property.

The modification of the Buffer Zone will therefore improve management of development in the immediate areas around the two key parts of the World Heritage Site.

5. Implications for Legal Protection

Official recognition of the proposed Buffer Zone by UNESCO will strengthen the following documents that have specific reference to the Buffer Zone.

Local Development Plan
The proposed Buffer Zone has already been incorporated in the newly revised Orkney Local Development Plan. This will replace the Orkney Structure Plan (2001) and Orkney Local Plan (2004). The Plan contains policies which address the need to put an appropriate level of protection in place for the Property and its setting.

Policy “HE1 - The Heart Of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site” in the Local Development Plan and the associated Supplementary Guidance require that developments must demonstrate that they will have no significant negative impact on either the outstanding universal value or the setting of the World Heritage Site.

Supplementary Planning Guidance
Supplementary Planning Guidance for the World Heritage Site has also been produced. These policies and guidance establish a general commitment to preserving the integrity and authenticity of the Property. They also seek to manage the impact of development on the wider landscape setting, and prevent development which would have an adverse impact on its outstanding universal value through the designation of the Buffer Zone and the identification of sensitive ridgelines outwith this area.

Draft Supplementary Guidance for Wind Energy is in the final stages of development. The September 2012 draft sets out Development Criteria against which all proposals for wind energy developments will be assessed. ‘DC6 for the Historic Environment’ states that wind energy developments will not be permitted where they would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the historic environment. The World Heritage Site, its Inner Sensitive Zones (these assume a different name but are identical with the proposed Buffer Zone) and wider landscape setting are listed under relevant historic environment resources. The draft Guidance also notes that “due to its international importance, significant protection has been given to the World Heritage Site and its Inner Sensitive Zones, careful consideration must be given to the siting and design of proposals and it must be demonstrated,
through assessment, that there will be no adverse impact on the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site or its setting.”

National Legislation
World Heritage Sites in Scotland are protected through the following pieces of legislation. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and The Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 provide a framework for local and regional planning policy and act as the principal pieces of primary legislation guiding planning and development in Scotland. Additionally, individual buildings, monuments and areas of special archaeological or historic interest are designated and protected under The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas)(Scotland) Act 1997 and the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) is the primary policy guidance on the protection and management of the historic environment in Scotland. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sits alongside the SHEP and is the Government’s national planning policy on the historic environment. It provides for the protection of World Heritage Sites by considering the impact of development on their outstanding universal value, authenticity and integrity.

6. Implications for Management Arrangements
The amended Buffer Zone is unlikely to have any implications for the management arrangements of the Property. Managing the amended Buffer Zone will involve the same partners, landowners and stakeholders, and will continue to be overseen by the World Heritage Site Steering Group.

World Heritage Site Management Plan, 2008 – 2013
As already indicated in this report, the 2008 Management Plan contained proposals for the amendment of the Buffer Zone, and since its inception the management and protection of the Property has been based on these proposals.

This can clearly be seen in the references to the amended Buffer Zone in both the Local Development Plan and the Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Work is currently underway to revise the Orkney Management Plan for 2014-19, and it is intended that this document will use the revised Buffer Zone as presented in this report.
7. **Maps**

The following maps have been attached separately and can be found in Annex A.

- **Map 1**  Current Buffer Zone Boundaries
- **Map 2**  Current and Proposed Buffer Zone Boundaries
- **Map 3**  Current and Proposed Buffer Zone Boundaries (Brodgar-Stenness area)
- **Map 4**  Current and Proposed Buffer Zone Boundaries (Skara Brae area)
- **Map 5**  Proposed Buffer Zone
- **Map 6**  Proposed Buffer Zone (Brodgar-Stenness area)
- **Map 7**  Proposed Buffer Zone (Skara Brae area)
Additional information for the minor modification to the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site Buffer Zone submission:

Table listing the four serial component parts of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site and the buffer zones with respective areas in ha (as inscribed and as proposed):

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<th>SITE AS INSCRIBED</th>
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Title: Heart of Neolithic Orkney
Brodgar - Stenness Area
Scale: 1 : 50,000 @ A4
Projection: British National Grid

Key
- Purple: Property Boundary
- Green: Proposed Buffer Zone
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Title: Heart of Neolithic Orkney Skara Brae
Scale: 1 : 35,000 @ A4
Projection: British National Grid

Key
- Property Boundary
- Proposed Buffer Zone