



ENGLISH HERITAGE



Easy Access to Historic Landscapes



Heritage
Lottery Fund

The United Kingdom's historic parks, gardens and landscapes are valued for their beauty, diversity and historical significance. Millions of people visit them every year but many others feel unwelcome and unable to enjoy these special places. Improving access is one key to a wider understanding, valuing, caring and enjoyment of historic landscapes. English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund have produced this guidance to help owners and managers reconcile wider access with conservation interests. Although prompted by the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, this guidance promotes an inclusive approach to ensure that every visitor to a historic park, garden or landscape has a meaningful experience.

The National Trust, Countryside Agency, Historic Houses Association and Historic Scotland have provided advice and guidance on this publication. The advice of the Historic Houses Association is very welcome as many of our important historic parks and gardens open to the public are in private ownership. The Sensory Trust, which was commissioned to develop this guidance, promotes and implements inclusive environmental design and management. The Trust's team has worked closely with groups of disabled people, property staff and advisors on this project.

Barriers to access and individual, site-specific solutions are illustrated throughout the guidance to stimulate ideas, but new access solutions are being developed all the time and over the next five years a library of good design and good practice case studies could be developed.

English Heritage, the National Trust and Historic Scotland seek to ensure that their properties and events are accessible to everyone by providing easy, dignified access wherever reasonably possible. The statutory agencies encourage others who own or manage historic landscapes to adopt access plans that are consistent with the special historic or archaeological interest of the property concerned. As the lead advisory body on historic landscapes in England, English Heritage believes access should be celebrated with high-quality design that is also sensitive to the special interest of historic parks, gardens and landscapes.

Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund across the UK often presents the biggest opportunity for historic parks and gardens to undertake major redevelopment and make physical improvements to overcome the barriers disabled people face in sharing access to our heritage. In its first 10 years the Heritage Lottery Fund has restored over 250 public parks, gardens, squares, promenades and historic cemeteries across the UK. HLF expects all applicants to think about how they can make their heritage asset more accessible for disabled people by overcoming the barriers which challenge access.

All of us who have been involved in producing this guidance document encourage everyone who may have a role in making historic landscapes more accessible – owners, managers, friends groups, advisors – to use this guidance to create inclusive landscapes that can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone.



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Mount Edgcumbe Park, Cornwall
 Cathedral Precinct, Glasgow
 Chatsworth House, Derbyshire
 Mount Stewart, Co. Down
 Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh
 Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire
 No Man's Land Orchard, Kent
 Painshill Park, Surrey

Historic landscapes and access issues are diverse.

Clockwise from top left: Peveril Castle, Derbyshire; Witley Court, Worcestershire; Birmingham Botanic Gardens; Mount Stewart, County Down; Badminton Park, Gloucestershire; Mount Grace Priory, North Yorkshire; Corfe Castle, Dorset; Painshill Park Waterwheel, Surrey; centre Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol



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Introduction

This guide has been produced to help property owners and managers make their historic landscapes more accessible to all visitors. It will also be of value to designers, planners, policy makers and others working to open up historic sites to a wider range of visitors. The principles in this guide are applicable for other landscapes.

The term historic landscape is used throughout this guide to include the following types of landscape in the UK:

- Historic parks and gardens
- Historic urban squares and townscapes
- Ancient monuments
- Industrial heritage
- Cemeteries and commemorative sites

A key theme of this guide is how to achieve a balance between improving access and conserving the historic character and fabric. The focus is on enhancing the visitor experience, but the guidance will also help improve the skills and approach of staff and volunteers. Access can often be significantly enhanced through low-key improvements and without major intervention.

This guide advocates an inclusive approach to design and management, addressing the needs of all people, regardless of age, gender, background or disability. This inclusive approach is underpinned by legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA).

Key points of this guide

Historic landscapes are important national assets. They provide some of the most special and valued places for public recreation and education. Such landscapes are often vulnerable. The objective of conservation management is to maintain historic landscapes in ways that sustain their significance or values, and where appropriate, recover, reveal or enhance them.

The benefits of improving access go beyond meeting legal requirements. It is an opportunity to attract new audiences, increase the likelihood of repeat visits and improve the quality of experience for all visitors.

