

Social Values Assessment Report: Battle of Bannockburn site

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Cover images

Top left: Independence demonstration 2024; Top right: Commemoration preparations inside the Rotunda 2024; Bottom left: Avenue looking towards the monuments; Bottom right: Robert the Bruce statue (all photo credits: E. Robson).

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Key Findings

The purpose of this social values assessment is **to understand the meanings, memories, stories, experiences, and feelings associated with the Battle of Bannockburn site by people today**, and the ways in which these contribute to people's sense of identity, belonging, and place.

Key findings are:

- The property is valued as part of multiple **place-based identities** which draw on different types of connection including memories, experiences, familiarity with the property from growing up or living locally, knowledge of place, ancestry, and nationality.
- Different **areas within the property** – the woods and fields, monuments, centre and café – are associated with different uses, meanings, and values, and have distinct senses of place.
- The outdoor environment provides **space and openness**. It is associated with feelings of time depth, peace and calm (which also resonate with it being a place for **memorialising**), and **multi-sensory experiences**, in particular the views and soundscape, that connect people with the wider landscape and with 'nature'.
- The woods and fields offer secluded and safe areas that are valued as places for **play and exploration**. Play is connected in some cases to formal learning experiences but not exclusively and frequently involves the 'repurposing' of the monuments and outdoor space.
- The monument cluster is a **focal point** within the wider landscape, being visible from beyond the property boundary, and is the focus for formal and informal commemoration. The monuments receive different emphases. The statue of Robert the Bruce is seen as emblematic of the property and is especially prominent in people's memories and practices.
- The visitor centre is associated with 'newness' and for many participants is a less familiar space, experienced with reference to memories of the previous centre. The café provides an indoor **gathering place**, but other gatherings and events take place in the outdoor spaces.
- Participants expressed a sense of **moral ownership** and authority over the outdoor areas and placed an emphasis on these when discussing social values.
- There is a shared desire to see the property '**cared for**'. This has multiple interpretations depending on the uses and values that are being foregrounded, for example, a memorial landscape, a nationally important site, or a place for play and leisure activities.
- **Connections to the surrounding landscape** are important symbolically, establishing the centrality of the property within the wider battlefield, and practically, for example as part of walking routes. This is in tension with views that the property is somewhere distinct from the surrounding areas, and that it is 'disregarded' by local residents who have not visited.
- The **emotional connections** people feel are significant in how the property is valued. These include patriotic and local pride in the property as somewhere nationally important.
- Sharing the ideas that the property represents and the emotional connections it generates, through **storytelling** or other activities, is seen as a form of **custodianship**.
- Events at Bannockburn are mobilised in **national narratives and contemporary politics** about Scotland and Great Britain, particularly in support of Scottish independence. Social values and expectations about the property are mediated in part by these wider discourses.
- The multiple social values associated with the property are actively negotiated by communities, the diversity managed in some cases through **spatial or temporal separation** of activities. Direct conflict is most likely when key events or changes to the property surface competing claims to authority and bring dissonant social values into the same space.

Context

This section provides a topline summary of the property and wider context for the assessment (for more detail see Annex I: Property Description).

The property

The Battle of Bannockburn site forms part of the historic battlefield where the Scottish and English armies met on 23-24 June 1314 (see Historic Environment Scotland 2012). It was purchased for the nation in 1931 and formally taken into the Trust's portfolio in 1943. The property covers c.21.5 hectares of mostly open fields and woods (see Annex II: Maps). There is a visitor centre and café towards the main road from which an avenue leads to a group of monuments. The monuments are designated as listed buildings (Historic Environment Scotland 2004) and comprise a flagstaff erected in 1870, a stone memorial cairn erected in 1957, a Rotunda (which encompasses the first two) and an equestrian statue of Robert the Bruce, both of which were erected for the 650th anniversary of the battle in 1964.¹

The current visitor centre was opened in 2014, part of a major project to mark the 700th anniversary of the battle. As part of this work, a conservation plan was commissioned by the Trust and Historic Scotland for the designated monuments (Wright 2011) to present the history, importance, and conservation, interpretation and future management considerations. This project also saw the addition of a poem inscribed on the inside of the (replaced) wooden beam atop the Rotunda.

The wider area

The property is bordered by residential properties and Borestone Primary School to the North, with further housing to the East, and a bowling club and fields to the South. The M9 motorway sits to the West with hills beyond, and the snaking line of the Bannock Burn curves towards the property boundary to the South West. Alongside the main vehicle entrance to the property, off the Glasgow Road, is the King Robert Hotel and slightly further down the road is the 1314 Inn.

The property is easily accessed on foot from the surrounding neighbourhoods of St Ninians, Whins of Milton, Braehead and Broomridge, and Bannockburn. Census data from 2011 for the St Ninians Community Council area, which includes the property, shows that the majority of the 5,884 people who were living in the area at that time were born in Scotland (89.6%) and most identified as white, with a small percentage identifying as Asian (2.2%) or other groups (Stirling Council 2011: 3-4). According to the Scottish Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020, the areas surrounding the property include some of the most deprived areas nationally, with two data zones in the most deprived 10% and an additional one in the most deprived 20%.

Management arrangements

The property is open year-round and receives over 80,000 visitors a year – independently, as part of school visits, and on tours. The outdoor areas can be accessed at any time without charge via

¹ The listing record states that the memorial cairn was built in 1954 by the National Trust for Scotland, but subsequent research has shown that it was erected in 1957 following a proposal by the Stirling Guildry and a fundraising campaign. The listing also states that the remains of the borestone were incorporated into the cairn, although photographs and other records show that at least some part of it was still on display in situ into the 1960s, after which the remaining fragments were moved to the visitor centre (Wright 2011: 19).

one of the multiple footpath entrances. Interpretation panels are located along the main avenue and around the monuments. The visitor centre is open daily (10:00-17:00) and includes the Battlefield Experience (which is a paid activity, visited by around 30,000 people per year), a dog-friendly café (accessible without paid entry), and workshop spaces that are used for educational activities and talks. Events organised by the Trust during the year include reenactments of battle camp life, Easter Egg and scavenger hunts, history talks, and battlefield walks.

On-going activities

At the time of the assessment, on-going Trust initiatives/discussions included:

- Educational programme – primary and secondary schools from across the country attend half or full day workshops every week day during term time. There is an on-going project to translate educational materials into languages other than English.
- Recent challenge to a planning decision by Stirling City Council to allow the development of a horse-trotting track in the fields neighbouring the property and within the wider Historic Battlefield designation (from July 2024 to June 2025, when the appeal was upheld by Scottish ministers).

Activities organised by other organisations or groups during the assessment period included:

- An annual march/demonstration for Scottish independence, which concludes with events in the field below the Robert the Bruce statue, on the Saturday closest to the anniversary.
- An annual commemoration for the fallen on both sides, which is focused on the memorial cairn in the Rotunda, on the Sunday closest to the anniversary.
- Outdoor education activities run by an independent charity that uses the wooded areas at the property for activities with small groups of parents and children.

Assessment Process

Research approach

This was a rapid study in terms of the time spent on research activities, but it was conducted over an extended duration. The total time spent (by one researcher) was **approximately 17 days** over a period of 16 months. Research activities began with attending the anniversary weekend activities in June 2024 and concluded with the group discussions and final interviews in autumn 2025. Within this period, activities were mostly concentrated in March/April 2025 and August/September 2025. This extended timeframe was partly due to the time required to identify and engage with potential participants (see below) and partly because several other assessments were running concurrently throughout 2025. Being based at Stirling, which is a short 10-minute drive from Bannockburn, activities for this assessment could be conducted on day visits, rather than extended fieldwork trips with overnight stays.

Recruitment and selection of participants

Initial approaches were made to Trust staff (past and present) and individuals or organisations that were known to be using the property, either regularly or as part of the annual anniversary events. These contacts and observation of websites and group pages on Facebook provided the basis for expanding the network of potential participants (snowball sampling). However, even with a personal introduction, it proved quite challenging to secure wider participation. The reasons for this are not

entirely clear and may not be unique to this property or process. In some cases, those already involved in volunteer activity lacked the time to participate and/or had other priorities/demands to attend to. The on-going planning dispute may also have been a factor, although experience elsewhere would tend to suggest that a live issue of that nature is more likely to surface values and galvanise engagement. Finally, the assessment findings include a perception among some groups that the property is not part of the local community or not for local people, which may have impacted on motivation to engage, as might the fact there was no specific action or decision-making process associated with the outcomes.

Observation was conducted on site at various times of day/week and combined with requests for those people present to complete short, structured interviews (positive response rates to requests were c. 75%, people were asked to participate as they were encountered unless another interview was on-going). Formal community structures (such as Community Councils) for the area were approached but did not respond. Fortunately, a speculative request via Facebook to the convener of an informal community group (not heritage focused) was well received and, having checked with the group members, this led to a discussion about the property being included in one of their regular meetings. Most of the group members indicated that they do not regularly visit the site, bringing valuable additional perspectives to those generated through the on-site activities.

Research methods

This assessment combined interview techniques (semi-structured and structured) with online and offline observation and participation in group activities (at the property and in other locations). This range of approaches meant it was possible to reach participants from various communities and observe a range of engagements during which values were either directly expressed or surfaced through the interaction.

The specific research methods applied were:

- Semi-structured interviews (7 participants, 3 including walks on site).
- Structured interviews (11, all completed in-person, outdoors at the property).
- Group discussion (involving 11 members of an existing community group, off site).
- Participant Observation at the 2024 anniversary weekend events (independence demonstration, commemoration, and reenactments).
- Observation on site, alongside other activities, and online (NTS and community Facebook pages and the websites of organisations interested in or utilising the site).

The **interviews** all took place at the property and were mostly one-to-one. The semi-structured interviews lasted around 1 hour and were free-flowing, exploratory, and responsive to the contributions of the participants. They explored how people first came to know the property, how regularly they are present at the site and the activities that take place when they are there. Participants were also asked about any memories, feelings, experiences, or stories they associate with the property, how different communities engage with the area, and what they think is important to preserve or change for the future. These in-depth discussions were complemented by short, structured interviews covering similar questions (see Annex III: Structured Interview).

The community **group discussion** was held at a local venue in Bannockburn during a regular meeting alongside the group's normal activities. It lasted about 90 minutes and included an introductory explanation about the research, a semi-structured discussion during which people shared their experiences, memories, perceptions or feelings about the property, and questions from

participants. Everyone attending was included throughout, although some chose to participate in the discussion more than others. The group dynamic included participants discussing and asking questions of one another about how their experiences were similar or differed.

