



# Advice & Ideas for SCOTLAND'S BATTLEFIELD CHAMPIONS

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The **Scottish Battlefields Trust** is a registered charity dedicated to promoting, interpreting and protecting Scotland's rich and fascinating battlefield heritage.

This document is designed to help individuals, interest groups and communities who care about a particular battlefield. It draws on our experiences in leading, supporting and observing similar activities. The document is intended to help with your thinking and provide some inspiration.

Too often battlefields are in the news because they are facing some form of crisis. We want to turn that around, and encourage communities to see battlefields as important cultural and historical assets which offer opportunities for supporting tourism, well-being, and a sense of place.

They are also places for contemplation and remembrance, for honouring the sacrifices of those who have forged the mettle of the nation and directed the course of its journey. We also owe it to future generations that we act as responsible guardians of our heritage.

We start with a summary of the relevant national policies. Then we pose some questions about *your* battlefield and what makes it special. That will lead to ideas about what you might want to achieve and what might not be appropriate, and how you might choose to get there.

We hope that you will find this document useful. Please get in touch with us at any time and we will try to support, strengthen or promote your ideas and activities.

## KEY NATIONAL POLICIES



Historic battlefields in Scotland have no statutory protection. By law, however, *Historic Environment Scotland* (HES) maintains an official **Inventory of Historic Battlefields**. Inventory designation makes the battlefield a material consideration in the planning system, meaning that impacts on this historic landscape must be taken into account when assessing potential developments. Individual elements within a battlefield may be protected separately from the battlefield, such as listed buildings or scheduled monuments.

*“Historic battles hold a significant place in our national consciousness and play an important part in our sense of identity. These momentous events live on today, through memorials, music, poetry and literature.”*

Historic Environment Scotland

Planning decisions are taken by the local authority, but within a designated battlefield HES are statutory consultees in the process. Some local authorities are developing their own supplementary planning guidance for battlefields, to further inform planning decisions and identify areas of particular sensitivity. In some cases, the Scottish Government intervene and call-in a decision. A nominated reporter then makes an assessment and recommendation to ministers.

With local decision-making so crucial, it is important that we all encourage local interest in our battlefields, supporting active engagement and understanding.

### **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields**

The Inventory is the most important tool for managing battlefields today. The designation records also provide an excellent starting point for research too, with bibliographies and references as well as summaries of what took place. You can download the official Guide to the Inventory [here](#).

There are 40 battlefields on the Inventory at present. These have all met a set of defined criteria, which not all battlefields can do. This means there are sites of battles, skirmishes and sieges which remain undesignated. Anyone can propose a site for inclusion in the Inventory or suggest changes to existing designations. The form is [here](#).

### **Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS)**

The guiding policy principles for management the Historic Environment are presented in [HEPS \(2019\)](#). These emphasise protection, seeking opportunities for enhancement, and - after all alternatives have been explored - mitigation against unavoidable detrimental impacts. There is also an emphasis on collaboration, communities (of both place and interest), and on protecting intangible heritage as well as the physical. These policies can support proactive enhancements of our battlefields, and help to articulate the defence against insensitive management or development.

### **Managing Change: Battlefields**

HES has produced guidance notes for the management of battlefield landscapes, downloadable [here](#). This is a key document, and acts as policy guidance for decision-makers as well as owners/developers. Its contents are not only valuable for understanding the processes, but also for articulating the pros/cons of proposals.

## THINKING ABOUT *YOUR* BATTLE



This section gives a starting point for your battlefield project. It asks questions which should help articulate *why* something should be done – especially for people who may not already understand as much as you do.

### When did it happen?

This is not always as obvious as it seems, and some battles have alternative possible days that might be days, weeks or even years apart. A date helps to contextualise an event within the wider national story.

### Who was there?

A connection to significant or recognisable historical figures can help people to contextualise the story of a battle, and help emphasise a battle's significance. It is not just about finding the kings and lords, however; any named individuals can help bring an historical narrative to life for people.

### What took place?

Presenting an understandable narrative is very important. Some battles are better documented than others, and some have traditional narratives which might need reappraising. Think also about the experience of the soldiers on the ground: what it might have been like for them; what they wore; and what the armies might have looked like in the landscape. How did these events impact local civilians? What happened before and after?

