

NORWAY

Cultural heritage places, monuments and sites of national importance can be protected under national legislation (The Cultural Heritage Act). Cultural heritage of regional and local importance can be protected under the Building and Planning Act. The Directorate for Cultural Heritage is under the Ministry of the Environment. The Directorate is responsible for the management of all archaeological (including underwater) and architectural monuments and sites and cultural environments. The following agencies are responsible for the day-to-day management:

- County level Cultural Heritage Management exists in all 18 counties. This service advises the county administration on questions of conservation and protection of cultural heritage and environment in the planning process at county and municipality level.
- The Saami Parliament (Sámediggi) has a Department of Environmental and Cultural Heritage, which undertakes the same tasks as the county cultural heritage management.
- Local Council Cultural Heritage Management can be found in some towns and local councils. This service advises the municipal council on questions of conservation and protection of cultural heritage and environment in the planning process.
- The Archaeological Museums in Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø undertake excavation and investigation of archaeological monuments and sites.
- The Maritime Museums in Oslo, Stavanger and Bergen; the Museum of Natural History, Archaeology and Social History in Trondheim, and Tromsø Museum are responsible for underwater archaeological sites on the sea bed.
- The Cultural Conservation of Svalbard is administered by the Governor, in accordance with the cultural heritage regulations for Svalbard.

Cultural Heritage Overview

Overall, there are 1230 listed and protected building groups with 2950 buildings in Norway. Of these, 85% of the buildings are in rural areas and connected to agriculture. In addition, there are a range of other types of cultural heritage that are protected in Norway. These are briefly discussed below.

Archaeological sites

Archaeological sites have been protected since 1905, and until today 300,000 automatically protected objects on 70,400 sites have been recorded. Archaeological sites have been inventoried for the Economic Map since the early 1960s, but 72 out of 434 municipalities have still not completed this inventory. In addition, large forest and mountainous areas have not yet been investigated. The average loss of archaeological sites is estimated to about 0.7–0.5% each year, mostly resulting from agricultural work.

Rock Art

Rock art in Norway dates back more than 7000 years, numbering at least 1100 sites with more than 32,000 motifs. Observations and research during the past 25 years show that 94% of the sites are more or less damaged. The sites are endangered for a number of reasons, most often in different combinations: climatic influence, wet and dry depositions, macro- and microbiological growth, and human impact. The resulting impacts are weathering, mineral loss, development of cracks, crevices and exfoliations, and general



An early 20th-century timber merchant warehouse in Skien, County of Telemark, on the demolition list

mechanical, chemical and biological deterioration. In 1996, a national 10-year multi- and cross scientific project for the management, conservation and protection of rock art was initiated by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage.

Underwater archaeological sites

We do not know the exact number of underwater archaeological sites, but we have estimated it to be about 3500 locations with thousands of objects. Priority has been given to 400 sites. The pressures from development of the coastline, harbours, offshore activities and shell sand digging are threatening underwater sites.

Mediaeval period

Norway still has a few hundred unique mediaeval houses in wood. Of these, 255 have been restored during the last 8 years. Out of an estimated 2000 mediaeval wooden churches, only 28 stave churches are left, and some of them are in a poor condition. Stave churches are particularly threatened by the danger of fire, as well as by human wear and tear. A major project for the protection and safeguarding of these wooden churches started this year (2002). There are still 160 mediaeval stone churches left in Norway and more than 70 ruins of mediaeval churches, monasteries, castles, and so on. The ruins are generally in a bad condition and are seriously endangered. They are threatened by the effects of previous conservation works that used inappropriate techniques and materials, lack of proper maintenance and monitoring routines, plant growth, damage of frost, mechanical wear and tear and wanton destruction.

There are eight mediaeval towns in Norway, and their still-intact cultural layers are important – though seriously endangered – sources of information. The sites are under strong pressure from modern urban development. Efforts are being made to gain more knowledge about which conditions favour protection and which lead to deterioration. Through the systematisation of previous inventories, combined with ongoing studies, we are in the process of defining possible differential solutions, contingent upon the context and the local conditions: these include uncompromised preservation, archaeological excavations, protection in situ combined with building on the cultural layers.