An important aspect of the Trust's work at the property are the educational workshops it offers to schools, linking to key content areas of the national curriculum. Seeking to understand this programme of activity, Elizabeth attended a couple of the workshops led by the Trust (no research data was collected from participating students). Following on from this, there was scope to run a social values workshop with a local school; however, it was not possible to get approval from the Council in time to realise this activity (see Gaps/Future Assessments).

In total, **29 people directly contributed to the research** (see Annex IV: Participants), including one person who was identified through another assessment. All participants have been anonymised in this report. Indirect participants include the hundreds of people attending the anniversary weekend events, visitors to the property during observation, and those contributing to online discussions related to the property. The purpose of the research was explained upfront when engaging with people in person and to the administrators of closed Facebook community groups prior to joining and repeated in any online correspondence. During large-scale public events, leaflets about the research were placed in the café and handed out to attendees.

Research activities were complemented by selective reading from the extensive literature on the Battle of Bannockburn, with a focus on publications addressing its contemporary significance (see Annex V: Previous Research), as well as the poems and commentaries in *10 Bannockburn* (Various 2013), and the Trust's documentation regarding the property. This helped inform a **thematic analysis** of the research material generated by the activities. The time required for the analysis, writing, and discussion among the research team was **approximately 18 days**.

Ethical considerations

Participation in this assessment is voluntary and based on the principle of informed consent. People were advised before participating about the purpose of the research, what participation would involve (time and activities) and how any data they shared would be used, stored and disposed of. Participants involved in interviews were given written information to keep and asked to sign a consent form. Participants engaged during community-led activities were given information and confirmed consent verbally. Participants could withdraw at any stage from the process and consent was regularly reconfirmed with people involved in more than one activity.

Another key principle is that of protecting participants and causing no harm, both during the activities or in the sharing and handling of resulting material. This assessment does not directly address sensitive topics, but any subject matter introduced by participants that appeared to be emotionally charged or distressing was treated with sensitivity during activities. Participation was kept confidential and all participants have been given participant codes in this report. Careful consideration has been given to issues of identifiability and content when using direct quotes and to how potentially conflicting values and views are presented.

Personal and research data has been kept secure and not shared beyond the research team. The methods and approaches adopted in this assessment were reviewed and approved by the University of Stirling General University Ethics Panel prior to commencing activities.

Findings: Communities

The assessment identified a number of overlapping communities or groups for whom the property has social values. These may be based on identity, location and/or interest and include people resident locally, as well as individuals who maintain an attachment from a distance. They are not all communities in the formal sense but include looser groups of people with shared interests, who may or may not be associated through joint activities or organisations. They include:

- Local residents (distinctions are made between different areas).
- People with family connections to the area or who grew up locally but now live elsewhere.
- Pupils and alumni of Borestone Primary School.
- People who trace an ancestral connection to those who fought in the battle.
- People interested in Robert the Bruce (e.g. Strathleven Artizans, Knights Templar).
- Supporters of Scottish independence (e.g. members of the All Under One Banner coalition).
- People who have worked at the property.
- Relations and friends of those commemorated in the grounds (formally or informally).
- People who use the property for leisure interests – either as a destination or as part of routes through the area – including walkers and dog walkers; runners; cyclists; photographers; star gazers, bird watchers.

These communities are not exclusive, people may identify with more than one or move between them over time. Neither is this list exhaustive, other groups may be identified or community identities be foregrounded depending on circumstances.

Groups draw on different forms of knowledge and have different types of connection to the property – for example, those who are directly familiar with it as an everyday place and those with a more abstracted national or political interest in it as a significant monument or iconic symbol. Many people maintain their interest and/or connections through spending time at the property, either regularly or occasionally (not necessarily when the visitor centre is open), but others express an interest and attachment from a distance, only rarely or never visiting. These different relationships generate a range of values and related views on how the property should be cared for and used, with the potential for tensions, for example if communities are looking to use the property in different ways at the same time (e.g. around the anniversary of the battle).

Another group present at the property but not listed above are the large numbers of tourists who visit, especially in the summer. This study has not sought to explore the values of once-off tourists, since the Trust has other ways of capturing information from this group. However, as described in the following sections, their presence does impact on how other people value and use the site.

Findings: Social Values

What follows is a summary of the values identified and the activities and experiences that generate and sustain them (see Annex V: Statement of Social Values for a more detailed discussion). Values are not static, they are liable to change over time and multiple (potentially contradictory) values can co-exist between and within communities. These findings should be considered ***indicative of the range of values expressed by a diversity of communities*** that feel an attachment or association with the property, rather than comprehensive or definitive. Some contextual factors (e.g. the repairs needed to the Rotunda or the proposal to develop a neighbouring field as a trotting track) feature in

contributions to this assessment more prominently than they might have done at another time; however, the focus is on understanding the underlying values rather than the specific issues raised.

This assessment encompassed all aspects of the property – the visitor centre, the monuments, and the landscaped fields and woodlands – finding that these elements serve multiple functions for a variety of communities and are experienced and valued differently. Participants placed particular emphasis on **the outdoor areas and experiences** when discussing or expressing social values. The on-site research activities mostly took place outside, which may have been a factor in this. However, participant responses indicate that these open, freely accessible areas are seen by many people as public space and are the focus for much of the activity, meanings, memories, and stories relating to social values at the property.

People who are familiar with the property from having grown up or lived in the area expressed feelings of **belonging** based on their experiences. One local resident saying, *“[I’ve] been coming here since I was five years old. I used to go to Borestone Primary and remember the unveiling of the statue by the Queen. Lots of memories of coming with my own dog when a child, this was a daily walk”* (SUR_002). **Place-based identities** were expressed through this type of place knowledge - having known the property/area for a long time and personal memories of events or changes, sometimes shared with reference to multi-generational connections. Another local resident recalled, *“I used to come as a child, father has a photo of me sitting on the iron grill that was over something [the Borestone], remember this [the Rotunda] going in and the Queen coming [to unveil the Robert the Bruce statue in 1964]”* (SUR_011).

Bannockburn’s social value is also connected to the personal identities of people who trace **ancestral descent** from individuals involved in the battle. Participants in this study did not express such connections themselves, but some did observe that the experience of visiting the property *“was very personal”* (INT_004) for others who had identified such connections. More broadly, the property holds symbolic social values connected to **Scottish national identity**. The Scottish victory at the battle and the character of Robert the Bruce are a focus for patriotic pride. One participant said, *“we didnae win many, so we won one we want to remember!”* (INT_003). The annual independence demonstration also brings a national focus to the property.

That Bannockburn is recognised as **nationally important** and attracts visitors from all over the world also impacts on how the property is valued locally and is a source of **pride**. One local resident said: *“If Robert the Bruce could see how much pleasure people get from seeing where the battle took place, it’s pride of place, I like to think he’s sitting up there, guarding his land”* (SUR_009). Another local resident reflected, *“[we’re] lucky to have it on the doorstep, it’s a privilege, and see people come for all different reasons, it’s inviting to lots of different people and ages, young and old”* (SUR_003).

Over the seven centuries since the Battle of Bannockburn took place, the area has seen mining, farming, and numerous developments, including the construction of housing and a motorway, as well as varied practices of commemoration and patterns of visitation. The site itself has been extensively re-landscaped. The borestone, previously the focal point at the site, has been replaced by a newer collection of monuments, and the visitor centre was relocated and rebuilt in 2014. These changes and how they are remembered impact on how the property, and areas within it, are used and valued today.

Activities are concentrated in the upper part of the property, which is traversed by multiple paths. Within this area, the **sense of place is differentiated**, with distinctions made between the fields and

woods, the monument cluster, and the visitor centre. Activities may encompass more than one of these, but they are different types of space primarily associated with different types of engagement and feelings.

The **views**, within and to areas beyond the property, contribute to feelings of **openness** and freedom. The open fields are used by walkers, cyclists, for picnics and games, to exercise dogs, and for gatherings and events. After a storm, one person commented on Facebook: *“Hope the weather ripped up the trees u planted were the wains sledge”* (comment on NTS post from 25 Jan 2025), suggesting that specific places within the property are associated with this seasonal activity.

The woods offer **sheltered and secluded spaces** for walking, outdoor learning and play, including for pupils from the neighbouring Primary School. When asked what they enjoy about the property, a participant who lives nearby and regularly walks at the property, said *“openness of the space and nature, green - the colours and landscape. [...] The woods are really nice [...] The trees have seen so much and are still here”* (SUR_003). As this shows, the different outdoor environments offer different experiences. The woods are also generating a sense of **time depth**, something that other participants raised with reference to the history of the site.

Although this is a designed landscape, it is associated with **‘nature’**. A local resident said, *“for me it is enjoying the nature round about. You see all the changes of the seasons, you see all the plants”* (INT_005). The sense of place is also impacted by the **weather and seasons**. Another local resident also felt, *“the scenery is beautiful and even in winter there is something about it”* (SUR_009).

The sense of place associated with the **monuments** reflects their elevated location, forming a focal point within the property and wider landscape that is exposed to the wind and weather. That they are the focus for formal and informal **commemorative** events also impacts on how they are experienced, one participant saying, *“the rotunda, the statue [...] folk feel an affinity when they are here”* (INT_002). These feelings are accommodated alongside an **everyday familiarity** that integrates the monuments into day-to-day practices like walking, with comments such as *“I come every morning to walk the dog and see King Robert’s statue”* (SUR_001).

Aesthetics, perceived functionality, meaning and personal attachments all play a role in how the various monuments are valued. The **statue of Robert the Bruce** has become emblematic of the property, wider area, and battle. It is central to many people’s memories of the property and is appreciated aesthetically – *“it is a beautiful statue”* (INT_005) – and as a personification of King Robert the Bruce, one participant explaining, *“that is Robert the Bruce to people”* (INT_003). During the independence demonstration the statue was a focus for photographs and large saltire flags were placed on the ground beside it.

While sight and views are foregrounded in many responses, the **multi-sensory experience** of place is also valued with importance of the **soundscape** mentioned by several people. The acoustic effect of the Rotunda is well known, as well as being the location of a sound installation (which some people found ‘beautiful and haunting’ and others described as ‘bizarre wailing’). More natural sounds include the calls of birds and the rookery (with its potentially evocative associations with battlefields). Kathleen Jamie’s **poem** inscribed on the Rotunda beam is for many people now *“part of the site”* (INT_002), the words and practice of reciting it generating an emotional connection and conveying the feelings associated with the site.