### Where did things happen?

Can the engagement as whole, or individual episodes within it, be placed reliably into

today's landscape? Sometimes traditional place-names give clues, or have lasting cultural associations. What clues do the original accounts give us? Precise locations aren't always possible, and whilst that means a battlefield may not be eligible for designation, it does not mean it should not be interpreted or commemorated.

Sketching out answers to some of those questions might expose where there are gaps in our knowledge, or opportunities for fresh investigation. These next questions are less about the history, and more about the battlefield today:

### Is it on the Inventory?

If it is, then there'll be a very useful designation record containing lots of information, including answers to all the previous questions. You should still try to articulate the answers yourself however, to focus on the issues which are more important to you and your potential audiences.

There are some very significant sites which are not on the Inventory. Sometimes this is because they cannot be reliably placed in a location which can be formally defended in the planning system, or because specific criteria have not been met. Examples include the large skirmish at Inverurie (1745), the bloodless Battle of Carberry Hill (1567), and the battles of Luncarty (990) and Athelstaneford (832?) which exist more in tradition than evidential history. These sites are still worthy of our attention.

### Are there significant surviving features?

Some battlefields have important physical anchor-points which help understand the narrative or locate particular episodes. These can include settlements, strongpoints such as castles or earthworks, or natural features such as hills, ravines, or waterways. Some of these features might be listed or scheduled.

### Is there a monument or focal point?

Some battlefields are already marked by a central monument or marker. Sometimes this is purpose-built, like the memorial tower at Harlaw (1411), the cairn at Culloden (1746), or the monumental pillar at Langside (1568). They can also be natural features which have become associated with a battle. Until the 1920s, the main marker point at Prestonpans (1745) was a hawthorn-tree, for example. At Killiecrankie (1689), a pre-existing standing stone became associated with the battle.

Such monuments are important as markers in the landscape which identify a location today with the event in the past. Many also serve a commemorative purpose similar to twentieth century war memorials. They can be valuable focal points if you are thinking about commemorative events, walking tours, or encouraging visitors.

If your site does not already have a monument, is there another landmark that could begin to serve a similar purpose? For example, the tomb of King James III at Cambuskenneth could serve as the focus for remembering all who fell at Sauchieburn (1488), even though it is some distance from the battlefield.

### Is there any interpretation?

We want to encourage people to understand and value our battlefield heritage, and that means sharing our knowledge. Before we do anything else however, it is important to consider what information is already available.

There may be an existing interpretation panel on site, for example. But is the information up-to-date, and is the board well maintained or has it fallen into disrepair?

Does the battlefield feature on any local trails or walking routes? Many communities and

local authorities produce such trails and maps which highlight points of local interest.

Look for off-site interpretation too. Is there a local museum, heritage centre or visitor attraction which talks about the battle, or has relevant artefact in its collection? Are there commemorative artworks in the community, like Coldstream's Flodden wall hangings?

### How intact/accessible is the battlefield?

Depending on your site and project aims, these practical considerations can be very important. Few battlefields retain their historical appearance, but some have changed beyond recognition. This will affect *how* you can interpret the battle, but that does not mean that you shouldn't still do so. You may do much of your interpretation off-site, but that process is still valuable. Alternatively, you may have a well-preserved historical landscape which is difficult to access or explore. It might be very remote, or simply lacking anywhere nearby to park a car.

### Where else does it connect to?

Battles rarely occur in isolation. Where did the armies come from, and where did they go next? Is your battle part of a larger campaign, and a bigger conflict? Thinking about these questions is very helpful, as it starts to identify potential partners or visitor trails, and contextualises local stories within the national timeline. These connections can be very valuable both practically and interpretatively.