Access improvements benefit many people. It is estimated that one person in five is disabled (11.7 million), and that a further 18 million people would benefit from improved access to public spaces. This includes older people, families with young children and people with temporary or health-related impairments (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2003).

Access must be seen in its widest sense, including how easy it is for people to explore the landscape, enjoy it and feel comfortable. Standard solutions rarely work. Access improvements should be planned to respect the special qualities of a particular site.

The DDA requires a reasonable approach to improving access but the meaning of reasonable is yet to be established. Expectations of what is reasonable are likely to evolve as inclusive approaches are more widely used and technology improves. Meeting responsibilities under the DDA relies on changing practices, policies and procedures as well as making practical changes on the ground. Inclusive practices rely on the support and involvement of all staff and volunteers.

What this guide covers

The focus of this guide is on developing approaches that can be sustained over time, for example by making existing practices more inclusive. In the absence of regulatory standards for access to landscape, this guide suggests examples of current good practice.

Part 1 sets the scene. It addresses the challenges associated with improving access in historic landscapes and the need to find creative access solutions. It gives an overview of the DDA, highlights the benefits of an inclusive approach and outlines the importance of developing skills and consulting with people.

Part 2 is designed to help managers and owners plan access improvements. It discusses how visitors find out about, reach, and enjoy a site, and highlights the importance of comfort and enjoyment. Ideas and examples of good practice have been collected from historic landscapes throughout the UK.

The supporting information section provides information on the legislation, with particular emphasis on the DDA. It also identifies sources of further information and advice.

Other guidance

This guide has been produced as a companion to English Heritage's *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* (2004), Historic Scotland's Technical Advice Note *Access to the Built Heritage* (1996), the *Countryside for All* accessibility standards, the Fieldfare Trust's *A Good Practice Guide to Countryside Access for Disabled People Extended CD Edition: 2005*, and the Countryside Agency's new guidance on least restrictive access (*By All Reasonable Means* 2005). It also refers to the *Building Regulations* and the minimum standards set out in *Part M* of these regulations (ODPM 2004).

Guidance on access standards for buildings and the wider countryside can be very useful. However, whilst many issues are similar for both indoor and outdoor environments caution is required when applying such solutions in historic landscapes.

At the time of writing there is limited published guidance on improving access to historic landscapes. The Sensory Trust website includes a review of current publications.

Part 1

Access and conservation: getting the balance right

Historic landscapes provide some of the most popular visitor attractions in the UK. In 2002, more than 57 million visits were made to country parks, historic gardens, historic houses and palaces (VisitBritain 2002). English Heritage's own visitor survey information from 2003 and 2004 shows that approximately 35 per cent are repeat visits.

These landscapes are tangible links to our past. They are important as expressions of landscape design and for their association with individuals, historic events, art and culture, and as wider landscape settings.

Parks, gardens and other designed landscapes of special historic interest may merit inclusion in the national registers for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the *Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* in Scotland. These designations reflect the aesthetic qualities of the landscapes, their rarity, state of survival, and their contribution to the history of landscape design.

Registered and inventory landscapes often represent layers of design from different historic periods as well as the work of important designers. Many other non-registered sites are of local importance and require care when planning changes.

Parks and gardens were designed for pleasure. Their paths, drives, vantage points and features such as pavilions and terraces show how the landscape was originally intended to be used and enjoyed.

Many of these historic landscapes are open to the public, and visitors are important to help them remain viable.

However, few historic landscapes were originally planned to be accessible to disabled people. Therefore, it is not surprising that many parks and gardens present access challenges due to their topography and design features or a combination of both. For example, narrow paths and gateways laid out as part of an intimate private garden may make access difficult for wheelchair users or people with pushchairs when this garden is opened up to the public to visit.

Carefully planned and maintained access improvements can help attract new audiences and improve the visitor experience. The principles of easy access are not new. In 1833, the garden designer, Robert Marnock wrote an article on the making and formation of gravel walks and was mindful of 'the horror' of loose gravel upon those who happened to have 'such things as corns on their feet' (*Gardener's and Forester's Record* 1 1833).