The outdoor spaces are valued by many people for creating feelings of **peace and calm**. One resident explained, *"It's just a nice, calm area"* (INT_005). These feelings were mirrored in the key words structured interview respondents associated with the property (see Figure 1). For historic battlefields, reconciling a current sense of calm and peace with past conflict presents something of a paradox (Sikora 2016); however, for the most part, this juxtaposition was not raised by participants. The outdoor monuments at Bannockburn have relatively few military overtones, so, while those who go through the Bannockburn Experience, with its sign for 'combatants only', may experience *"medieval battle-clamour"* (Jamie 2013), in the outdoor spaces there is relatively little to surface what poet Tom Pow describes as *"the tension that lies between its [the landscape's] present (and previous) 'innocence' and in what it has witnessed"* (Various 2013).

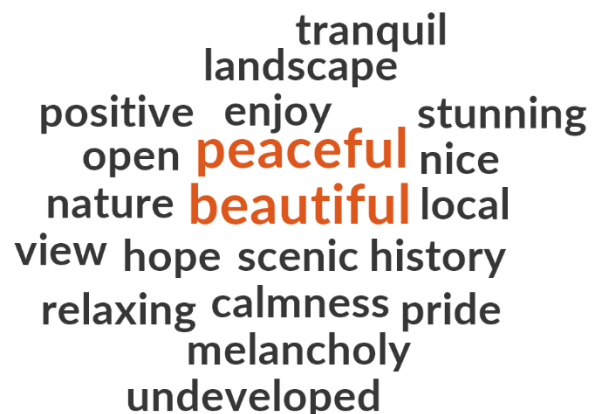


Figure 1: Key words provided by structured interview respondents. Peaceful and beautiful (plus stemmed words) were mentioned 4 and 5 times respectively, all other responses were given once. Total number of respondents = 11. Wordcloud generated using Nvivo14.

For many participants, the sense of place associated with the visitor centre related to the building's **'newness'** and a resulting lack of familiarity or comfort with the space and presentation. Local residents and regular visitors often remembered visiting the old heritage centre or knew people who had worked there, and the new building is experienced partly with reference to those memories. One regular visitor said, *"I came here when I was seven and drew a picture of a soldier warrior that got put on the board [...] and I'm not arty at all, so that was a big thing for me. So yes, that's my first memory of coming here, it wasn't all fancy like this though"* (INT_006).

Underpinned by place-based identities and experiences, the property is valued as a place for remembering, reflection, and marking key life events, including **acts of memorialising** and the scattering of ashes. Collective memorialising has led to some people describing the area as a **'sacred' place**, similar to a war memorial. As the plaques on the cairn and the flagpole flying the Saltire indicate, this sense of the sacred is primarily linked to Scottish national identity. Memorialising activities are focused on the outdoor spaces and at times intersect with the monuments, which receive different emphasis within the memorial landscape. For example, flowers and other items are left by the Robert the Bruce statue and on the memorial cairn.

Linked with the property as a place of memory and memorialising is a focus on **storytelling**. Storytelling is not only about how the site is interpreted but what people value about the experience of place and how it connects with other aspects of their identities. It is a means through which connections to place are formed, performed and extended to others, generating enthusiasm and *"getting that feeling"* (INT_002). Stories related during the study include local events, such as the Queen unveiling the statue of Robert the Bruce, and the events of the battle or lives of individuals

involved. Telling and retelling stories is a way in which people overcome a lack of physical evidence associated with the battle and share their feelings about the site and what it represents to them. Becoming familiar with and retelling stories is also a way of **establishing a role in remembering the history**. Not all stories are actively remembered or retold and emphasis changes over time. Participants suggested there is potential to tell more stories and also *“different stories [...] looking to the past, connecting with the present, more nuanced stories”* (INT_004).

In keeping with the property as an open, green space, but somewhat in juxtaposition to the formal focus on the battle and memorialising practices, it is valued as a place for **play and exploration**. One local resident recalled, when they had small children, *“this was their playground”* (INT_005). Play at the property is connected in some cases to formal learning, but not necessarily and frequently involves the ‘repurposing’ of the monuments and other outdoor areas. Play and exploration can support the development of place attachment and social relationships among children and young people (Chawla 1992).

Feelings of **moral ownership** were apparent in discussions on potential changes (e.g. the proposed trotting track) and in statements about how the property should be **cared for** (which has multiple interpretations). At the time of this study the Rotunda beam was supported by scaffolding poles (now removed) and many people commented along the lines of this regular visitor who lives nearby: *“Would like to see the Rotunda fixed, reckon it's been 18 months or two years it has been like that, a long time, a lot of tourists up here noticing it. Was beautiful before, so bit of TLC [tender loving care] that way”* (SUR_006). There were also mentions of **community-led practices**, such as cutting back vegetation from paths, picking up litter, and cleaning graffiti from the monuments following the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. Connected with the area as a memorialising landscape, and given its national importance, there are expectations regarding maintenance and appearance. However caring is not just about the physical landscape. A view expressed by several participants was that caring for the property includes **sharing the feelings and ideas** associated with it.

Wider connections are important in how the property is valued. Some of these tie the property into wider historical and national narratives, leaving people *“feeling part of the country and the history”* (INT_002), and link events at Bannockburn with other places and to universal human experiences. Other connections relate to the specific geography and the property as somewhere *“grounded in a place”* (INT_004). The sightlines across the landscape are not only valued for the views they provide but are used in articulating **the symbolic centrality** of this part of the battlefield (in contrast to its physical location on the edge of the designated historic battlefield area). More broadly, the property is seen as connected to the wider area through the shared **recent histories** of mining and development. Connections with **the surrounding landscape** and places beyond the property boundaries to also important to day-to-day practices, such as walking, with routes that begin or pass through the property.

The property is a **gathering place** for a range of events, including those associated with the anniversary of the battle, occasions (such as New Year), and for social groups as part of planned activities and informal, everyday practices: *“There's a group call themselves the 4 o'clock club who come with their dogs at 4 and get together for a blether [chat]”* (SUR_011). While most group activities are focused in the outdoor areas, the café also provides a gathering space for regular visitors and local residents, occasionally - *“I have come for a coffee with friends a couple of times”* (SUR_009) - or more regularly – one participant indicating that they come to *“walk and go to the tea room for a cup of coffee”* (SUR_007).

Despite the values associated with connectivity and the property's proximity to multiple residential areas, some participants described it as **physically distinct** from the surrounding areas. For example, one participant who grew up locally said “[I was] always very proud of the battle but when think of Bannockburn it’s the village and the heritage centre was more Hillpark” (INT_008). Participants living locally who are not familiar with the property and do not regularly visit expressed feelings of **disconnectedness** and identified unknown aspects that presented potential **barriers to visiting** including the cost, accessibility, and the appropriateness for different audiences.

As has been the case for generations, events at Bannockburn are leveraged as part of **popular politics and national narratives** about Scotland and Great Britain. The date and place of the battle act as physical and temporal rallying points, for example, bringing people together for the annual independence demonstrations and commemorative events. Today, there is a strong connection between Bannockburn and the movement for **Scottish independence**. The idea of Scottish independence has multiple shifting meanings, and Bannockburn is drawn on in a variety of ways. Calls for **unity** and for people to work across interests and political affiliations in support of independence were prominent at the 2024 demonstration, with one speaker urging people to “*unite like the Bruce did here at Bannockburn*”. The narrative of the battle is also used to encourage **mass participation**, highlighting the role of ordinary people (the ‘small folk’) in securing victory and Bruce’s legacy in signing the Declaration of Arbroath (a contract between the king and people).

National narratives and identity politics can result in what one person referred to as “*an expectation about Scottishness*” (INT_004) at the property. This was occasionally observed during this assessment, e.g. “*If I had travelled 12,000 miles to get to the Bannockburn Experience, I kind of want to be welcomed by someone Scottish, someone with some pride in the result at Bannockburn*” (INT_002). More overtly exclusionary or anti-English values are a minority within the overall national narrative but nonetheless connect to the stories that are told about the battle and its contemporary significance in a Scotland that includes people from different backgrounds with diverse identities.

Implications

This assessment identified **multiple meanings and uses of the property, with differentiation between different areas**. This plurality can create an ambiguity regarding what the site as a whole represents and who it is for – for example, the potential juxtapositions between the property as a commemorative and memorial landscape and as a place of play, or the area as somewhere peaceful and calm that is part of an historic battlefield and also a gathering place for national and local events. These different meanings and activities are largely focused on different areas of the property (e.g. commemorations at the monument cluster, play in the woods and fields) and/or at different times. However, how the elements of the property are utilised and mobilised can create tensions based on different expectations, narratives and values.

The historic significance of the property intersects in complex ways with contemporary social values. The property is strongly associated with the Scottish victory in the battle and is mobilised in support of Scottish national identity and as somewhere nationally significant. These connections and meanings are relevant to many of the social values and place-based identities associated with the property. Social values are also mediated by popular and political discourses (Edensor 1997). This is apparent in the range of activities, diverse narratives, and variety of groups that participate in the annual anniversary events, and in expectations of how the property is presented and experienced. **National and local events will continue to influence how people engage with the property**, presenting opportunities and challenges, for example around interpretation.

Participants in this assessment expressed a range of **intangible connections, feelings, and stories associated with the property** and the areas within it. These are key to the meanings and social values associated with the site but are not necessarily apparent in the physical environment or from observing activities. For example, caring for the property is about both seeing that care is being taken (physical maintenance) and feeling that the place is being cared for (linked to practices, such as storytelling, and pride in place). The intangibility of such attachments and experiences renders them **vulnerable to disruption**, e.g. through changes to the social or physical landscape, and loss, particularly where they relate to informal communal knowledge, practices and memories.

When revisiting the formal **interpretation** at the property, consideration should be given to the existing stories and emotional connections associated with the property and how any new narratives sit with or may impact on these. Engagement with a range of communities as part of the development process could be a productive route in understanding these connections and recognising community ownership of their place narratives (also see Sikora 2017).

