

Appropriate fencing for archaeological sites

Why is fencing of concern to archaeologists?

Fencing of archaeological sites is essential where there is a danger of stock or mechanical damage to a site or where there is a public danger from the site itself. However the insertion of a fence, particularly where strainer posts are required can itself damage buried archaeological deposits. The physical structure of a fence can also have significant landscape impact both on the setting of an individual monument and on the wider historic landscape.

Fences should not be sited across archaeological monuments. Different fields will be cropped and managed separately obscuring the site from its place in the landscape. Many sites were placed in prominent positions to dominate their local landscapes. By dividing them they become less visually significant.

As stock tend to follow the line of a fence, a wrongly positioned fence can lead to considerable erosion.



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This fence line cuts through the centre of a prehistoric stone circle. This has led to different management on either side, making it difficult to view the monument as a single site.



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Fencing around this late medieval castle is helping to keep stock and the public away from a potentially unsafe structure.

What should you consider when planning fencing around an archaeological site?

Will fencing protect a site?

What will be the impact of fencing on the wider landscape?

Is fencing a temporary or permanent solution?

Can alternative stocking or cultivation achieve the same result?

A generous margin should be given to site a fence beyond the known edge of a monument, as buried archaeology generally extends well beyond the visible remains. A fence too close to a site can affect its landscape impact.

Fencing is not an end in itself and must form part of a long term management plan for an archaeological site eg the control of scrub, sward management and control of burrowing animals in fenced-off areas.

A low cost solution such as the positioning of an old tree trunk to prevent vehicle access or temporary scare fencing placed when cattle are in a field may be more appropriate than permanently fencing off an archaeological site.

Much of Scotland's archaeological heritage lies in rural areas. This sheet is one of a series giving advice on some of the ways these important remains can be protected during normal rural land management.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Identify where archaeological sites survive on your land and make sure these are marked on a farm plan.
- Where existing fencing cuts across an archaeological site consider changing the fence line to prevent further damage.
- Particular care must be taken when inserting new fencing not to damage archaeological deposits when inserting strainer posts, fencing stobs or burying netting.
- If only temporarily restricting stock, consider using electric fencing.
- Take advice from Historic Scotland when dealing with Scheduled Monuments and from your local authority archaeologist when dealing other sites.
- Make sure that a suitable buffer (5m minimum) is left between known sites and the position of protective fencing. Take advice if unsure what size of buffer is necessary.
- Consider the landscape impact of any proposed fencing.
- Select materials and a style of fencing that will not be obtrusive in the local landscape.
- Make sure there is access through a fenced enclosure for future management of the protected area.
- Gates and tracks should be sited so that access is directed away or around a monument.
- Have a management plan for the long term enhancement of a site.
- Ensure staff and contractors know the location of protected sites and how to avoid damaging them.

Further information - [Practical Tip : Fencing](#) [2004]



This strainer post and adjoining fence stobs here have been placed inside a prehistoric roundhouse, perhaps 2,000 years old. It is important to identify the position and extent of sites before adding new fencing.



This medieval castle mound would become a more visible feature if a less obtrusive gate was used and the fence shifted further back from the edge of the monument.