17th- and 18th-century wooden churches

There are 185 wooden churches dating from the 17th or 18th centuries, and they are typical for the northern European region. There are still 130 churches from the period 1800–1850, and approximately 900 were built after 1850; 50% of these are of historical interest. The damage to these churches is mainly the result of overheating and cracking of wooden and painted decorations. We also have to mention that the introduction of new material, specially plastic wall paintings since the 1970s, has caused great damage.

Industrial and technical heritage

The protection of 31 technical monuments receives priority in Norway. In addition there are many others that are not protected and which are of great historical value. The complexity of these

monuments, their size and the lack of knowledge of their maintenance increase the danger of losing this industrial heritage.

Buildings owned by the State

Historic buildings owned by the State are recorded, but not protected by law. During the last years the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and the different ministries have worked out conservation plans for:

- Coastal administration – historic lighthouses;
- Railroad company (NSB) – stations, bridges, water towers, etc.;
- Military defence – including fortifications, airports, barracks (1300 objects are proposed for protection).

Ship preservation

The major task concerning ship preservation is to preserve a representative selection of vessels of great historical value. The term ‘ship preservation’ in Norway has been used synonymously with the preservation of vessels longer than 30–35 feet in a floating condition. In addition to this fleet there are many objects preserved inside museum buildings, but these are mainly small, open boats.

Ship preservation in Norway has always been based on voluntary efforts. This activity started in the 1960s, and the Norwegian Council of Cultural Affairs then financially supported some of these projects. Today the Directorate for Cultural Heritage, which is under the Ministry of the Environment, has the public responsibility for ship preservation. A total of 172 vessels have received economic support or been declared ‘worth preserving ship’. According to the Cultural Heritage Act §14a it is now also possible to protect boats that are of particular historical value.

In 1996 three national ship-preservation centres were established. These centres have collected valuable knowledge concerning old shipbuilding skills and are able to maintain old vessels in accordance with relevant traditions. The restoration work done at the three centres is based on historical and technical documentation. One of the greatest threats against a properly ship preservation today seems to be the safety regulations.

Recorded and not protected buildings

During the years 1973–1998, 540,000 buildings built before 1900 were recorded across Norway. These buildings have no legal protection and most of them are part of farms. They are of great historical value as they represent an enormous source of knowledge of former craftsmanship, use of materials and ways of life. Research in some communities has given the depressing result that 15% of the buildings have disappeared within 20–25 years. In addition, 20% have been badly damaged. Without a large scale repair and maintenance programme, 35% of the buildings will be lost within 10 years. If these buildings are not taken care of, there will be virtually none left in 80 years time.

Historic gardens and parks

A register of approximately 400 gardens and parks of historic interest in Norway was established around 1960. The register covered the whole country except the two last northern counties, which were not included until the 1980s. This register has been revised only once, in 1986, when the gardens were also surveyed. The 1986 revision showed that while the majority of the gardens

were in relatively good shape, 40% had deteriorated, of which 20% were in ruin and 7.5% had been destroyed. This means that there is an acute need for a total update and digitalisation of the register and a new field survey.

Museum buildings

In total, 329 Norwegian museums own 4700 historic buildings, mainly as part of open-air museums. Many years of lacking or poor maintenance has led to a considerable loss of authentic building materials.

Historic Saami sites

The Saami have been recognised as the indigenous people of Northern Scandinavia, and many Saami sites have been recorded during the last couple of decades, in connection with different projects. However, since Saami sites have only been legally protected since 1978, and most of them are located in forest and mountain areas, the majority of sites have not yet been identified. This presents a particular danger because many Saami sites are threatened by the building of hydroelectric power stations, dams and military training fields. Only one Saami cultural environment, Skoltebyen in South Varanger (County of Finnmark), has so far been listed; this site is the traditional summer camp (settlement) of one of the Eastern Saami groups.

Groups of Monuments and Sites

Historic wooden towns – fire protection

There are more than 200 historic wooden towns and areas of densely built wooden buildings in Norway. Highly flammable materials, a short distance between houses, frost problems (tem-

peratures below -30°C are normal), heating during long periods of the year, windy conditions, remoteness of sites (distance to fire brigade, unoccupied buildings etc.) and insufficient water supply in remote locations create particular challenges for wooden towns. Fire protection of wooden towns started with the installation of sprinklers at Bryggen in Bergen in the early 1960s. This step followed a fire in 1955 that destroyed half the buildings at Bryggen (one of four Norwegian places on the UNESCO World Heritage List). In the 1980s, work was started on fire protection of the mining town of Røros (also on the UNESCO World Heritage List). Fire detection in lofts and passages was recommended for Røros in a report in 1985. Extreme climatic conditions made it difficult in those days to find appropriate fire detection systems, because of too many false alarms. Experience with the Norwegian stave churches now makes it easier to find fire detection systems suited for use in difficult climatic conditions. In recent years a pilot project has been carried out in the old fortified town of Fredrikstad to test relevant external fire-detection systems in lofts and passages.