Access relies on more than making physical changes. For example, guided tours bring to life the history of a place and can be tailored to different audiences, such as here at the Great Flat Lode Trail in Cornwall.



The potential benefits of improving access need to be balanced with maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the historic landscape. This requires an understanding of the significance of the historic landscape. For example, its design and features, architecture, archaeology, historic and cultural associations, scientific or wildlife interest and role as an amenity. The aesthetic qualities of the historic landscape are equally important. Part of the property manager's challenge is to appreciate these different and potentially conflicting interests, and find the most appropriate solutions to improving access.

An example of balancing historic significance with access improvement to accommodate a grade change at Well Hall Pleasaunce, London.



Conservation principles for historic landscapes give priority to physical preservation and, where possible, their continued use or function. As much as possible of the original fabric should be retained, and intervention should be minimised.

The components of a historic landscape may be important in their own right or for their collective effect but they may not be of equal significance. Some may even detract from or obscure features of historic significance, some values may be conflicting.

There can be a tension between conserving historic significance and broadening the use and enjoyment of a landscape by visitors. Historical survey and analysis are essential to understand the significance of individual components, optimise values, and plan the sensitive integration of new or upgraded access provision. Interventions and

decisions should be recorded for future interest and original material salvaged.

The diversity of historic landscapes means that access improvements cannot be standard solutions. For example, the benefits of good signage are well understood but sign design needs to be specific to each site.

Access improvements should be in context with the design and qualities of a historic landscape, and major interventions should aim to be valued as features in their own right in the future. Conservation principles do not imply or rule out working in historic styles but do require respect for the significance of the historic landscape. Short-term or temporary solutions should be reversible and should not delay or obstruct permanent, well-designed improvements. Maintenance of a historic landscape is essential. Paths, signs and other access features should be kept in good condition.

New sensory gardens and features like raised borders with scented plants have often been developed to add interest to sites. However, better maintenance of the whole historic landscape can often unlock a far more extensive sensory experience for all visitors. The whole garden should be a sensory experience. With the emphasis on maintenance and repair of historically important parks and gardens, new sensory gardens are unlikely to be appropriate.



© Clay Perry

The Arley Hall, Cheshire, double herbaceous border dates from 1846 and is one of the oldest in the country. By tradition and for aesthetics, such flower borders are often set against lawns, however some wheelchair users will find grass surfaces difficult.

Reconstruction or re-creation of a historic landscape or feature may be considered to add interest or to aid interpretation. Such developments need to be accurate, exact, evidence-based and fully recorded. Straightforward maintenance and repair is nearly always preferable.

The DDA does not override other legislation such as listed building or planning legislation, and the need to obtain appropriate approvals still applies in the case of changes made to improve access.



The historic garden at Audley End, Essex has an 18th-century parterre which was restored in the 1980s. The fountains add to the sensory experience of the garden.

Permissions and consents

Planning permission, listed building or scheduled monument consents may be required if changes affect a registered park or garden of historic interest.

Planning permission

Permission is required for the development of land. This includes most building work involving material alteration to the appearance of a property and most changes of use. Planning permissions are administered by local authorities.

Listed building consent

Historic landscapes often include notable buildings and garden structures. Consent is required for any works of demolition, alteration or extension which affect the character of a listed building, including any associated structures and fittings within its curtilage. Listed building legislation applies to both internal and external changes, irrespective of whether features are identified separately in the list description. The advice of the local planning authority should be sought on the need for consent at an early stage in the design process.

In seeking listed building consent it is important to provide information about the architectural and historical significance of the building and to assess the likely impact of the access proposals in relation to this. The application must demonstrate why any potentially damaging works are

necessary or desirable, and thus establish that a balance between conservation and access has been struck. If a detailed proposal is refused consent it may still be possible to achieve alternative and acceptable design solutions through negotiation and resubmission.

It may also be necessary to apply for listed building consent for temporary access measures, including those made in advance of permanent solutions being adopted, if these will affect the character of the building – the local planning authority will advise on the need for consent. Portable ramps which are not fixed in place and which are removed after use do not require consent.

Scheduled monument consent

Some historic landscapes may be protected as scheduled monuments. Consent is required for any work to a site or building that has been designated as a scheduled monument. The websites for English Heritage, Historic Scotland, Cadw and the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland give information on how to apply for consents.

