

NORWAY – HERITAGE @ RISK!

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 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.
- 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 administer excavation and investigation of archaeological sites.
- The Maritime Museums in Oslo, Stavanger, and Bergen, and the Museum of Natural History, Archaeology and Social History in Trondheim and Tromsø Museum are responsible for the underwater archaeological sites on the sea bed.
- The Council for Sami Cultural Heritage has its own organisation, with the same tasks as the county cultural heritage management.
- Cultural Conservation of Svalbard is administered by the Governor, in accordance with the cultural heritage regulations for Svalbard.

Norway's Cultural Heritage

Archaeological sites have been protected since 1905 and until now 300,000 automatically protected objects at 70,400 sites have been recorded. Huge areas in the forests and mountains have still not been investigated. The average loss of archaeological sites is 0.7% each year, much of this is a result of ploughing of fields. In some areas the loss of gravel is more than 50%.

Rock art in Norway dates back 7,000 years, and many sites are endangered. 1100 sites with 31,800 motifs have been recorded. Observations and research during the last 25 years show that 94% of the rock art is damaged. The reason for this damage is not clear. A probable explanation seems to be climatic influence, pollution and the interference of human beings. In 1996, Norway started an ongoing project on safeguarding its rock art.

We do not have an exact number for underwater archaeological sites, but we have estimated it to be about 3,500 sites with thousands of objects of which 400 sites are given priority. The pressure of coastal development, harbours, offshore activities, and shell sand excavation is threatening these underwater sites.

Norway still has some hundreds of unique wooden medieval houses, 255 of these having been restored over the last 8 years. Of 2000 medieval wooden churches, 28 stave churches are left,

and many of them are in a poor condition. Although great efforts to restore and protect them have been made, damage by the climate and tourism is serious.

There are still 160 medieval stone churches left in Norway and 70 ruins of churches, monasteries, castles etc. Some of them, especially the ruins, are endangered. The reason is previous maintenance using inappropriate modern techniques and materials, vegetation growth, damage by frost, mechanical wear and tear and wanton destruction.

Norway has 6-7 medieval towns, and their cultural layers are very important sources of information. Every time a site has been fully excavated, a cultural layer is lost and interpreted according to our present scientific understanding. We need to protect areas for future excavation when new scientific methods and skills will have been developed.

There are 1,230 enlisted and protected building groups with 2,950 buildings in Norway. 85% of these buildings are in rural areas and connected to agriculture.

Wooden churches

The number of wooden churches dating from the 17th and 18th century is 185, and they are typical of the northern European region. There are still 130 churches dating to the period 1800 to 1850, and approximately 900 built after 1850, 50% of these being of historical interest. The damage to these churches is mainly the result of overheating and cracking of the wooden and painted decorations. We must also mention that the introduction of new materials since the 1970s, especially plastic wall paints, has caused great damage.

Industrial and technical heritage

The protection of 31 technical cultural heritage places receives priority in Norway. In addition there are many others which are not protected and which are of great historic value. The complexity of the heritage place, their size and a lack of knowledge about their maintenance increases 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 recent years, the Directorate of Cultural Heritage and other ministries have developed conservation plans for:

- Coastal administration: Historic lighthouses
- Railroad company (NSB): Stations, bridges, water towers, etc.
- Military defence: Fortifications, airports, barracks etc (1,300 items are proposed to protect)

Ships and Vessels

In 1999, 162 floating vessels were listed and protected in some formal way. 121 received financial funding, and 3 maritime centres were established for the restoration of old vessels. Corrosion in salt water, mechanical wear and tear and poor maintenance

nance are the main reasons for the endangered boats. The condemnation of the fishing boats has for many years been a threat to the protection of historical vessels in a good condition. The ownership, management and maintenance of most of these ships is based on voluntary efforts.

Recorded but unprotected buildings

540,000 buildings built before 1900 were recorded between 1973 and 1998 all over Norway. These buildings have no legal protection and most of them are a part of farms. These buildings are of great historic 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 these buildings have disappeared in the last 20-25 years and 20% have been badly damaged. Without a large-scale repair and maintenance program, 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.

Museum buildings

329 Norwegian museums own 4700 historic buildings, mainly as part of open-air museums. A long time with a lack of maintenance has led to a great extent to the exchange of authentic building materials.

Historic Sami sites

The cultural heritage places and sites of the Sami people are not systematically recorded.

Groups of cultural heritage places

Historic wooden towns

Norway has 54 wooden towns and villages with 13,000 buildings. The greatest risk to these structures is fire.

Agricultural landscapes and farmsteads

104 cultural landscapes receive priority. Reports for these areas have been provided, but we do not have any surveys for the condition of these landscapes. Every year 5000 acres of land is under urban development, most of this area being within the suburban rural landscape.

The Arctic area

Half of the archipelago of Svalbard has been recorded, and sites have been found ranging from walls to hunting sites 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 represent the largest number of cultural heritage places. Every year for the past 15 years, 2% of



An old floodgate as technical heritage

farms are closed down and partly abandoned. Outhouses are losing their function and are no longer maintained. Deep ploughing destroys archaeological sites and cultural layers.

Forestry

Building of roads, heavy forestry machinery and gravel pits are threatening unknown archaeological sites in outer areas. Training courses in cultural heritage in the forest have been organised for more than 12,000 forest owners and workers and forest certification will help to diminish the loss of this cultural heritage.

Communication

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

Military

The military forces are in the process of reorganisation and rationalisation. Many old camps and some training fields are abandoned, but new training fields are also being planned. The largest interference in nature, an area of 250 km² that includes 3,000 archaeological sites is now being planned in eastern Norway under the name of "regional training fields for eastern Norway".

Hydro-electric power

New hydro-electric dams are still being planned. The resultant artificial lakes will cover enormous areas with many historic sites.

Case Study – Historic Ships

The protection and restoration of historic ships raises manifold problems. Here three examples:

"Forlandet" was a whaling ship built in 1921 in Norway for hunting from Grytviken on the South Georgia Island. Today the vessel is owned and restored by a voluntary organisation.

"Lady Elisabeth" is a barque, aground on the beach at Whalebone close to Port Stanley, Falkland Island. The three master iron barque was built in 1879 in Sunderland. 1906 the barque passed to the Norwegian flag. In 1913 the ship left Vancouver for South Africa, came into a hurricane and was badly damaged and tried to reach a harbour on Falkland Island when it went aground. Compared to the long time the ship has been lying on the shore it is still in a surprisingly good condition.

"Borgenes" is a steamer built in Canada in 1942 for the British government as escort vessel with the name -276 Cailiff, belonging to the Western Isles-class. The ship was used in convoy escorting across the Atlantic. The ship was bought in 1947 by Heinsa AS in Kristiansand in Norway and was rebuilt as a trawler and given the name Borgenes. The ship is very important as pioneer in the development of the trawling fleet and it is the only steam trawler left. It is also one of the very few escort vessels from the Second World War. The ship was saved from being dismantled a few years ago and is now under restoration.

ICOMOS Norway

Example for an endangered farmstead, a blockhouse protected by a provisional roof