In the early 1990s, plans were made for the fire protection of the old wooden centres of Risør and Tvedestrand. Some technical measures were carried out in these towns: for example, dry sprinklers on the façades of some houses to create fire barriers. Local enthusiasm has contributed to improved fire protection in Skudeneshavn (on the coast north of Stavanger), including external frost-proof fire hoses and a fire engine suitable for use in a small town with narrow streets. In Lyngør, another coastal community, the fire brigade is equipped with a boat for fire fighting.

In addition to the above work, the Directorate for Cultural Heritage has funded plans for the fire protection of Grip, Lillehammer and Stavanger, carried out during the last few years.

The agricultural landscape and farmsteads

Priority has been given to 104 cultural landscapes. Reports for these areas have been prepared, but we do not have any surveys for the condition of these landscapes. Every year 5000 acres of land



Hunting pits for elk are common in many Norwegian forest areas. This one is situated in Follidal, County of Hedmark.

are subject to urban development, and most of these areas are within the suburban rural landscape.

The Arctic area

Half of the archipelagos of Svalbard has been surveyed and recorded, and sites have been found from whaling to hunting dating to the 16th century, and the mining industry from the 20th century. The tough climate, erosion and increasing tourism are today the greatest threats to the cultural heritage of the islands.

General Threats

Agricultural development

Norway has 180,000 agricultural properties and in connection with these, farm buildings present the largest number of cultural heritage items. Every year for the past 15 years, 2% of the total number of farms is closed down and partly abandoned. Outhouses are losing their function and are no longer maintained. Deep ploughing destroys archaeological sites and cultural layers.

Forestry

It is only in recent years that archaeologists have seriously started to show an interest in forest areas. During the last 20 years, archaeological digs and recordings in these areas have revealed a rich occurrence of cultural remains and several new types have been discovered or have been dated further back than previous remains. Mechanisation of forestry in Norway was a post-war phenomenon, and it was not until around 1960 that machinery began to replace the horse to a greater extent. This means that large areas still exist in which cultural monuments and cultural environments are nearly untouched by modern intervention. This places Norway in a unique position, also among the Nordic countries, and it imposes upon us a special responsibility to manage this heritage in a sustainable manner. A precondition for success, however, is the support of those who make their daily living from the forests.

Building of roads, heavy forestry machinery and gravel pits are threatening the unknown archaeological sites in the outer areas.

Training courses in cultural heritage in the forest have been organised for more than 12,000 forest owners and workers. Forest certification will probably help to diminish the loss of this cultural heritage.

A central principle in Norwegian environmental politics is that each sector is responsible for its own cultural sites. The Norwegian forestry sector has taken this responsibility seriously and has established (1998) a trial project whereby cultural heritage sites are recorded as a part of forestry planning. Through the project 'Environmental recording in forests' – sub-project 'cultural heritage' – the forestry sector is covering new ground by defining target groups, types of cultural heritage sites of value, establishing recording methodology and adopting a cross-disciplinary approach. The project is necessary because national cultural heritage databases have been found to be inadequate and unreliable for the Norwegian forests.

Communication

The development of road and railway networks, harbours and airports are claiming huge areas in Norway, posing great threats to all cultural landscapes and archaeological sites. Of the total loss, 1% can be traced back to communication and infrastructure projects.

Military

The military forces are in a process of reorganisation and rationalisation. Many old camps and some training fields are abandoned, but also new training fields are under planning. The largest interference in nature, an area of 226 square kilometres that includes a large number of archaeological sites, is now under planning in eastern Norway under the name of regional training fields for eastern Norway. During the last four years most of the area had been recorded and 2981 legally protected sites were found, dating back to the Stone Age, Iron Age and mediaeval times.

Hydro electric power

New hydro-dams are still under planning. The lakes so created will cover enormous areas that include many historical sites.