

MIDAS Heritage:

The UK Historic Environment Data Standard

A new standard for records of the historic environment now published.
<http://www.midas-heritage.info/>

MIDAS Heritage has been developed over the last three years by English Heritage on behalf of the UK heritage sector, represented by the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH).

Our knowledge of the past is held in many hundreds of databases held by different organisations up and down the country, run by local authorities, national agencies, university departments and amenity societies. Different approaches mean that the same buildings or archaeological sites are recorded in different ways by different organisations and it is difficult to get a full picture.

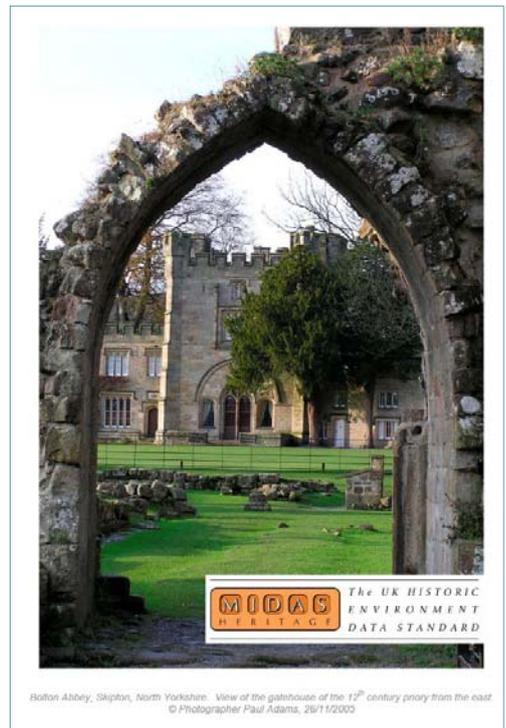
What is MIDAS Heritage?

MIDAS Heritage is the UK data standard for information about the historic environment developed for and on behalf of the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH). It states what information should be recorded to support effective sharing of the knowledge of the historic environment, and the long-term preservation of those records. It covers

- the individual assets that form the historic environment (buildings, archaeological sites, shipwrecks, areas of interest and artefacts)
- the work that is undertaken to understand, protect and manage change to those assets
- sources of further information

Do I need to read it?

Building on success of an earlier edition, MIDAS Heritage for the first time relates to all the interests of the U.K. heritage sector. It sets a standard for the records that document individual buildings or sites, but also covers whole areas of town or landscape at one end of the scale, and individual artefacts at the other. Everything is covered - from a grain of prehistoric wheat to a whole agricultural landscape.



For the first time MIDAS Heritage also sets standards to record the work undertaken to understand, protect and manage change to the historic environment. MIDAS Heritage will help make it easier to find out what work has been done, how decisions were made and where to find out more.

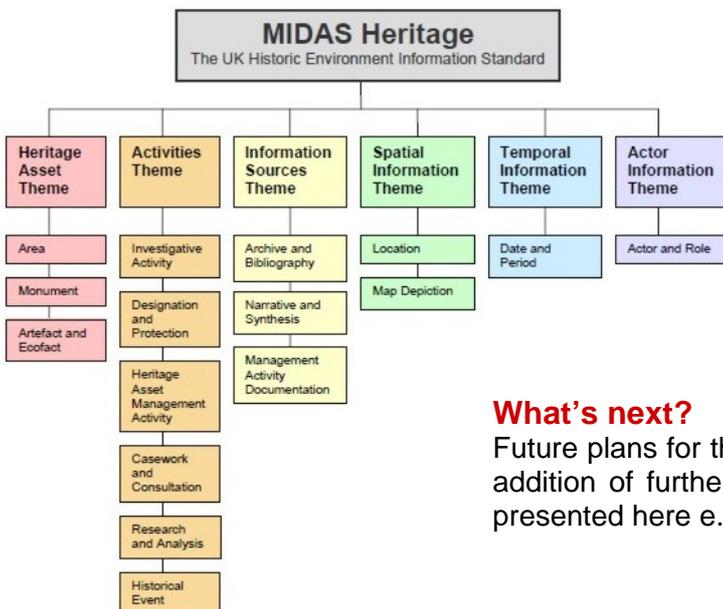
MIDAS is aimed at all those who compile structured information about any of these aspects of the historic environment. This includes

- .gov - Heritage managers and advisors employed in local authorities and staff in national heritage sector organisations who maintain their own National Monuments Records,
- .org - Amenity groups and societies
- .ac - The research community, both in national government organisations and the university sector.
- .com - Professional contractors involved in collecting data from the field. And software vendors and consultants providing information management and software development services to the heritage sector.

How was it developed?

MIDAS Heritage has been compiled and produced by English Heritage on behalf of the member organisations of FISH. It builds upon the following sources:

- The first edition of this data standard MIDAS – A Manual and Data Standard for Monument Inventories (RCHME 1998)
- Subsequent experience with the application of MIDAS 1st edition.
- The development of international data standards for the cultural heritage sector, in particular ISO 21127 (2005) the Conceptual Reference Model from CIDOC, the documentation committee of the International Council of Museums and the Council of Europe Cultural Heritage Committee.
- The work of the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH), in particular the development of the FISH interoperability Toolkit designed to assist sharing of information between information systems.
- The experience of the organizations which have contributed to MIDAS Heritage complemented by comments received from reviewers, many of whom hold or are in the process of establishing historic environment information systems.
- Changes in the heritage profession, and the development of new recording methodologies.



What's next?

Future plans for the development of MIDAS Heritage include the addition of further Information Groups and refinement of those presented here e.g. 'Area' and 'Designation and Protection'.



MIDAS Heritage is a contribution to the April 2005 Statement of Accord between the National Monuments for England, Scotland and Wales managed respectively by English Heritage, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, and the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of Wales (Comiswn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru).

The first edition of MIDAS was published in 1998 by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. It is in wide use in the UK heritage sector, and has been used to advise on standards for projects abroad, for example in Taiwan, the Windward Islands and Russia.

MIDAS Heritage is a specific application for U.K. use of the international standard ISO 21127:2006, the Conceptual Reference Model issued by CIDOC (Le Comité International pour la Documentation des Musées).

MIDAS Heritage is a free digital publication, and can be downloaded from <http://www.midas-heritage.info/>



FISH is a collaboration between representatives of key United Kingdom heritage sector information managers established in 2000. It works to co-ordinate, develop, maintain and promote standards for the recording of heritage information. Further information can be found at <http://www.fish-forum.info/>