

# NCAP DIGITISATION POLICY

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline the National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP) digitisation policy, to document which aerial imagery is scheduled for digitisation and the reasons for its selection.

NCAP is the official repository for UK Government declassified and released aerial imagery of Scotland and the World (except England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Digital technology has enabled NCAP to employ innovative ways of providing access to its collections and to assist RCAHMS in meeting three of its Strategic Priorities, as set out in the document *Future RCAHMS, the next five years 2010-2015*:

**1. Inspire learning and intellectual curiosity in our national culture and identity at home and worldwide**

We will achieve this by:

*Engaging with users of all ages to meet their data and information needs*

**2. Continue to update our national collection through field investigation, research and selective collecting, and make RCAHMS the first port of call for information about Scotland's places**

We will achieve this by:

*Continuing to develop our aerial photography collections, one of the largest and most significant archives of its type in the world, so that they can be used and enjoyed by an increasing number of people*

**3. Widen digital access to information on Scotland's places, making it more interactive and an integral part of the burgeoning world-wide network of cultural heritage data**

We will achieve this by:

*Using digital technology to capture data, to maximise public access, and to ensure long-term preservation of digital archives*

*Broadening access to historic environment information and increasing our capacity to deliver data to people's homes, offices and schools worldwide*

*Increasing the quality and quantity of information and images available online*

## 1. Why we digitise

Digitisation is an integral part of NCAP activities. By digitising archive aerial imagery, NCAP aims to:

- Enable people around the world to access archive aerial images, and to use and publish them, with an appropriate licence, without having to visit the search room
- Preserve rare and fragile images, while also improving access to these images by providing digital surrogates of the items for use by the public, thereby reducing physical handling of vulnerable original images
- Build a critical mass of digital content to support research in a variety of fields as well as the RCAHMS education, publishing and exhibition programs
- Engage with new audiences by making NCAP imagery available in the online environment for use by different communities and new technologies
- Service commercial and private orders for copies of imagery not already digitised or at higher resolutions than available on the NCAP website

## 2. How we digitise

### 2.1 Considerations when digitising

The following considerations are made when aerial imagery is digitised at NCAP:

- Digitisation of aerial imagery is undertaken in-house by trained NCAP staff.
- NCAP employs national and international standards and practices for digital capture, metadata, storage, preservation and access.
- Digital master images are created by digitisation of rolled photographic films and photographic prints from the NCAP archives. NCAP is committed to managing the master images for long term access.
- Digital master images are created to a resolution appropriate to the item and the type of use it is likely to attract. Quality assurance is undertaken routinely to ensure adherence to NCAP standards.
- Digital master images are not digitally manipulated or enhanced.
- Imagery is digitised once only and the digital copy images can be licensed for reuse. Where lower quality master images exist, created using early digitisation practices and standards, the original images are re-digitised to the current standard when requested by an internal or external customer.
- When partial digitisation of a roll of film or box of prints is required, NCAP prefers to digitise the roll or box in its entirety. For practical reasons this is not always possible. The decision to digitize whole films or boxes is made by the Geoinformation Manager, taking into account significance, fragility, ease of cataloguing, and available resources.
- Collection Level Descriptions and metadata are created using established international bibliographic standards and standard protocols.
- Digitisation takes account of UK copyright law and other relevant legislation and protocols.
- The digitisation of images in the archive does not diminish NCAP's commitment to the preservation and care of these images. Digital surrogates assist in the preservation process by reducing the need for repeat handling of the original images, which are maintained in appropriate preservation conditions.

### 2.2 Care and handling of records

Digitisation activities undertaken by NCAP take into account the preservation requirements of the original images. Digitisation procedures ensure that material is not damaged during the digital capture process. NCAP staff are trained in the care and handling of collection material. Digital capture is undertaken using equipment appropriate to the format of material being digitised. This may be a copy-stand, flatbed scanner or photogrammetric scanner.

NCAP aims to digitise collection material in its best possible physical condition. Therefore, a preservation assessment and any remedial treatment of prints or films are undertaken prior to digitisation whenever possible.

## **3. What we digitise**

### **3.1 Records selected for routine digitisation**

NCAP routinely digitises images selected by collection managers from NCAP's Scotland, ACIU and JARIC collections. While there has been a particular focus on imagery of Scotland, digitisation of overseas material is also undertaken. The following selection criteria are applied:

- historical and/or cultural significance of the imagery
- uniqueness and/or rarity of the imagery
- level of demand for the imagery
- existence of good quality finding aids
- potential to generate income through online image sales
- out of copyright status or permission to digitise obtained
- restricted access to the imagery due to its condition, value, vulnerability or location

### **3.2 Records in a fragile state**

NCAP imagery may be selected for digitisation to reduce the risks associated with physical handling of fragile or valuable material, or where there is a high risk that the original would deteriorate. NCAP may also digitise material unable to be kept in its original format or at high risk of not being able to be accessed into the future.

### **3.3 Records used in public outreach programs**

NCAP imagery is also digitised to support the RCAHMS's outreach activities, such as exhibitions, publications, and educational activities. Digitisation for these purposes is carried out when capacity allows and enables the archive to engage new user communities and target a range of audiences.

### **3.4 Records demanded by commercial customers**

NCAP imagery is also digitised to order by commercial customers. Due to the requirement for the archive to generate a commercial income to offset its costs, digitisation for orders is prioritised over all other digitisation work and is carried out within 15 working days from receipt of the order. Material ordered for digitisation is processed in the same way as all other items, however, and is handled in accordance with the standards outlined at paragraph 2.2, above.

## **4. Access to digitised collections**

NCAP provides access to digital copies of collection items but does not generally interpret them. Instead, the digital copies are made available for others to use as required. The use and reproduction of items from NCAP archives incorporates a requirement that the user attributes the work, acknowledges NCAP as the source, and complies with any copyright or other licence restrictions.

### **4.1 Online galleries and search room service**

NCAP's digitised imagery can be searched and accessed through the NCAP website:  
<http://ncap.org.uk>

Access to original prints (Scotland) and surrogate microfilms (ACIU) is provided through the GIS catalogues in the search room. It is intended that when surrogate digital copying of Scottish prints has been completed, visitors will be able to access digital images and the original prints will then be withdrawn from the search room.

### **4.2 Sustainability of digital archive**

Digital images are stored initially in uncompressed TIFF format on a department RAID system before being copied to data tape, logged in a database and stored in a Fireproof Safe. No copy is currently held off-site.