The 2011 conservation plan noted the “*recreational value*” of the monuments and landscaped areas to local residents (Wright 2011: 57), although this was ranked fairly low as a category of significance (VI out of VII). This assessment has added nuance to this observation through **more detailed understandings of the activities and senses of place associated with different areas of the property**, as well as the social values that underpin and are generated by these engagements. This should help inform how such attachments and practices are reflected within future planning.

The **extent of activity and sense of communal moral ownership** expressed by participants in this assessment **over the outdoor areas** (as ‘public space’ connected to the wider landscape) could also have implications for how decisions are made and communicated. While the woods are valued as secluded areas for walks and play, the growth of the trees is gradually reducing the sense of openness that was part of the 1960s landscaping and is still felt by some participants to be important in the sense of place and key in positioning the property within the wider landscape. Going forward, there may be challenges around balancing the appreciation of open space and expectations regarding care (mown grass in a memorial landscape etc.) with environmental management such as the development of unmown meadow areas and expansion of the wooded areas (screening parts of the site from other areas and potentially disrupting established activities, such as sledging and walking routes, and sightlines to and from areas beyond the property boundary).

Despite the diversity of activities, communities, and social values associated with the property, **day-to-day tensions are managed between communities**. Participants described actively negotiating, often with care and consideration, uses of the area for potentially discordant activities. For example, education groups make minimal use of the monument cluster, so as not to disturb tourists, and the annual commemoration is now held the day after the independence demonstration. Spatial and temporal separation helps to minimise direct conflicts and an emphasis on the emotional experience and reinterpretation of the space allows concurrent meanings to co-exist without precluding other activities or undermining alternative connections and knowledge of place.

That does not mean that tensions are entirely avoided – Bannockburn’s historic and contemporary significance continues to create **contestation, underpinned by different values and claims to authority**. Different social values often surface around key dates (e.g. anniversaries) or physical changes (e.g. the planned trotting track), which bring competing claims to authority and dissonant values into the same physical or narrative space. More broadly, **diverse values and uses associated with the property result in different expectations regarding how the area is**

presented and managed for the future. Encompassing this multiplicity and polyvocality is a challenge and a consideration for the Trust in designing future activities and interpretation.

Procedurally, as described in the Assessment Process section, there were **challenges engaging the locally resident community** in this assessment. This is a wider challenge, as participants involved in other voluntary or community-led activities also reflected on difficulties in securing local participation. However, it highlights the challenge of conducting a rapid, participatory assessment in a context where there is currently limited formal community engagement. A slower, more embedded approach that connects with community-led activities and/or co-ordination with other organisations active locally could be effective in achieving wider participation in future activities and in addressing some of the limitations noted in this assessment.

Gaps/Future Assessments

In terms of addressing recognised limitations in representation and scope, complementary research could be conducted with:

- **School-age children** – as described under Assessment Process, a proposed workshop with school children could not be completed within this assessment. Many people first visit the site while at school, in part due to the Trust's popular educational programme, and this study revealed some of the ways that younger people are engaging with the property. This gap could be addressed either through incorporating social values discussions into the existing educational activities or through targeted activities with schools (in which case early liaison with the Council would be essential).
- **Family/Clan or ancestral connections** - the online observation revealed instances where people expressed a sense of attachment through ancestral connections to those who were involved in the battle (both English and Scottish). While this community appears to be more diffuse than specific family or Clan societies (e.g. Bruce or Douglas), further research could be done to better understand the values they associate with the property. Online methods are likely to be most productive for reaching these people who may rarely (if ever) visit the property. This is in addition to, and separate from, groups interested in key figures associated with the battle, such as Robert the Bruce, some of whom it was possible to identify and include in this assessment.
- **Reenactors** – mention was made during the assessment to other occasions when reenactments have taken place at the property and to reenactments elsewhere that feature events related to the battle or those involved (notably Robert the Bruce and Sir James Douglas). This community may overlap in some cases with historical interest groups, but discussions during this study and other research suggests that reenactors may well have different forms of attachment and values derived through the embodied experience of reenactment (with an emphasis on the authenticity of practices, knowledge and skills).
- **National identities, narratives and practices** – further research could be conducted with those for whom the property is primarily valued for its connection to national identities, narratives and practices, such as those who attend the annual demonstrations, to gain further depth of understanding of their values.

Annex I: Property Description

Location:

The Battle of Bannockburn site sits on the Western boundary of the historic battlefield area identified as the location of the battle between the Scottish and English armies, which was fought on 23-24 June 1314 (Historic Environment Scotland 2012). The M9 motorway to the West runs roughly North-South, with hills beyond, and the Bannock Burn to the South runs roughly East-West.

The areas surrounding the property have become increasingly built up in the decades since it was purchased for the nation in 1931 – a step that was partly prompted by proposed developments, with the intention of then transferring ownership to the newly formed National Trust for Scotland. Residential properties and Borestone Primary School are situated to the North, with further housing to the East, and fields to the South and West (see Annex II: Maps). There are multiple footpaths leading onto the property and it is easily accessed from the neighbourhoods of St Ninians and Whins of Milton, as well as Braehead, Broomridge, and Bannockburn. The main vehicle access to the property is via the Glasgow Road (or A872). The King Robert Hotel is situated alongside the entrance and slightly further down the road is the 1314 Inn.

Socio-economic profile of surrounding areas:

The property falls within the Stirling Council and St Ninians Community Council areas (the areas of Braehead, Broomridge, and Bannockburn are served by two separate Community Councils). Census data from 2011 (reported in Stirling Council 2011: 3-4) shows 5,884 people living in the St Ninians Community Council area at that time. The majority of residents were born in Scotland (89.6%) and most identified as white, with a small percentage identifying as Asian (2.2%) or other groups.

According to the Scottish Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation, the data zones surrounding the property mostly fall below the national median and include some of the most deprived areas nationally, with two data zones in the most deprived 10% and an additional one in the most deprived 20% (S01013057, S01013053 and S01013043).² An exception is the data zone encompassing the site itself (S01013054), which is ranked in the sixth decile overall. Rankings for geographic access and, in some zones, housing tended to be higher than the other domains of health, employment, education, income, and crime.

Property (including formal heritage designations):

The property was formally taken into the Trust portfolio in 1943. The present site comprises c. 21 hectares, with activity focused in the section closest to the main road (A872), which contains a visitor centre with café, car park, and a group of Category A listed monuments (Historic Environment Scotland 2004) accessed via an avenue (see Annex II: Maps). The monuments are: a flagstaff (erected by the Oddfellows of Dumbarton and Stirling Masonic Lodges in 1870), a memorial cairn (erected in 1957 in response to a proposal from the Guildry of Stirling and a fundraising campaign),³ both these first two are contained within the Rotunda (designed by the architect Robert Matthew), beyond which stands a bronze equestrian statue on a plinth (*The Bruce* by Charles d'Orville Pilkington Jackson, unveiled in 1964 by the Queen). These latter two monuments were created to mark the 650th anniversary of the battle in 1964. The Rotunda also contains a round stone set into

² The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure across 6,976 small areas (called Data Zones). It ranks all the Data Zones and divides them into ten equally sized segments: the first decile (ranked 1) are the 10% most deprived areas, and the tenth decile (ranked 10) are the 10% least deprived areas.

³ This information reflects research by Wright (2011), subsequent to the formal listing.

the paving with the inscription: *“the location of the borestone where by tradition Robert the Bruce raised his standard”*.

The current visitor centre was opened in 2014, part of a major project to mark the 700th anniversary of the battle. This saw the locations of the previous centre and car park swapped, so the centre is now located further away from the main road, between the car park and the monuments. The project also included the repair and restoration of the monuments and the addition of a poem inscribed on the (replaced) wooden beam atop the Rotunda (discussed further under cultural associations).

In preparation for the major project, the National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland commissioned Reiach & Hall Architects to prepare conservation plan for the monuments. An independent consultant was appointed to develop the plan, which outlines the histories and relative importance of the monuments, to help guide conservation, interpretation and future management (Wright 2011). Excluded from the plan was the then heritage centre and other parts of the site, although the wider landscaping is considered.

The conservation plan is based on extensive archival research supplemented by site visits during August and September 2011. The plan deals with each of the monuments in turn and includes a brief discussion on the different reports of when the borestone was removed and where the fragments were placed (2011: 19). It suggests that the official listing (Historic Environment Scotland 2004) might need to be updated based on this research (specifically regarding the construction of the memorial cairn, 2011: 6).

The statement of significance presented in the plan rates categories of significance from I (highest) to VII (lowest) *“to provide guidance and encourage discussion on what is considered to be important about the site, and to whom”* (2011: 51). The ranking is weighted towards the physical (monuments, archaeology and landscape) and the extent to which activities or ideas are deemed to have impacted on national consciousness (for example, songs like Flower of Scotland are ranked more highly than lesser-known artworks). Some of the highest ranked aspects of significance identified include:

- Battlefield: historical associations and national identity (rated I and II), noting the *“strong emotions”* and patriotism the site arouses (2011: 52).
- Authenticity of location (rated II).
- Memorialisation of the battlefield (mostly rated II).
- Politicisation of the battlefield (rated III). Earlier in the plan Wright observes that *“In some respects perhaps, this event [the annual demonstration] has overtaken the celebrations that took place in the past at the flagstaff on Bannockburn Day, reflecting local interests in the site and its historical significance, and in keeping a tradition alive”* (2011: 48).

The plan includes a section on Community interest and recreational benefits, which states that historically there was *“a sense of ownership for the Borestone in particular”* (ranked V) and that *“until the Trust took ownership of the site, interpretation and initiatives for its upkeep and improvement were largely inspired by local action”* (2011: 57). It also records that *“the monuments are of recreational value to the local community and, in particular, to the residents of the social housing schemes nearby”* (2011: 57) (ranked at VI). Access and public enjoyment are also identified under risks and vulnerability, where it says *“The Borestone site has always been accessible to the public [and] the landscaped park has been enjoyed increasingly as public recreational space. As welcome as this is, it has brought its own problems of antisocial behaviour”*, noting risks associated with vandalism and personal safety (2011: 66).