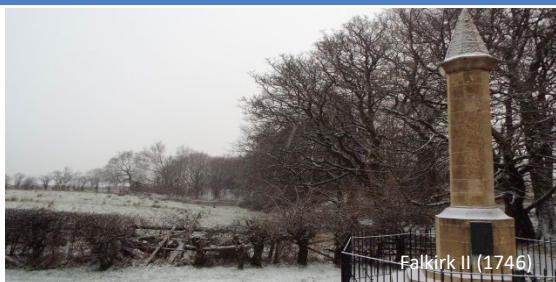
#### Example: Pinkie Cleugh (1547)

**Campaign connections:** archaeological sites at Innerwick, Dunglass and Eyemouth.

**Conflict connections:** Haddington, Hume, and Ancrum as part of the Rough Wooing.

**Character connections:** Queen Mary - battles at Carberry Hill and Langside, museum in Jedburgh, various castle/palace sites.

## GETTING STARTED



There is no single project plan which will suit every battle or battlefield. It is important to temper enthusiasm with realistic expectations, and to fit ambitions to budgets. But there is also a lot which can be achieved *without* huge amounts of work or money. This section gives some ideas of how you might get something started.

### Step One – Write it down

Write down your answers to the questions above, and you'll soon have the basis for valuable document. The process will have been valuable in itself, but writing it down creates something which can serve as a briefing document for yourself and others, form the core of a website, or inform future interpretation plans. The process should reveal to you what makes your site of interest important, what makes it special, and where the opportunities might lie.

### Step Two – Find Friends

If you're on your own, then there is a risk you'll feel overwhelmed and eventually lose some of your driving enthusiasm. You might also miss the ideas, skills and resources which others can bring. We might be able to help put you in touch with others, or to call for supporters through social media or our magazine.

Consider forming a working group. Speak to others in the battlefield's community, such as the community council or the council archaeologist, as well as any other interested

parties you might have uncovered through answering the earlier questions.

Later on, your group might need to formalise in order to apply directly for funds. By then you'll need to have a number of people willing to help with the administration. Move at a pace which doesn't frighten people off from the commitment.

### Step Three – Light the Fire

What you do is up to you, and depends on the location. You could start by simply **laying a wreath** on the battle's anniversary, sending a photo to your local newspaper with a quick report explaining why you did it and how people can contact you. Send something to us and we can share it on social media too.

A great way to get things moving is to hold a small and easily manageable event. Civic weeks or local archaeology festivals can be good opportunities, as some of the promotion can be done for you.

A good start is to **hold a public talk**, as these can be useful in gauging local interest. Community halls can often be hired without great expense, and as a non-commercial use you should be able to get heavily discounted rates. Alternatively, you can hold an online talk using Zoom or similar. We could help you with that if you aren't sure.

Think about who will do the talking and at what level you pitch the information. The first set of questions from the last section should provide a solid basis. **Tell the story, and make it engaging.** A panel discussion might be a good approach, tackling different parts of the story. Let us know if we can help.

Sometimes it can be useful to set up a question you are seeking to answer: eg. *Who killed King James III at Sauchieburn?; Is it the Battle of Luncarty Fact or Fiction?* It doesn't always matter whether you have the answers.

Alternatively, you might prefer to start with a guided walk or a small commemoration ceremony. This is especially relevant to easily accessible sites with existing paths and identifiable locations or features.

You might then feel that you've done enough, having raised the profile of battle. But you might want to build on that further...

## MOVING FORWARD



As part of your initial engagement – assuming your energy and interest has not already been exhausted – provide a means for people to get in touch with you. If you collect people's contact details, just remember to comply with data security regulations.

### Build your momentum

Following your first talk or event, however modest it may have been, you should be able to build a bit of momentum. One simple option is to turn your first commemoration or guided walk into an annual event. Plan to run it at the next anniversary, or during the next local festival programme. This way your project – and the battle's story – starts to become part of the local scene. Attendance is likely to build over time, as has been shown at the Pinkie Cleugh (1547) anniversary commemoration for example.

### Make your battle or project visible

If you've gone through the process of answering the questions in our earlier section, then you will already have thought about and

written up an important summary of the battle. Could this be developed into a small leaflet, or a walking trail? There is even freely available software for creating audio trails for mobile phones. Drafting or getting permissions for a decent map of your battle can be very useful.

Talk to your local authority museum or archaeology service and see if they are able to support you with these ideas in the first instance. Some museums have rotating community displays, so perhaps you could encourage them to do a special feature on the battle.