Designated historic gardens and landscapes

If planning permission is required for any proposed alterations, the local planning authority must consult the Garden History Society in all cases. In addition, English Heritage in the case of English sites registered as Grade I or II*, or Historic Scotland, or Cadw on designated landscapes in Scotland and Wales. The Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland is the statutory agency for natural and built heritage.

It is important in principle that disabled people should have dignified access to and within historic buildings. If it is treated as part of an integrated review of access arrangements for all visitors or users, and a flexible and pragmatic approach taken, it should normally be possible to plan suitable access for disabled people without compromising a building's special interest. Alternative routes or reorganising the use of space may achieve the desired result without the need for damaging alterations.

Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage 1994. *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.*

Access legislation and standards

Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005

This section gives an introduction to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the scope of which is extended by the 2005 Act. Further detail about the DDA and associated Codes of Practice is provided in the supporting information section.

The DDA makes it unlawful for the providers of goods, facilities and services (and certain other bodies) to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of his or her disability. It affects all owners of historic gardens and landscapes that are open to the public, as 'service providers', often also as employers and sometimes as education providers. It applies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The DDA requires that reasonable adjustments should be made where a service provider has a practice, policy or procedure or there is a physical feature that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of the service. What is deemed reasonable will be tested in the courts but the Disability Rights Commission's *Code of Practice* (2002), gives helpful guidance.

Where appropriate, Scheduled Monument, or Listed Building Consent and planning approval must be obtained in advance of improving access by physical changes. However, this does not provide a blanket excuse for avoiding access improvements,

especially those that can be achieved by means that avoid major physical alteration. It is usually possible to reconcile conservation and access interests.

Defining disability

Improving access for disabled people is often assumed to mean providing for wheelchair users, but it is estimated that only five per cent of disabled people are permanent wheelchair users. Their needs are important but must be considered together with other types of disability.

The DDA defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [a person's] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. In addition to wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people, this definition includes those with poor manual co-ordination or little strength; those with sensory impairments, including impaired sight and hearing; and people with impaired memory, concentration or understanding. The DDA 2005 extends this definition to include people with progressive conditions such as multiple sclerosis, HIV or cancer.

Disability spans all age groups, backgrounds and circumstances. It is estimated that one in five people in the UK has a disability (ODPM 2003). This does not include all those people who at any one time experience what may be temporary

'disabilities', for example a broken limb, a heart condition, or general fatigue. The implications of disability are often shared by a group of visitors including families, friends, carers and companions.

Older people may not consider themselves disabled but can experience many of the same barriers through reduced stamina, mobility, sight and hearing. Demographic changes are resulting in a greater proportion of older people in society. Increasingly, retired people have more disposable income and time to spend on leisure. They are already likely to be a significant proportion of visitors to historic landscapes.

Recent disability figures for the UK suggest that there are:

- Over 11.7 million people who are categorised as disabled
- Over 2 million have a visual impairment
- 8 million people suffer from some form of hearing loss
- 1 million people have a form of learning difficulty
- Over 7 million people have literacy problems.'

Cabinet Office 2002. *Illustrated Handbook for Web Management Teams*
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Standards for access and *Part M*

The DDA does not include standards for access. *Approved Document Part M: Access to and Use of Buildings* (ODPM 2004) of the *Building Regulations* (ODPM 2002) is the only set of regulatory standards to address accessible design. It was updated to include the BS 8300 (BSI 2001) standards. The updated version advocates an inclusive approach to 'design to accommodate the needs of all people'. BS 8300 has also been updated.

Part M applies primarily to buildings but includes the approaches to them from edge of site, car parks and setting-down points.

Part M is a useful reference point for designers, owners and managers, even when building regulations do not apply. It provides guidance on inclusive design principles and a wide range of specific issues including car parking, paths, ramps, gradients, steps, information, toilets and other facilities.