Management arrangements:

The Bannockburn site attracts over 80,000 visitors per year – independently, as part of school visits, and on walking or bus tours (which often include other sites in Stirling).⁴ The property is open year-round and the outdoor areas can be accessed at any time without charge. There are metal signs at the main entrances to the property and a sequence of outdoor interpretation panels, located along the avenue between the visitor centre and the Rotunda and between the Rotunda and the Robert the Bruce statue, describe the timeline of events leading up to, during, and after the battle. These panels also orientate the visitor to the key locations visible from the site (the Roman road from the south and Stirling Castle, the English objective), highlighting the site's strategic value as the location of the Scottish camp. Staff are present in the visitor centre during the day. The centre contains the Battlefield Experience, which is a paid attraction (around 30,000 visitors per year) that combines immersive multimedia technology with interpretation by a guide, as well as workshop spaces, which are used principally to host educational visits for primary and secondary school pupils, and a dog-friendly café (accessible without charge).

The Trust organises a range of events throughout the year, including activities around the anniversary of the battle, such as reenactments of camp life. At other times of the year there are Easter Egg hunts and outdoor scavenger hunts, battlefield walks, and talks in the centre. The team regularly share updates on the property Facebook page, highlighting upcoming events and historical research related to the battle and the key figures involved.

Cultural associations:

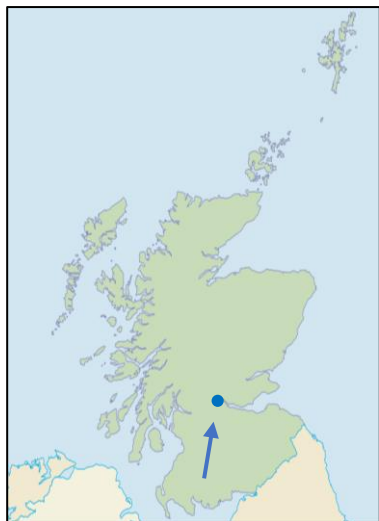
The Scottish victory at the Battle of Bannockburn has been heralded as one of the most significant events in Scottish history and a pivotal moment in the Scottish Wars of Independence. The battle and the figure of Robert the Bruce have long been highly significant in terms of national identity and symbolism (Edensor 1997; Ditchburn and Macdonald 2014; Penman 2016) and they continue to be referenced in contemporary political and popular debates around Scottish independence. An annual march for independence (organised by the All Under One Banner coalition) is held on the Saturday of the weekend closest to the anniversary and concludes with a rally in the field below the statue of Robert the Bruce. An annual commemoration for the fallen of both sides is also held annually on the Sunday of the anniversary weekend, with wreaths laid at the memorial cairn in the Rotunda.

The battle has been depicted in film and television productions and images related to the battle have featured on Scottish banknotes. It is mentioned in a wide range of poems, ballads and songs, with *Scots Wha' Hae* (Burns) and the more contemporary *Flower of Scotland* (Williamson) being among the most famous examples. As part of the 700th anniversary project, the Trust commissioned ten poets to produce short works on the significance of the site, which were then collated with commentaries by the poets into the book *10 Bannockburn: Poems for a landscape* (Various 2013). The contributions reflect a range of contemporary concerns (e.g. the 2014 independence referendum) and personal experiences (all the poets walked the site together), as well as historical events, geography, national identity and politics. The poem selected for inscription on the Rotunda beam was 'Here lies our land' by Kathleen Jamie (2013). She describes how her work was intended to suggest "*shared experience and quietude - especially because people who had been through the visitor centre before approaching the rotunda would have been subjected to a lot of medieval battle-clamour; their minds would surely be loud with nationhood and self-determination*" (2013). In contrast, Jamie felt the Rotunda (where the poem was to be inscribed) was a place for quiet reflection and coming together in the "*relative peace [...] space and fresh air*" (2013).

⁴ Figure based on data from Trust footpath counters

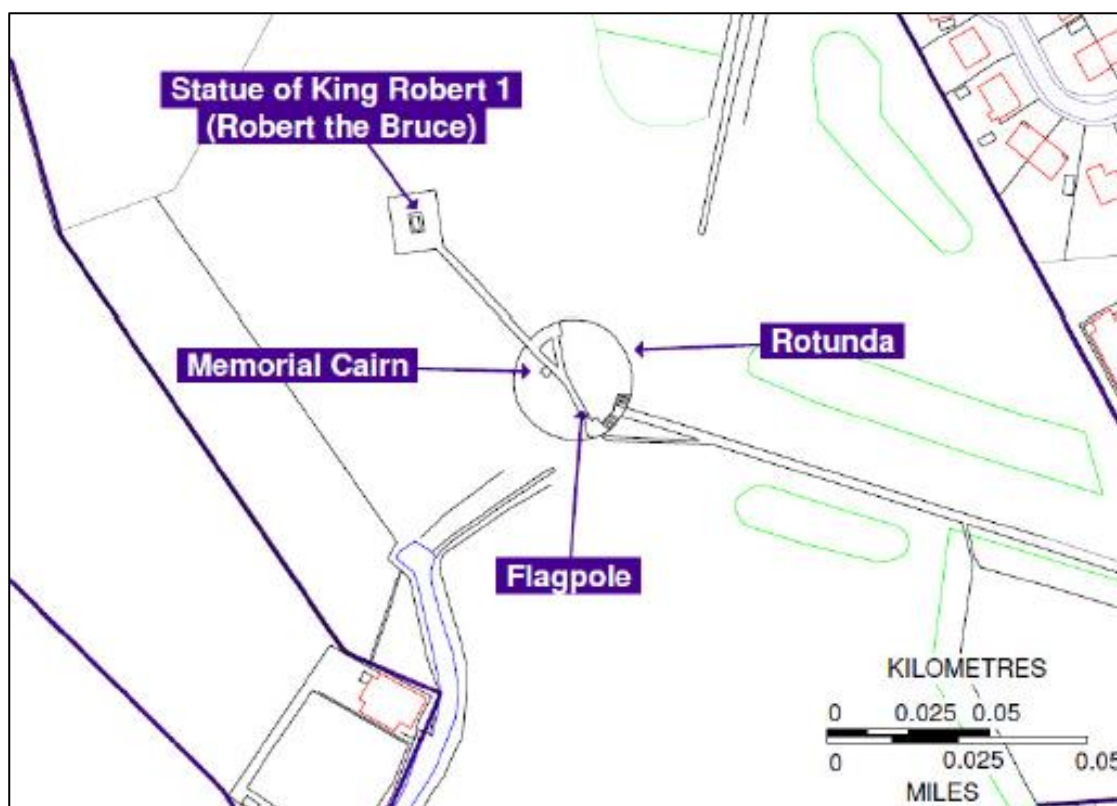
Annex II: Maps

Map 1: Location - Bannockburn is marked with a blue dot.



Maps 2 and 3 are based on Ordnance Survey data reproduced with the permission of HM Stationary office © Crown Copyright, NTS licence No 100023880. All other data © NTS. Not to be reproduced without permission.

Map 2: Positioning of the designated monuments.



Map 3: Property boundary. The area closest to the A872 (Glasgow Road) is where the main entrance, visitor centre, and avenue to the monuments are located. The fields towards the M9, are less frequented.



Annex III: Structured Interview

Participants were advised about the purpose of the research project before participating and asked to confirm their consent. They were given an information sheet including contact details to keep.

Question 1: Where did you come from today?

Question 2: What brings you here? Do you normally come together/with others/alone?

Question 3: Is this your first visit? If no, how often do you visit? [multiple choice] First visit; once before; 3-6 times/year; 1-3 times/month; weekly; more than once a week

Question 4: What do you enjoy about this place (for this activity or more generally)?

Question 5: Is there anything you don't like about it or would like to see change in future?

Question 6: Are there other places you go for this activity? How does it compare?

Question 7: Are there other things you come here for? Who with?

Question 8: Does this place have any special significance or meanings for you (could be related to or beyond this particular activity)?

Question 9: How would you describe this place - are there three key words that sum this place up for you?

Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to add?

At the end, participants were asked to provide some basic demographic information (all questions optional).

Annex IV: Participants

Date	Method	Primary affiliation/reason contacted
29/11/2024	Semi-structured interview	NTS staff member
03/03/2025	Semi-structured interview	Local resident
12/03/2025	Semi-structured interview	Interest group
17/03/2025	Semi-structured interview	Ex-NTS staff member
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Regular visitor (Newcastle, England)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (Whins of Milton)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (St Ninians)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (St Ninians)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (Bannockburn)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (St Ninians)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Regular visitor (Gartcosh, North Lanarkshire)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (Bannockburn)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (Whins of Milton)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (Bannockburn)
23/04/2025	Structured interview	Local resident (St Ninians)
12/05/2025	Semi-structured interview	Local resident [also questionnaire]
15/06/2025	Structured interview	Former resident [also part of another study]
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
28/08/2025	Group discussion	Community group member
03/09/2025	Semi-structured interview	Regular visitor
03/09/2025	Semi-structured interview	Regular visitor

Annex V: Previous Research

In support of this rapid study, consideration was given to existing literature concerning the contemporary significance of Bannockburn (what is now the Trust property, the wider battlefield, and the historic events and characters associated with the battle). The available studies focus on how historical narratives have been reworked over time and the political discourses surrounding the battle, rather than ethnographic research into social values. A full list of references is given in Annex VI: References and Comparators.

In his paper, *National Identity and the Politics of Memory*, Tim Edensor argues that the idea of a nation requires ‘symbolic spaces’, such as Bannockburn, to act as *“the repository of common memories, myths, and traditions and the sites for a range of collective and individual performances of ritual and pilgrimage”*, processes through which identities are both constructed and contested (1997: 175). His analysis of official and expert narratives is complemented by observations of visitor practices (at the old heritage centre, the anniversary commemoration and annual demonstration) and consideration of popular culture (films). He finds that identities and memories are not static, leaving the monuments at Bannockburn *“open to renewed interpretation”* (1997: 180).

The symbolism of the battle and its mobilisation in support of ideas of nationhood and Scottish national identity is also highlighted in a paper by David Ditchburn and Catriona Macdonald (2014). They discuss how the significance of the battle has changed over time and repeatedly been reframed in relation to the present cultural moment. This contemporary recontextualising was especially apparent in the run up to the 700th anniversary of the battle in 2014 and the Independence Referendum which took place that year, which also coincided with the centenary of the start of World War One.

Robert Crawford writes in his literary review, *“the singular occurrence at Bannockburn on 23–4 June 1314 has long since become many Bannockburns. It has been reenvisioned in other contexts by writers in quite different eras”* (2014: 4). Crawford was one of the ten poets invited to compose new works for the 700th anniversary. He describes how each contended in various ways with the historical narratives of the battle and contemporary realities of Scottish politics and society (2014: 233-237), noting that the poem ultimately selected does not refer directly to independence or the battle but rather focuses on the landscape - *“a terrain in which all humans are transient”* (2014: 236).