Your objective is to get people thinking about the battle, so consider offering talks to local clubs and societies. You never know who you will meet or what you will trigger. If someone in your group is comfortable writing an article, consider sending one to us for our magazine. Think about other accessible publications too.

If there are simple things which can be done, such as occasional weeding around a monument, then volunteer to do them if nobody else seems able. But make sure you tell people – share your good works on social media so that the battlefield becomes a good news story for the community.

### Interpretation

Often the obvious next step is to seek an improvement to the marking of the battlefield in the landscape. Depending on your level of ambition, this could be through installing a plaque, erecting a small cairn, or putting up interpretation panels. Obviously these options come with costs ranging from the hundreds of pounds to the thousands, and can be affected by issues such as access and planning consents. Although digital or off-site interpretation suits some locations, physical markers are useful for attracting and supporting visitors and connecting the history

to the landscape. You should think about your options carefully, and plan what might be achievable over a series of phases.

You might want to begin with a single interpretation board, perhaps near to an existing monument or landmark. That might even be sufficient. Think about the balance between text and images: we probably know some re-enactors who could pose for photographs for you, for example.

Consider the purpose of your panel(s) and where best to put it. The board at the bus station at Inverkeithing (1651) are well placed to be seen by lots of people but not for understanding the battlefield landscape.

Remember each individual interpretation panel will need planning consent, so factor in the costs and time required for that. You might also want to consider some directional signage to help people find your battlefield: speak to the local council about this.

### **Fundraising**

Initially, you might be able to get things done through a supportive organisation such as a community council or by working with an existing local history group. But to progress further you are likely to want to formalise your own organisation with a committee and bank account. Then you will be eligible to raise funds and apply for grants independently, which will be important if your ambitions develop.

Think carefully about what you need money for, how much you really need (be honest with yourselves), and how the spend will improve the situation at your battlefield. Creating a simple chart of the project objectives, outcomes and success indicators is often helpful to you, and is sometimes required by funders anyway.

There are often local funding pots available for projects requiring fairly modest sums (a few thousand pounds). These include community councils, area partnerships, and local authorities. Sponsorship from local businesses might be possible too, so use your local networks.

Traditional fundraising methods – selling booklets, collecting donations at events, holding fundraising events – remain very useful, and consider trying your hand at online crowdfunding. These methods work best for achieving modest sums to support a specific project/event/activity, with a reportable outcome (eg, a new interpretation board or publication). Alternatively, they can help you offer match-funding against a larger grant.

You can sometimes save some money on interpretation if you're able to supply the written text yourself, or even design your own artwork. But not everyone has these abilities within their group however, and it is important that you finish with something of which you can be proud, so professional design might be required. You are welcome to send drafts to us, which we can check over for you.

For larger sums there is the possibility of support from national agencies such as Historic Environment Scotland or the National Lottery Heritage Fund. These processes are often competitive and require careful thought and administration.

Sometimes applying for grants can appear daunting and onerous, but if you plan your project and the budgets carefully then you should be fine. Every step you've taken in articulating significance, raising awareness, and demonstrating potential will stand you in good stead and make applications easier. Ask around for some official letters of support,

including from us at the Scottish Battlefields Trust.

### **Growing your Events and Resources**

Events help build your audience and demonstrate the appetite for supporting the battlefield. Public events also encourage others with an interest to get involved with you. We've already talked about the possibilities for simple early events which don't take too much energy or finance to undertake. Sometimes it is enough just to continue in that vein, running occasional walking tours, local talks, and wreath-layings. Consider live-streaming online to build a wider audience beyond your immediate community.

The next step is consider activities which are a little more energy intensive but can bring greater rewards. You could talk to some of the connections and contacts you've developed so far about running a **mini-conference day**. Your battle might be the sole focus, or it could act as the host for a day of talks about the wider conflict or period. Consider whether the local authority or a church, school or college might help you avoid venue hire charges. We can help you promote such events.

**Living history or re-enactment** events can also be highly effective at raising awareness and providing engaging educational opportunities. Colourful and eye-catching, they can bring large footfall, are popular with family audiences and create great photo opportunities.

Re-enactments can cost less than you might imagine, and it is all a question of scale. Often the field logistics (site security, toilets, water provision etc) cost more than the re-enactment itself. This makes it important that you chose the right venue for the size of event you want to run.