However, the following points need to be considered:

- *Part M* provides minimum standards and these serve as baselines only
- The standards are building-related and may not be appropriate for all landscape situations
- There may be constraints that prevent a historic designed landscape from meeting the standards, and inclusive solutions may be achieved more effectively through other means

A copy of *Approved Document Part M* (2004) can be downloaded from the ODPM website. Similar standards for access can be found in the *Building (Scotland) Regulations* (2004) on the Scottish Building Standards Agency website.

Access statement

The access statement is an important addition to the updated *Part M*. Essentially the access statement is a way of demonstrating that every effort has been made to provide an inclusive environment and that the property manager is not simply using the site and its layout to justify lower standards of access provision. It is a useful document for owners and managers to create, even when building regulations do not apply. *Part M* recognises that access solutions may vary from site to site, and that there may be other, equally satisfactory ways of meeting the requirements.

An access statement should be a working record of how approaches and applications were planned, the reasons why decisions were made, the constraints imposed by the existing design, who was consulted and what guidance was used. Further detail is given on page 26.

Accessible sites allow disabled and non-disabled visitors to enjoy the experience together. Access provision that separates people should be avoided whenever possible.



Considering reasonable adjustments

The DRC *Code of Practice* (DRC 2002) that covers access, facilities and services explains the statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments as comprising of a series of duties falling into three main areas:

- 1 Change practices, policies and procedures
- 2 Provide auxiliary aids and services
- 3 Overcome a physical feature by removing the feature, or altering it, or avoiding it, or providing services by alternative methods

All of these need to be considered and judged in terms of what would form a reasonable approach to balancing historic significance and access requirements.

It is often assumed that access improvements involve physical changes. This is not always the case. Some of the most effective improvements come from quite simple, low-cost changes to interpretation, the way things are done, and how visitors are looked after. This is particularly important for landscapes of high historic significance with more limited options for physical change.

An inclusive approach

An inclusive approach recognises everyone as a potential visitor. The challenge is to ensure that each visitor has an equally satisfying experience.

An inclusive environment is one that can be used by everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability or background. It results from a creative approach to design and management that embraces diversity and seeks solutions to benefit as many people as possible. This approach will help owners and managers improve access for the widest range of visitors, staff and volunteers.

Traditional approaches to improving access have tended to segregate disabled people. Even though access may be improved, disabled visitors can feel isolated and patronised. For example, disabled people may have to use a separate entrance to their favourite garden, or follow an alternative route around a site that misses the most popular attraction.

A common example of segregation is the idea of a sensory garden designed specifically for visually impaired visitors. An inclusive approach recognises that the sensory qualities of a landscape are appreciated by all visitors. The best approach is to draw out the full sensory experiences throughout the site.

Accommodating the diverse needs of disabled people will also address issues of age, gender and background as long as disability is seen in its broadest sense. For example, improving a path surface will



benefit people with pushchairs as well as older people and wheelchair users. Clearer signage will help people with dyslexia as well as those with visual impairments.

An inclusive approach ensures that all visitors feel included.

It is rarely possible to do everything for everyone. The point is to create a balance so that every visitor is able to enjoy the experience. Providing choice is important. For example, if a property offers audio tours, an equivalent experience should be provided for hearing-impaired visitors through written materials or signage.

Simply following design specifications will not result in inclusive sites and facilities. Specifications are a starting point, but common sense and a creative approach are required to find solutions that work best within a historic landscape.

Inclusive design is an evolving approach that changes in response to expectations and new techniques as well as legislation. It relates to how access improvements are planned, as well as the end results. An inclusive approach is based on the set of principles below.

Principles of an inclusive historic landscape

Easy to use

This principle relates to how easy it is for people to get to and around a historic designed landscape, and to use its facilities. The main issues usually concern transport, entrances, paths, toilets, seating and information. Improvements may involve physical adaptation such as re-laying uneven paving or providing an alternative, shorter route around a site. Maintenance can make a big difference, for example keeping paths clear of overhanging plants or repairing eroded path surfaces. Staff and volunteers can provide valuable support as guides or assistants.

Comfortable

Comfort relies on a network of facilities including toilets, food, help points and seating. Comfort is important for all visitors, particularly those who tire easily and need to rest more often. Providing seating and shelter enables older or disabled people to explore a longer historic route or to pause to absorb information. Small details can make a big impact, for example water provided for assistance dogs.