Justin Sikora’s doctoral study (2013) adopted qualitative ethnographic methods (participant observation and semi-structured interviews) to explore how interpretation impacts on the values visitors associate with historic battlefields. His research focuses on three battlefields (Culloden, Bosworth Field and Flodden), finding that the archaeological finds/potential and military importance of a battle, almost exclusively used in formal assessments of significance, are less important to people than *“the ideas behind a battle and, crucially, its aftermath”* (2013: 224). Although not one of Sikora’s three case studies, he uses Bannockburn to illustrate how, even when there is a paucity of finds and the exact location of the battle is not known, the ideas associated with a battlefield can lead to it being widely valued as a place of identity and memory (2013: 211-212, 226). Sikora builds on his doctoral study in subsequent publications (2016 and 2017), highlighting the issues that can arise between different actors (with differing goals and values) when preserving and presenting historic battlefields.

Annex VI: Statement of Social Values

This Statement illustrates the range of values expressed by a diversity of communities that feel an attachment or association with the property, whether or not they are regularly present on site. The assessment encompassed all aspects of the property – the visitor centre, the monuments, and the landscaped fields and woodlands – finding that these elements are used and valued differently. Participants placed particular emphasis on **the outdoor areas and experiences** when discussing or expressing social values. The majority of on-site research activities took place outside, which may have been a factor. However, responses indicate that these open, freely accessible areas are seen by many people as public space and are the focus for much of the activity, memories, and therefore negotiation of different values at the property. Some participants were familiar with the Bannockburn Experience or had participated in educational activities, but this Statement complements rather than duplicates the surveys of paying visitors and feedback on educational activities that the Trust gathers through other means. It is based on a limited number of participants who do not claim to speak for or represent the views of their entire community and should therefore be considered as indicative rather than comprehensive or definitive.

Values are not static, they are liable to change over time, and multiple (potentially contradictory) values can co-exist between and within communities. This is apparent in the following analysis, in which the property serves **multiple functions for various communities** who express feelings of ownership and identity connected to its national and local significance. This Statement represents the values expressed at a particular moment and some contextual factors (e.g. the repairs needed to the Rotunda or the proposal to develop a neighbouring field as a trotting track) may feature in responses more prominently than they would have done at another time; however, the intention is to understand the underlying values being expressed.

1. Place-based identities

- 1.1 People who are familiar with the property from having grown up or lived in the area expressed feelings of **belonging** based on their experiences. As one local resident expressed, *“It is very much part of my life. Even if I moved away, I would still come back and walk around the perimeter. [...] This is a very special place for me, it has been since I were five year old”* (INT_005). Echoing this sentiment, a survey respondent who had grown up locally explained that they come from the outskirts of Glasgow every week or so to walk at the property because it is somewhere they knew in their youth. They recalled, *“As a child, 70 years ago, there was nothing here, just fields. It's OK now, but sad to see it getting built all around”* (SUR_007).
- 1.2 Place-based identities were expressed through **place knowledge** (including how the area has changed over time) and personal memories, sometimes shared with reference to multi-generational connections. For example, a local resident recalled, *“I used to come as a child, father has a photo of me sitting on the iron grill that was over something [the Borestone], I remember this [the Rotunda] going in and the Queen coming. I came with school, all the schools closed and we got a flag to wave”* (SUR_011). The unveiling of the Robert the Bruce statue by the Queen in 1964 was known or remembered by many participants alongside day-to-day activities, such as walking dogs or riding bikes. One local resident said, *“I come now to walk the dogs 4-5 times a week but, when I was a kid, I remember the statue being opened and we used to come on bikes and run around the wood and to swanswater and back”* (SUR_010).

- 1.3 Another group for whom Bannockburn's social values are connected to their personal identity are people who have identified **ancestral connections** to individuals involved in the battle. Participants in this study did not express such connections themselves, but some did mention encountering people *"claiming they were a Bruce or a Douglas"*, going on to observe that the experience of coming to the property *"was very personal for some of them"* (INT_004). For example, one individual posted online: *"Thoroughly enjoyed visiting Bannockburn last year. Having identified a number of direct ancestors (including Robert the Bruce and Edward II) who fought and died (12 English among them), it was amazing to stand on that ground with an understanding of those connections"* (comment on a Trust Facebook post from 28 Aug 2024).
- 1.4 More broadly, the property holds symbolic social values connected to **Scottish national identity**. The Scottish victory at the battle and the character of Robert the Bruce (with his near mythical status as a brave, warrior-leader who defended the country and led his army to victory over English) are a focus for patriotic pride. One participant said, *"we didnae win many, so we won one we want to remember!"* (INT_003). The annual independence demonstration also brings a national focus to the property (see section 9). One resident reflected, *"some [local] people attend it, but they come from a big area. It is very much a gathering point, so yes, nationally it is still very important"* (INT_005).
- 1.5 That Bannockburn is recognised as nationally important and attracts visitors from all over the world also impacts on how the property is valued locally and is a source of **pride**. One local resident said: *"If Robert the Bruce could see how much pleasure people get from seeing where the battle took place, it's pride of place, I like to think he's sitting up there, guarding his land"* (SUR_009). People reflected on having *"met people from all over the world here"* (SUR_010) and remembered the positive reactions of visitors to the property. One local resident reflected, *"[we're] lucky to have it on the doorstep, it's a privilege, and see people come for all different reasons, it's inviting to lots of different people and ages, young and old"* (SUR_003).

2. Sense of place

- 2.1 The property is valued in part because of the sense of place it evokes, which is **differentiated within the property**. Broadly speaking distinctions are made between the fields and woods (with a focus on the upper part of the property, which is traversed by multiple paths, rather than the lower fields), the monument cluster, and the visitor centre. Activities may encompass more than one of these areas, but they are different types of space primarily associated with different types of engagement and feelings.
- 2.2 The **open fields** are used by walkers, cyclists, for picnics and games, to exercise dogs, and for gatherings and events (see section 8). The **views** within and out beyond the property, were frequently mentioned as contributing to feelings of **openness** and freedom – this is somewhere to get out in the fresh air, where *"nobody bothers you"* (SUR_004), you're free to *"just soak in the views and absorb the good vibe"* (SUR_001).
- 2.3 The **woods** offer more **sheltered and secluded spaces** for walking, outdoor learning and play (discussed in section 6), including for pupils from the neighbouring Primary School. A participant who lives nearby and regularly walks at the property, said that they enjoy the

- “openness of the space and nature, green - the colours and landscape. [...] The woods are really nice [...] The trees have seen so much and are still here”* (SUR_003). As this comment indicates, the different outdoor environments offer different experiences. In this case, the inter-generational presence of the trees also generates a sense of **time depth**. Other participants, drawing more on historical narratives, also reflected a sense of connection through time, to the past and future. One local resident saying the property is *“part of history, just always been here, expect it always will be”* (SUR_004).
- 2.4 Although the open areas surrounding the monuments are a designed landscape, they are associated with **‘nature’**. A regular visitor said *“I walk into the town centre quite often and it’s more busy, you’re more in nature here, walk into the woods and it is even more wild”* (SUR_003). A local resident said, *“for me it is enjoying the nature round about. You see all the changes of the seasons, you see all the plants”* (INT_005). As this last comment indicates, the sense of place is also impacted by the **weather and seasons** (also see Mills 2019). Another local resident also felt, *“the scenery is beautiful and even in winter there is something about it”* (SUR_009).
- 2.5 The **monuments** are the focus for formal and informal **commemorative and memorial** activities (discussed in section 4) and the sense of place reflects this. One participant saying, *“the rotunda, the statue, king bob, people have different names for it, folk feel an affinity when they are here”* (INT_002). The elevated position of the monuments makes them a **focal point** within the property and the wider landscape. Poet Kathleen Jamie records how, *“visiting the rotunda and the statue, I noticed the way the land seems to wheel around that site”* (Jamie 2013).
- 2.6 These feelings are accommodated alongside an **everyday familiarity** that incorporates the monuments into day-to-day practices, with comments such as *“I come every morning to walk the dog and see King Robert’s statue”* (SUR_001) and *“every morning when [my granddaughter] is having her breakfast we study what the wind is doing [with the flag]”* (INT_005). This last contribution indicates how the flagpole is incorporated into the visual landscape and contributes to the sense of place beyond the property boundaries, as well as how the location of the monuments exposes them to the wind and weather. The individual monuments are themselves valued differently (also discussed in section 4).
- 2.7 There was relatively little discussion of **the visitor centre** by participants, although the café was mentioned as a gathering place (see section 8). When the centre was raised, the sense of place often related to the buildings **‘newness’** and a resulting lack of familiarity or comfort with the space and presentation. Although the building is now over 10 years old, one participant described it as *“brand new”*, saying *“you fear to walk in with dirty feet”* (INT_003).
- 2.8 Local residents and regular visitors often mentioned visiting the old heritage centre or that they knew people who had worked there, and the new building is experienced partly with reference to those memories. One regular visitor said, *“I came here when I was seven and drew a picture of a soldier warrior that got put on the board [...] and I’m not arty at all, so that was a big thing for me. So yes, that’s my first memory of coming here, it wasn’t all fancy like this though”* (INT_006). A previous member of staff recalled, *“locals always brought up the old centre if they had visited before [...] that it was friendlier”* (INT_004). Feelings that the new building is ‘fancy’ or not as ‘friendly’ as the old centre contrasted with the sense of place associated with the other areas of the property.

