

Managing & improving access to archaeological sites

Why should I care about promoting access to archaeological sites?

Archaeological sites are popular places for walks by both local and external visitors. The new [Rights of Access](#) place greater duties on owners to make access easier. Controlling access to sites may prevent damage to crops and disturbance to stock by directing visitors on preferred routes. Some archaeological sites may form part of Core Path Networks.

What technical problems might I find?

Health & Safety is an increasing problem for land managers and it may also be necessary to fence off areas to restrict public access to sensitive areas like vulnerable archaeological sites. You may be able to get funding from the government's Land Mangers' Options or Rural Priorities Scheme for pay for this. Both HS and SNH may be able to supply funding to aid public access, though this is likely to be restricted to accessing major archaeological sites and areas or for schemes forming part of larger projects..



Note how the open gate is focusing stock and people to one point on this medieval castle mound causing an erosion gully. If fencing sites to control access make sure this is not causing any additional problems.



Access is important for making sites more easily available and visible to visitors. Clear signs are important as long as they are not obtrusive..

What can I do to promote access to archaeological sites on my land?

Identify which sites on your land may be able to sustain increased access, either from existing knowledge, from [PASTMAP](#) or by having an archaeological audit carried out. Assess the likely impacts of both the paths themselves and increased visitor pressure on the monuments themselves. Do not forget to consider the impact of paths and signs both on an individual monument and on the wider landscape. Draw up a plan and consult with both your local authority archaeological advisers and with SNH before implementing new access. They may well be able to advise you on suitable materials and approaches.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Identify if current access for stock and/or vehicles is being routed over archaeological sites and historic monuments.
- If a problem is identified see if the access can be re-routed and the existing route blocked off (with the option of restoring damage - such as that caused by wheel ruts - where this has occurred).
- Do not place new access routes where they will cause damage to sites.
- Where fences are necessary make sure they are maintained to protect sites, the public and stock.
- Make sure that neither fencing nor marker posts are inserted on top of visible monuments or into buried archaeological deposits.
- Consider the impact of a proposed fence & path on the local landscape.
- Choose materials that are not obtrusive and that are locally appropriate.
- When excavating foundations & drains for a path, make sure these do not affect archaeological deposits and features. Report any new discoveries to your local archaeology service.
- Design any path, fence, stile, car park or other access related feature into an overall access management plan. (Impacts in one area may well have an effect elsewhere on your or your neighbour's land.)

*Further information - Historic Scotland leaflet [Managing change in the historic environment Accessibility](#) is primarily giving guidance on access to listed buildings. It does provide a link to the useful English Heritage [2013] 70 page [Easy access to historic landscapes](#). [Scottish Outdoor Access](#) website has useful information on both legal and countryside access. The **SNH** website has useful information on [Managing Recreation and Access](#). This includes technical advice on designing & constructing access. The [Paths for All](#) website has a range of general and specific technical advice that includes grant information as well as on managing and repairing tracks.*



Inappropriate tracks, signs and fences can disfigure a monument's setting as well damaging the monuments themselves.



Well designed access is unobtrusive but makes it easy to reach a monument and understand its local setting.