We have a lot of experience in our team, and can provide some advice if needed. We can also direct you to some of the most suitable re-enactment societies to contract for your purposes. It is a good idea to speak to a society early in the process to get a sense of the possibilities.

Another important audience to consider is school children. It may be possible to run a workshop at **your local school**, or to arrange for a class visit to the battlefield. If you have the skills, you could even look to design some classroom resources or activities to help local primary children consider the battle as a class project. Flags and heraldry, for example, provide colourful and creative opportunities. Perhaps banners could be made to dress local shop windows around the battle's anniversary?

You should also consider making your battle/project visible at other local events. If there is a gala day or fete, for example, could you take a stall or provide costumed characters or banner-bearers for a parade? If you think these opportunities could be worthwhile, consider creating a resource box to take with you: replica weapons or clothing, artefacts to handle, and maps of the battlefield are all popular with casual visitors.

What about wargaming and model-making? Perhaps there are people in your community who have the skills and interests to support you by **making a model or diorama**. If so, these can be very eye-catching and informative. Give careful thought to storage and transport issues.

It is often possible to host an **exhibition** at your local museum, library, or community centre. A few information panels in a visible location can be very effective, and if you have the resources then you can be even more ambitious with what you present.



## GOING FURTHER



### New Monuments or Memorials

If your battlefield cannot already boast a monument, you may wish to consider erecting one. Some groups choose this option instead of creating interpretation boards, as they are seen as more lasting markers. These can be cairns mounted with a plaque like that at Kilsyth (1645), or carved stones such as the tablet-style monument at Pinkie (1547). Other recent monuments include the Bell o' the Brae (1297) pillar in Glasgow and the memorial tables at Prestonpans (1745). These monuments can either be general location markers or, like the Prestonpans tables, be dedicated as memorials. They are potentially costly and require detailed planning, with consideration given to access and setting. You should also consider the impact of any physical installation on the battlefield itself. Monuments can however become iconic locations, and a focus for generations of visits, commemorations, and reflections.

### Archaeology

Few Scottish battlefields have had the benefit of large-scale systematic archaeological survey. Some have had no formal investigation work at all. Conflict archaeology as a discrete field is relatively recent but has been growing considerably and there is considerable expertise available.

Unless the battle is believed to have featured fieldworks or was connected directly to upstanding remains, the critical elements for further investigation will mainly involve cartographic study and metal-detection.

Other methods might be used to help detect features such as burial pits, but these are rare discoveries and usually accidental ones. Line of sight surveys and LiDar imaging are also increasingly valuable for understanding terrain.

Digital resources such as those at the National Library of Scotland [maps service](#) have made independent landscape study highly accessible. The OS Name Books have also been digitised, and can be a very valuable resource for your investigations.

To take things further, see if there are any local voluntary archaeology clubs who might be willing to partner with you for a project. Amateur metal detectorists can be very useful, but should be encouraged to work with you as part of a planned project with GPS recorded recovery. A small grant could facilitate professional oversight of such an investigation. If you have any queries or concerns about metal detecting, talk to [Treasure Trove](#). Involving the local community in archaeological works, either through events or participation opportunities, can be very rewarding. Consider getting in touch with [Archaeology Scotland](#) for further advice and support.

Talk to your local museum service to see if they have any artefacts relating to the battle which could be brought to your events.

### Permanent Exhibitions/Visitor Centres

Currently there are only two major visitor centres on Scottish battlefields: Culloden (1746) and Bannockburn (1314), both run by the National Trust for Scotland. There is also the National Wallace Monument which is devoted largely to the Battle of Stirling Bridge (1297), and a small centre at Killiecrankie (1689). Both Prestonpans (1745) and Falkirk II (1746) have dynamic visitor centre plans.

Whilst not suitable or even necessary for every battlefield, some form of permanent exhibition space is often a desired outcome for many battlefield groups. This need not always mean multi-million pound visitor attractions, although research suggests that small-scale operations are difficult to sustain financially as independent centres.