3. Sensory and emotional experiences

- 3.1 While sight and views are foregrounded in responses, the **multi-sensory experience** is also valued. Several people mentioned sheltering from the wind around the monuments or in the trees. Touch is also part of how people engage with the monuments, including children climbing on the Rotunda (see section 6).
- 3.2 The **soundscape** was mentioned by several people as important to the sense of place. This is reflected in one participant's argument against the trotting track: *"This is where the troops are meant to have come down so if you are listening to a racing commentary it's certainly not going to be very, not conveying the atmosphere at all"* (INT_005). More natural sounds include the calls of birds and the rookery (with its potentially evocative associations with battlefields). The acoustic effect of the Rotunda is well known, with people stamping to create an echo and reciting the poem, as well as being the location of a sound installation (which some people found 'beautiful and haunting' and others described as 'bizarre wailing').
- 3.3 Kathleen Jamie's **poem** inscribed on the Rotunda beam is for many people now *"part of the site"* (INT_002), the words and practice of reciting it generating an emotional connection and conveying the feelings associated with the site: *"everything about it is so rousing"* (INT_005).
- 3.4 The property is valued by many people for creating feelings of **peace and calm**. One resident explained, *"It's just a nice, calm area"* (INT_005). This is also reflected in the key words associated with the property by structured interview respondents, many of which related to how the property feels, with words such as tranquil, peaceful, and relaxing. When asked what came to mind when they thought of the property, one regular visitor said: *"Peacefulness, calmness, hope - with everything that is going on in the world, and melancholy, at times, when grey and rainy"* (SUR_003).
- 3.5 For historic battlefields, reconciling a current sense of calm and peace with past conflict presents something of a paradox (Sikora 2016); however, for the most part, this juxtaposition was not raised by participants. With the exception of Robert the Bruce's battledress, the monuments at Bannockburn have relatively few military overtones and a past staff member reflected that the wider interpretation treats conflict as *"a very abstract notion"*, rather than addressing *"what really war means [...] that people really died in battle, and the pain and the fallout from conflict"* (INT_004). While those who go through the Bannockburn Experience, with its sign for 'combatants only', may experience *"medieval battle-clamour"* (Jamie 2013), in the outdoor spaces there is relatively little to surface what poet Tom Pow describes as *"the tension that lies between its [the landscape's] present (and previous) 'innocence' and in what it has witnessed"* (Various 2013).

4. A memorial landscape

- 4.1 Underpinned by place-based identities, experiences, and the sense of place, the property is valued as a place for remembering, reflection, and marking key life events. This includes **acts of memorialising** and the scattering of ashes (both human and animal) at the property was mentioned in interviews and online. One participant described, *"this was [our dog's] favourite place. We lost her last February and scattered some of her ashes here"* (INT_002).

The participant's personal connection to the site and memories of having visited 4-5 times a week with their dog both played a part in this decision.

- 4.2 Formal collective memorialising has led to some people describing the area as **a 'sacred' place**, similar to a war memorial. Use of terms such as 'sacrilege' with reference to building on the battlefield, also suggest it holds these values. Although the property is not a war grave or cemetery, for many people the property's connection to the people and events of 1314 means that it is *"where the battle took place"* (SUR_009). Speakers at the 2024 commemorative service made reference to all those who fought and died in the battle but, as the plaques on the cairn and the flagpole flying the Saltire indicate, this sense of the sacred is primarily linked to Scottish identity and commemorating their victory in the battle.
- 4.3 Memorialising activities are focused on the outdoor spaces and at times intersect with the **monuments, which receive different emphasis** within the memorial landscape. For example, flowers are left at the foot of the Robert the Bruce statue and during the 2024 independence demonstration, painted stones (with the Saltire and pro-independence messages) were placed on the memorial cairn. A local resident identified that, for them, *"the flagpole is the important bit, and the monument inside [the memorial cairn], the actual rotunda itself, apart from giving the kids something to climb up doesn't have terribly much advantage to it. You don't find many people sheltering inside it or anything"* (INT_005). This suggests that, for them, aesthetics and perceived functionality, alongside meaning and personal attachments, play a role in how the monuments are valued.
- 4.4 The flagpole is the oldest of the current monuments and is visible from beyond the property, but it is the **statue of Robert the Bruce** that has become emblematic, its image is used in representing the property, wider area, and battle. It is central to many people's memories of the property and is appreciated aesthetically – *"it is a beautiful statue"* (INT_005) – and as a personification of King Robert the Bruce, i.e. *"That is Robert the Bruce to people"* (INT_003). During the independence demonstration the statue was a focus for photographs and large saltire flags were placed on the ground beside it.

5. Storytelling

- 5.1 Linked with the property as a place of memory and memorialising is a focus on **storytelling**, which was mentioned in various contexts as important. Storytelling is not only about how the site is interpreted but what people value about the experience of place and how it connects with other aspects of their identities. It is a means through which connections to place are formed, performed and extended to others, generating enthusiasm and *"getting that feeling"* (INT_002).
- 5.2 Stories are **inspired** by the current monuments, such as speculation about what is inside the box behind the cross on the plinth of the Robert the Bruce statue, as well as historic events. One local resident who regularly visits said: *"I love history, I make up poems about here, some of them have been used in schools, which I was really pleased about [...] I woke up in the night and imagined the battle, my house would have been in the battlefield. I put [a poem inspired by] that on social media and got a lot of positive comments"* (SUR_009).
- 5.3 Telling and retelling stories is a way in which people overcome a lack of physical evidence associated with the battle and share their feelings about the site and what it represents.

Bannockburn and Robert the Bruce have inspired myths and stories, told in prose, poem and song. Becoming familiar with and retelling these stories, whether collectively at public events (such as reenactments or commemorations) or in private, is a way of **establishing a role in remembering the history**. William Letford, one of the anniversary poets, wrote: *“The battle that took place here is an important part of our identity as a nation. [...] Every person that tells it [the story of the battle] keeps it alive. Every person that remembers it takes part in it. You are taking part in it”* (Various 2013).

- 5.4 Not all stories are actively remembered or retold and **emphasis changes over time**. For example, historically the borestone was the focus for the site and how it was known (Wright 2011). It remains prominent in local placenames, including the neighbouring properties of Borestone Primary School and Borestone Bowling Club. Stories told by participants related to when the borestone was in situ (remembered by some) rather than what had happened to it or that its location is now commemorated in the paving. When asked if they remembered the borestone, one local resident said: *“Yes, there used to be a metal cage around it and apparently the stones that used to be around it are, I think that must be the stones that supported the cage [...] I think they just lost them”* (INT_005). Another participant mentioned that it was the location of the borestone which led to the flagpole being constructed, making a connection to the present-day monuments that people are now more familiar with.
- 5.5 Finally, participants commented about how many stories there are to tell, and **which stories are told**. People suggested that more use could be made of the space to tell *“more stories, the story of King Robert the Bruce”* (SUR_001), the personal stories or wider lives of those involved in the battle, and *“different stories [...] looking to the past, connecting with the present, more nuanced stories”* (INT_004).

6. Play and exploration

- 6.1 Another juxtaposition between the formal focus on the battle and informal social practices are the values associated with the property as a place of play. This is connected in some cases to formal learning, but not always. One local resident recalled that, when they had small children, *“this was their playground, their adventure playground, and those stones there are fantastic for jumping up and down, playing hide and seek, round King Robert as well”* (INT_005).
- 6.2 Participants valued the outdoor areas as **secluded and safe** spaces for play. One visitor described how *“[the physic garden] was enclosed, a distinct space, children like this, the beds being raised but not very high, they could interact with the plants, making their own world in a way. I saw this with other kids, not just my own”* (INT_004). The woods also offer secluded play areas for children of all ages and are used by the outdoor educational providers, who noted that the property offered a contained and safe option for parents and children, while also allowing spatial separation between educational groups (in the woods) and tourists (in the areas immediately around the monuments).
- 6.3 Play also occurs in the **open areas and around the monuments**, which are used for picnics and bike riding. A couple of people mentioned children climbing on the Rotunda, one recalling that *“the kids used to walk around the top of this, this was a common thing for the children to do”* (INT_005). Seasonal activities were mentioned, including rolling eggs at Easter and sledging in winter, with one person commenting online: *“Hope the weather*

ripped up the trees u planted were the wains sledge" (Facebook, comment on NTS post from 25 Jan 2025 re: storm damage). This comment suggests that specific areas of the site are associated with these activities.

- 6.4 Many people first experience the property as part of a school visit and it has an association with **education and learning**. The diverse habitats are also seen as offering a range of potential educational opportunities for children. The weapons handling at the visitor centre and activities, such as forming a 'children's army' at the 2024 anniversary reenactment (armed with pool noodles), brings an element of play into the formal learning experience.
- 6.5 For adults as well, there is an aspect of **exploration** to their experience of the property. There was mention of the more unexpected aspects of the property being memorable or valued, for example *"the Rotunda was something they [visitors] didn't know was there, so was a nice surprise"* (INT_004). Exploration also is not limited to the site itself, as people walk on from, and look out into, the surrounding landscape (see section 8).
- 6.6 What differentiates the formal education and learning experiences from informal play is how children **'repurpose' the space**, incorporating the monuments and outdoor areas in various ways, to create opportunities for play and exploration. Louise Chawla (1992) argues that engaging in such practices in secure/familiar yet expanding environments can support the development of place attachments, social relationships and identity among children and adolescents. One of the factors that Chawla identifies as important in these processes is *"undefined space where young people can formulate their own worlds"*, whether the imaginative 'let's pretend' of young children, the independent games and explorations of school-age children, or the public and private spaces for testing new ideas and relationships by adolescents (1992: 68-69). All these practices were observed or described by participants as taking place at the property, suggesting it is valued in part as an 'undefined space'.

7. Ownership and care

- 7.1 Personal connections and place-based identities can generate feelings of **moral ownership**. For example, in an exchange on Facebook, one person expressed their authority to decide what happens at the site on the basis *"I grew up next to it, my old school is at the end of the field"* (comment on Trust Facebook post from 20 February 2025). These feelings are often most apparent when discussing what happens at a property or potential changes. In this assessment, a sense of moral ownership was expressed in discussions on the proposed trotting track and around management of the outdoor areas and monuments, which are treated as public space.
- 7.2 A sense of ownership is expressed through statements about how the property should be **cared for**. At the time of this study the Rotunda beam was supported by scaffolding and many people commented along the lines of this regular visitor who lives nearby: *"Would like to see the Rotunda fixed, reckon it's been 18 months or 2 years it has been like that, a long time, a lot of tourists up here noticing it. Was beautiful before, so bit of TLC [tender loving care] that way"* (SUR_006).
- 7.3 Regular **maintenance** is also seen as evidencing an appropriate level (or lack) of care, as in this comment: *"So sad to see this park going to ruin they have stopped cutting the grass*

[...] its got that bad a friend has taken it upon himself to trim pathways" (comment on Trust Facebook post from 20 Jan 2025). There was also concern among participants that leaving grass longer would potentially reduce the care taken by dog walkers, a local resident commenting: *"I heard they are going to stop cutting the grass. When the grass is short most people pick up after their dogs, wont be able to stop the dogs going in the long grass"* (SUR_010).

