

#### Placing protective buffer zones around archaeological sites

##### Why should I create a buffer zone around a site?

Buffer zones protect archaeological sites from damage. These may help prevent accidental damage from farm or forestry machinery or be useful because archaeological deposits extend beyond the visible remains. They also help sites fit better into the landscape.

##### What size of buffer do I need?

As a minimum you should have a buffer of at least 5 metres from the edge of the known monument. But some schemes or where a site is located in a field may require a bigger margin of 10 to 20 metres to protect sites adequately. Larger buffers may be required to protect extensive sites and to create manageable exclusions from cultivation.

In some cases this may require portions or even whole fields being removed from cultivation, subject to SGRPID agreement.



The same site after a buffer has been established under a voluntary agreement.



Ploughing has taken place far too close to this stone circle, leading to almost certain damage to the stones from a tractor or plough kit and continuing disturbance to buried deposits extending beyond the visible stones.

##### Where can I get advice on what size of buffer is appropriate?

In the first instance consult your local environmental adviser but you may also need to speak your local authority archaeologist. Historic Scotland Field Officers and Managers may be able to advise on appropriate buffering around Scheduled Monuments. Buffer zones should always extend beyond the known edge of an archaeological site.

##### Do I need to manage a site once it has a buffer around it?

You should draw up a management plan for each protected site to monitor changes and to make sure the site continues to be protected. For example, if fencing to exclude stock you will need to control coarse vegetation and scrub from obscuring or damaging the protected monument. This may be done by occasional grazing of the site but is best done through planned rather than *ad hoc* management.

*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

- Protect all archaeological sites with a minimum uncultivated buffer of 5 metres.
- When dealing with larger sites a minimum 10 metre or greater buffer may be required.
- Where forestry planting is planned a 20 metre buffer may be appropriate to restrict regeneration and root damage. Follow forestry guidelines for this work.
- When dealing with a buried archaeological site such as a cropmark or where archaeology is believed to extend well beyond visible remains allow a generous buffer to protect unrecorded features.
- When selecting monuments to be protected, identify those most at risk from damage for priority protection.
- When choosing areas for long term set-aside, re-seeding with species-rich grass seed or creating permanent pasture, consider archaeological sites as priority areas for protection.
- Consult with your local authority archaeology service or archaeological adviser if unsure what size of buffer is most appropriate.
- Draw up a management plan to ensure the buffer zone is managed along with the protected site. Include this in this in any environmental audit or conservation strategy for your farm.

Further information - Scottish government advice [Management of archaeological and historic sites](#)  
see also Archaeology Scotland [Managing archaeological sites in arable systems 1 & 2](#)



Existing measures to protect this standing stone are clearly not working. It would benefit from a buffer zone to keep stock away, perhaps with a scare fence when stock are in the field.



However aerial photographs show that the standing stone is part of a much larger monument. Any management proposed to protect the stone must be related to the larger monument which should ideally also be removed from arable cultivation with a suitable

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