Think carefully about your long-term objectives for the battlefield, and whether this is something you need to aim for. If you want to create an indoor focal-point for visitors, then on what scale should it be? Is there enough of a market for an independent centre, or is there a bespoke solution to which your battlefield lends itself? At Athelstaneford (832) and Prestonpans (1745), old dovecots have been turned into un-manned interpretation spaces. The team at the latter is also developing a small museum in the old Town Hall building.

Is there space in an existing building which could accommodate a permanent display about the battle for visitors? It might be a church or a community building, or even a local café or pub. As with all aspects of battlefield interpretation, the balance is between your ambition and your resources, but also the scale of the potential audience. It might be enough to achieve a permanent location to which visitors can be directed to receive information additional to that available through on-site interpretation.

The best space for your permanent exhibition might not even be a physical one. A well-crafted website can be very effective, especially if it helps inform visitors before, during or after a trip to the battlefield itself. As with monuments, interpretation boards and exhibitions, a website needs ongoing care and maintenance. It also comes with some ongoing costs, which can be easy to forget.

## DEALING WITH THREATS



### **The best strategy for protecting battlefields is to show that we value them.**

All of the ideas and initiatives above would contribute towards that, however modest. They also help to create an audience of potential supporters if the battlefield faces a threat to its survival or integrity. Sometimes, mounting a defence of a battlefield against development pressures can be protracted and challenging. Developers tend to have more resources than those trying to protect an historic site or landscape, and the latter have no options for appeal once a decision is made.

However, if such a situation arises then you are not alone! You should contact us as soon as possible, and we will try to assess how we can help. Whether it is as simple as submitting an opinion to a planning application, or helping mobilise wider support, we will try to protect any battlefield under threat. It is however important to have local support for such campaigns. Petitions can sometimes be effective at a political level, but what really counts in planning terms is the level of well-reasoned submissions which reflect genuine concerns expressed in terms of the relevant policies (see page two).

Battlefields are living landscapes, and not every proposal is one which requires objection. It is our view, however, that our generation should pass on its battlefields in *at least* as good a condition as we received them, and preferably better.

Risks to battlefields are not confined to insensitive development/construction projects, although these are usually the most high profile. Our colleagues at the Battlefields Trust (UK) have identified four classes of threat, which we have paraphrased below:

**DEVELOPMENT:** eg, construction or infrastructure proposals, which can result in changes to the landscape, character and setting of a battlefield, affecting views or artificially separating once-connected features (affecting the site integrity). Other risks include the loss of unknown archaeological deposits, decreased public access or awareness, or insensitivity towards places of remembrance or human burial.

**METAL DETECTING:** a less visible but ongoing threat is unrecorded or unsystematic metal detecting. This leads to the removal of artefacts which could disguise or remove critical evidence which could be found using systematic surveys. Individual artefacts are often far less useful than their context within an object scatter. There is currently no additional level of permission required for detecting battlefields as long as landowners have given their consent. At the Scottish Battlefields Trust, we believe that additional permission should be required for detecting on battlefields, which should only be granted with an obligation to report find locations. As it stands, we simply cannot know how much metal detecting takes places on Scottish Battlefields and how much archaeological evidence is being removed. Treasure Trove have issued guidance ([here](#)).

**AGRICULTURAL:** the uses of the land can affect both the integrity of the battlefield and the archaeological record it contains. Commercial forestry, for example, can severely impact views and therefore landscape understanding, whilst also having a serious impact on the archaeology with their

root systems and the resulting changes in the acidity of the soil. The use of chemicals and deep ploughing can have similar effects, and the latter can migrate artefacts considerable distances from their deposition point or reduce the prominence of landscape features (eg, ploughing out temporary fieldworks or ramparts).

**CONTAMINATION:** the archaeological record on a battlefield can become contaminated by activities which take place on the land, even if they are temporary in nature. For example, open air events, camping, and even battle re-enactment can deposit material which obscures, slows, or confuses the archaeological picture. Centuries of hunting and sports shooting can also cause misleading results, especially in relation to musket ball finds for example.

These different types of threat require different responses, some of which can only be achieved through sustained action or lobbying. Others require no direct action, but need to be borne in mind when considering certain proposals or assessments. Early notification of potential issues increases the chances of our being able to work constructively towards a better outcome. Remember, if you have any concerns at all then get in touch with us.

## Contact Information

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