- 7.4 Participants mentioned some instances where feelings of moral ownership and authority have resulted in unofficial **community practices** to maintain the property according to what they consider to be appropriate or important, such as cutting back vegetation and picking up litter. Another example of this is when the plinth of the Robert the Bruce statue and Rotunda were graffitied during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, people gathered and attempted to clean the monuments themselves before the Trust was able to arrange professional removal. However, in general there is an expectation of institutional care and maintenance for the property (with references to both the Council and the Trust) in keeping with its national significance.
- 7.5 Highlighting expectations around the appearance of a nationally important property and memorial landscape (as somewhere respectfully well-kept) one participant said, *"[you] couldn't do much more to be the image of what a thing like that is, the grounds are kept beautiful"*. However, while it may look the part, the same participant went on to say, *"there's not enough hands on, not enough passion"* (INT_003). This reflects a view expressed by several participants that caring for the property includes **sharing the feelings and ideas** associated with it, as well as maintaining the physical monuments and landscape. Another participant felt, *"it's about sharing information and being a good custodian is [about] passing it on"* (INT_002).

8. Connectedness

- 8.1 The property is valued in part for leaving people *"feeling part of the country and the history"* (INT_002). For example, several of the anniversary poems link the property and its history, with **Scotland, universal experiences, and the wider world**. Participants also described connections to other places, in Stirling or further afield, for example other historic sites or places associated with the life of Robert the Bruce and the wars of independence, tying the property and events associated with the battle into wider historical and national narratives (see section 9). However, the property is also valued for being *"grounded in a place"* (INT_004) and connected to a specific geography.
- 8.2 The sightlines to the North, towards Stirling Castle, and to South, towards the Burn/English advance, and towards the Wallace Monument (albeit increasingly obscured by trees) are not only valued for the views they provide but are used in articulating **the symbolic centrality** of this part of the battlefield. One resident said, *"I know they have done various searches to find out where most of the battle took place, because the battle would have moved around, but this is very much the central point for looking out and seeing the whole area"* (INT_005). This emphasis on the centrality of the property for understanding the battlefield and its importance contrasts with its physical location on the edge of the designated historic battlefield area, connecting the property with places and events beyond its boundaries.

- 8.3 **Connections to the surrounding landscape** are also important in how the property is valued and experienced through day-to-day practices. The property is popular with dog walkers, some of whom visit multiple times a day, walkers and walking groups. As well as walking onto the property at various points, several people describing walking routes that incorporate the surrounding areas. For example, one local resident described their route as follows, “[I] go up and round the swanswater and tinkers loan and then end up here [at the property]” (SUR_011). These wider perambulations incorporated paths around or through the property or were “connected to here [the property], as I start off here” (SUR_003).
- 8.4 The property is also valued as a **gathering place**, at key moments or as part of regular interactions. People come together to play and to walk their dogs: “There’s a group call themselves the 4 o’clock club who come with their dogs at 4 and get together for a blether [chat]” (SUR_011). A local resident and who walks at the property 4-5 times a week described how they “see the same regulars” (SUR_010). In addition to the annual anniversary gatherings, people congregate informally on occasions such as to see the Northern Lights or “at New Year you get a lot of people coming up so they can watch the fireworks” (INT_005). For those with a personal connection to the history, the property can also be a place for coming together, as indicated by this comment on Facebook: “We had a great time at the Bannockburn Experience. Sixty-five Bruce’s in two waves enjoying the lunch, the gift shop, the battlefield, the battle map room and the actual experience. Great time!” (comment on a Trust post from 28 August 2024).
- 8.5 While most group activities are focused in the outdoor areas, as the above comment indicates, **the café** also provides a gathering space. Around a third of regular visitors and local residents who completed structured interviews on site indicated that they use the café occasionally - “I have come for a coffee with friends a couple of times” (SUR_009) - or more regularly, coming to “walk and go to the tea room for a cup of coffee” (SUR_007). Other people noted that cost was a potential barrier: “That’s a disconnect, people think they only want rich people in there, people who can afford the coffee and afford the buns” (INT_003).
- 8.6 More broadly, the property is connected to the wider area through shared **recent histories of mining and development**. A local resident, reflecting on the changes in her lifetime, said: “This whole area has mine workings in it. There used to be big coal bings before the new houses were built [...] There used to be a little distillery or something, we used to have a mink farm just down there, and there are so many things that were here” (INT_005). This a connection with the more recent history of the area was also expressed by the community group members, most of whom are not familiar with the property and its formal significance.
- 8.7 In contrast to the values expressed around connectivity and the symbolic centrality of the property to the wider battlefield, some participants described it as **physically distinct** from the surrounding areas. It is situated between Bannockburn, St Ninians, and Whins of Milton, but is peripheral to the core of all three neighbourhoods. Despite its proximity to multiple residential areas, it does not appear to be considered as belonging to or being part of any one of these areas. For example, one participant who grew up locally said “[I was] always very proud of the battle but when I think of Bannockburn it’s the village and the heritage centre was more Hillpark” (INT_008).
- 8.8 Among people who are not familiar with the property and do not regularly visit, there were feelings of **disconnectedness** that related to communication and inclusion as much as the physical location of the property. In the community group discussion, it was proposed that

if it was more widely known what was happening (talks, walks, gatherings etc.) then the property might not be so 'disregarded'. It was specifically mentioned that if information is disseminated primarily on social media, then people were less likely to be aware of it.

- 8.9 For members of the group, who are not regular visitors, **unknown aspects and potential barriers** included the cost, accessibility, and the appropriateness of the Experience for different audiences. Although many people walk or drive to the property, it was observed that public transport links affect how accessible the property is to people from different areas of Stirling. The outdoor education providers indicated that they signpost the Trust facilities to parents and encourage families to come back and visit, while also noting the cost aspect (of the Experience and café) given that their activities are targeted to residents in areas with a low overall ranking on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

9. National narratives and contemporary politics

- 9.1 Today, as has been the case for generations, events at Bannockburn are leveraged as part of popular politics and wider national narratives about Scotland and Great Britain. The date and place of the battle act as **physical and temporal rallying points**, for example, bringing people together for the independence demonstrations and connecting a dispersed community who know each other from other such events. When attendees at the 2024 event were asked if they come to Bannockburn often, several replied along the lines of, "*Oh aye, every year*". This ties into a longer tradition of popular political gatherings and demonstrations at the location (see e.g. Penman 2016, who describes unionist, nationalist and workers reform movements all mobilising at various times throughout the 19th century at the borestone and/or on the anniversary of the battle).
- 9.2 There is a strong connection between Bannockburn and the movement for **Scottish independence**. A Facebook post from All Under One Banner to promote the 2024 demonstration stated that "*The victory at Bannockburn resonates through history that Scotland is a sovereign Nation, and the people of Scotland have the inalienable right of self determination*". The theme of self-determination was picked up by several of the speakers at the 2024 demonstration and many attendees were wearing t-shirts with quotes from the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath that refer to the fight for freedom from English overlordship.
- 9.3 The idea of Scottish independence has multiple shifting meanings, and Bannockburn is drawn on in a variety of ways. Calls for **unity** and for people to work across interests and political affiliations in support of independence were prominent in materials and speeches at the 2024 demonstration. Events at Bannockburn were also mobilised in support of this, with one speaker urging people to "*unite like the Bruce did here at Bannockburn*". As observed by Edensor at the 1992 event, "*different elements of the story of Bruce and the battle are highlighted to convey a range of messages*" (1997: 187), both relating to the overall goal of independence and the diversity of interests and approaches encompassed within this narrative. John Burnside, one of the anniversary poets, was inspired by "*the need, not just for an independent, but also a truly democratic, socialist, environmentally aware Scotland*" (Various 2013), a breadth of interests that were reflected at the 2024 independence demonstration.
- 9.4 Another key theme, highlighted by speakers encouraging mass political mobilisation and participants in this study, is the **role of ordinary people** – from the 'small folk' turning the

tide of the battle to supporting Robert the Bruce while he was on the run in the years that followed. What could be an historic narrative principally concerning royalty and nobility is thereby reframed to appeal to those with more socialist or working-class identities.

- 9.5 Those involved in the battle (king and commoner) are heralded as exemplifications of the ***national character***. The Bruce is described as a man who learned about Scotland from its people and established a contract between the monarch and the people by signing the Declaration of Arbroath. One participant explained, *“you might be king but you’ll never own Scotland, king and queen of the people, the land is free [...] Robert the Bruce signs the Declaration of Arbroath and the more I found out about that kind of thing, the more I liked him. I’m not a royalist, but my heart is into Robert the Bruce”* (INT_003). This comment also demonstrates how knowledge (of the history of the battle and of the key individuals involved), personal feelings and national identity are combined in retelling these stories.
- 9.6 National narratives and identity politics can result in what one person referred to as *“an expectation about **Scottishness**”* (INT_004) at the property. This was occasionally observed during this assessment, e.g. expecting people with identifiably Scottish accents to be leading activities or reenactments and opinions over which flags should be flown. One participant indicated, *“When I visit Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, I expect an Irish guide. I expect their leanings to be pro-Irish. If I had travelled 12,000 miles to get to the Bannockburn Experience, I kind of want to be welcomed by someone Scottish, someone with some pride in the result at Bannockburn”* (INT_002). Most of the more overtly exclusionary comments were observed in online spaces, although some anti-English sentiments were expressed directly to me during the 2024 independence demonstration. A minority within the overall national narrative, this nonetheless connects to the stories that are told about the battle and its contemporary significance in a Scotland that includes people from different backgrounds with diverse identities.

Annex VII: References and Comparators

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Comparator Trust properties with social values assessments:

- **Fyvie Castle, Gardens and Estate** (<https://doi.org/10.34722/z9mc-7s63>) – free to access outdoor areas with a pay to access Castle (previously part of the surrounding Fyvie Estate). On the edge of a village, people from a much wider area express a sense of moral ownership and connection to the property as somewhere 'local' to them. The landscape and gardens are an important focus for community activities and values derived from social, emotional and sensory experiences.
- **Newhailes House and Gardens** (completed in 2021) – free to access outdoor areas with a pay to access House. The property is easy to access from the surrounding residential areas, some of which are ranked low on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The designed landscape is valued for providing a connection to 'nature' and as a community green space. An understanding of social values and patterns of use has helped inform changes to outdoor landscaping and access, and how changes have been communicated.