Offers choice

This is one of the most important aspects of an inclusive landscape. It ensures that visitors can decide how they want to use and enjoy it. For example, some people will visit independently, others with family, friends or as part of a group. It is important to provide for all of these. Clear information will help people make choices about when and what to visit.

Safe

Safety is a fundamental issue. Health and safety policies and practices must address the needs of all visitors, staff and volunteers. Feedback from visitors, front-line staff and volunteers will help identify problems that might be overlooked by routine checks. Issues include emergency evacuation procedures, and how these are communicated to people with different disabilities. Safety checks should take account of temporary work and how it might impact on access.

Embraces diversity

An inclusive approach sees diversity as an opportunity to find creative design and management solutions. It relies on adopting positive approaches in all aspects of design and management. This includes staff and volunteer recruitment, events management, landscape design and management, education programmes and ongoing maintenance.

Benefits of an inclusive approach

Visitor satisfaction

- Better quality of experience for all visitors

Visitor numbers

- Increased visitor numbers from new audiences and increased repeat visits

Staff and volunteer development

- Improved service delivery and greater staff satisfaction

Positive image

- Good reputation associated with making efforts to improve access

Cost versus benefit

- More effective use of resources and less wastage from temporary measures

Employment

- Greater diversity of people employed as staff and volunteers

Balance

- Conservation of historic significance is balanced with improved access provision.



Broad, well-maintained paths provide good access through the quarry gardens of Belsay Hall, Northumberland. Ease of access between garden areas also needs to be considered.

Developing skills

Disability awareness training is designed to increase understanding of disability and access issues. Training should be ongoing, linked with other skills development, and provided for all staff and volunteers. Typically, organisations invest in training operational staff, but overlook the importance of extending this to all members of the organisation, including those staff who work behind the scenes and senior staff and board members.



Volunteers help a group of visitors negotiate barriers designed to prevent vehicular access on the Camel Trail in Cornwall.

Some of the best ideas for improving access, especially concerning operational practices, come from front-line staff. Arranging visits to other sites is useful to share ideas and experiences with others, and to see examples of good practice. This can help staff see the benefits of developing inclusive practices, and how access improvements can be made in keeping with the character and special qualities of a historic landscape.

Ideally, a training programme will include some sessions focused on specific disabilities such as hearing or visual impairments, as well as general awareness. Some of the most effective training is gained by working and consulting with disabled people. Trainers need to have an insight into historic property conservation and management, and the appropriateness of different options to enhance accessibility.

Visitors judge an organisation or site on staff attitude and the way things are done, as well as on what the place has to offer. Effective change therefore relies on developing skills and understanding amongst staff. It is crucial that everyone in the property team understands that they have a part to play in improving access, and that the organisation or property manager supports and encourages this sense of shared responsibility. Nominating a champion for access issues can help this process, but they must have sufficient seniority and the support of colleagues at all levels of the organisation.

Consulting with people

It is important to involve disabled people as early as possible when planning access improvements. Consultation should also include people who do not visit a place in order to find out why. Visitors and visitor-operations staff also need to be involved in the identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of the historic landscape in order to participate in making decisions about changes to improve access. This ensures that the needs and views of different people and the site and its conservators are considered at a stage when there is greatest scope for addressing implications.

Many disabled people are used to finding creative ways of overcoming barriers in their day-to-day lives. Their perspectives can be invaluable in helping to identify the most practical ways of overcoming access barriers in a landscape.

When planning consultation, it is useful to identify local communities and groups that might get involved, such as disability groups, retirement communities, clubs, conservation groups, schools and training centres.

Most people will respect the fact that efforts are being made and will welcome the opportunity for their ideas and views to be sought. Their involvement will demonstrate a positive commitment to improving access, and this can help reassure visitors who may feel frustrated with current access difficulties.



An inclusive approach involves as many different people as possible. Asking people what they think about a place will help identify priorities for improving access. This group took part in a consultation day for the North Downs Way Lost Landscapes project in Kent.

Consultation must not be a token effort to involve people. One of the most common criticisms from people who have given time to share their views is that they never heard any news of what happened as a result of their contribution. Ongoing contact with people is important to ensure they feel their input was valued and to review subsequent ideas and changes.

