

SWEDEN – HERITAGE @ RISK!

This report is the first attempt to describe the threats to heritage in Sweden. Later it will be deepened and updated.

Monuments and sites in Sweden are protected by law. There is special legislation for monuments, either ancient monuments that are automatically protected, or the built environment where there is a need for a decree to make the protection valid. There are also other possibilities to protect monuments and sites on a national level with the Environmental Code that also covers large areas, as for instance cultural landscapes. On a local level, possibilities to protect buildings etc exist in the Planning and Building legislation.

Each sector's legislation has apart from the above mentioned legislation, regulations for the consideration of cultural heritage. Since the 1970s, the Heritage sector participates in the National Physical Planning.

Sweden has

- 450,000 registered ancient monuments protected automatically by the Cultural Heritage Act
- 1,500 sites with protected buildings (containing many more buildings) out of a foreseen number of 3000, protected by the Cultural Heritage Act after a special declaration.
- 3000 churches all protected by the Cultural Heritage Act
- 1400 areas of national importance, protected by the Environmental Code (including cultural landscapes)

On a national level, the state conservation office is the National Heritage Board. All 20 Counties have a Heritage Unit in each County Administration. There are also 20 County Museums, as well as all other museums at a local level or private ones.

The National Heritage Board, the County Administration Heritage Units and the County Museums co-operate on questions concerning the conservation of cultural heritage in an organised way, supported by grants from the Government.

Around 250 million SEK is available as Government grants to private owners for extra monetary costs when restoring, while "normal" maintenance is the responsibility of the owner.

Sweden is a sparsely populated country, with the majority of buildings and population concentrated in the regions around Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

The country has been inhabited for the last 15,000 years since the end of the last Ice Age. In historic times, the country has mainly been an agricultural area while parts of the country have had mining and ironworks. Forestry and paper production are other sectors based on national resources.

Economic change, changes to infrastructure and environmental threats are the major threats to the built environment in Sweden.

Main threatened structures:

Farmsteads and agricultural landscapes

The change in agricultural policies over recent decades has brought many farmsteads into decay. It also caused a change to open agricultural landscapes, in some areas now planted with forests. Abandoned animal production has caused decay to cow sheds and barns that are no longer in use. In certain areas of

great cultural value, the Government and the cultural conservation units have ongoing grants to maintain those kinds of structures. That is especially the case on the islands of Öland and Gotland in the Baltic Sea and in the county of Jämtland in northern Sweden.

Manor houses and their cultural landscapes

As the institution of entailing estates was abandoned in Sweden some years ago, castles and manor houses are inherited collectively. That has caused them to be sold off and the collections scattered. Many manor estates are converted into conference hotels and the land is divided into several shares and sold or abandoned. Thus the cultural landscapes of manor estates are slowly disappearing.

Industrial heritage

Sweden was not industrialised to any large extent until the early 20th Century. The main industries were based on iron, forestry and copper. Most of this has vanished because production is cheaper elsewhere in the world. Industrial heritage, often with large buildings, stands as a monument to a past era, most often without any new use. At the national level, it is estimated that it is possible to conserve some of those with Government grants. The rest is severely threatened if grants or a new use cannot save them.

Industrial heritage also includes railroads and old roads threatened by new changes to the infrastructure.

20th Century housing areas

Housing estates built shortly before and after World War II are now in a state that makes restoration necessary, which includes rebuilding, often in new colours. Much of this building stock is not protected and is under threat of losing its high original qualities, although not being completely destroyed.

Soft stone in buildings and other constructions

Air pollution especially effects soft stone and is a threat that is brought to us from other countries. Although strong efforts have been made, including in co-operation with the Council of Europe, and inventories and conservation that have been undertaken, this is an ongoing threat.

Air pollution also causes a threat to finds in ancient heritage places and to rock art. A European Union project, the Tanum Laboratory on Cultural Heritage, based in Sweden, is trying to find solutions to this problem (see p. 226).