When discussing a site it is important to address the quality of experience it offers as well as its barriers. This will give a more complete picture of the site and show how best to make its sensory experiences accessible. It should also help to identify which barriers should be tackled first.



Consultation should be convenient and accessible so that people can participate. This includes accessible venues, appropriate times and transport if needed. Any supporting documents and information should be accessible.

Effective consultation relies on establishing clear parameters, including the following:

- Parts of the landscape with special historic significance which have limited options for change
- Barriers with no historic significance that could be changed
- The level of resources available to support new ideas and improvements
- Realistic estimates of the cost of capital works
- Providing adequate information for consultees to reach informed decisions
- Allowing sufficient opportunity for consultees to respond
- Taking into account consultees' advice in final decisions

Giving a clear picture at the outset will encourage more appropriate suggestions, and will help avoid the need to explain at a later stage why some ideas could not be taken into account. Professional input can provide specialist insights on design and management options, explain the historic significance of a site and interpret the implications of different suggestions.

Access at Witley Court Project

English Heritage invited groups of disabled people to help its Witley Court, Worcestershire, team understand the property's physical and intellectual access barriers and to discuss ideas about how access could be improved.

Witley Court is an important Grade II* registered landscape park and formal mid-19th-century garden. The French and Italian gardens designed by the prestigious William Andrews Nesfield (1794–1881) were considered to be among the most magnificent in England. The Court, its gardens, and associated buildings are also a Scheduled Monument. Within this group, the house, its link to the church and the baroque church are also Grade I listed buildings, and further buildings and features are listed Grade II* and Grade II.

In 2004, 58,000 people visited Witley Court. The majority are in the 45–54 group but 27 per cent are retired. The visitors are mostly day-trippers who travel between 5 and 20 miles to a property.

Witley Court is a challenging site for balancing conservation with access needs as there is a variety of path surfaces through the woodland and gardens. There are also steps, terraces, lawns and parterres; and the house is only accessible via steps.

The volunteers who took part in the *Access at Witley Court* project consultation included people with hearing and visual impairments, learning disabilities and wheelchair users. They offered many practical and inexpensive recommendations on how access and the 'comfort factor' of the site might be improved for all visitors.

The clearest message from the consultation was that many disabled visitors appreciate being given clear pre-visit and welcome information in different formats so they can plan ahead, make choices and decisions independently. Information should include details of the site layout and facilities available as well as the historical significance of the landscape.

Consultation continues with the groups who took part in the project as recommendations are followed up and new site presentation and interpretation is developed.



© Drew Bennetick



Volunteers at Witley Court (Worcestershire) discussing how to improve access and appraising the audio guide.

Part 2

Planning for better access

Good access provision is the result of a property team's commitment to improving access and enjoyment for all visitors to their historic landscapes. Property managing organisations should develop policies and working practices that include the needs of disabled people in all aspects of their business. The ultimate aim is to make this inclusive approach integral to everything the organisation does.

Planning ensures that improvements bring the greatest benefits to the visitor experience, while respecting the special qualities of the historic landscape. Most designed landscapes have limited capital and revenue budgets, and often limited staff resources. Planning helps ensure that these are used to best effect.

The diagram on pages 24 and 25 shows how to use and relate access planning tools like strategies, audits and plans, and historic environment conservation management plans. Plans will vary according to the scale and complexity of a garden or landscape, but the principles remain the same.

There are risks in failing to address historic significance when planning access improvements. The view that an entire landscape must be preserved may overlook features with little historic significance that could be improved aesthetically as well



as providing greater accessibility. Conversely, an approach that opens up all areas to change can result in irreparable damage to the historic character and fabric of a landscape. There may be opportunities to reinstate routes that are historically appropriate, for example old carriage drives to give vehicular access.

Access may also rely on the quality of service provided by external agencies, for example contractors like caterers, grounds maintenance teams, and event organisers. It is important that such agencies are aware of the quality of service they are expected to deliver. The duties introduced by the DDA and the property's access policies and standards will therefore need to be included in briefs and specifications.

Involving people as early as possible in the consultation process, such as this planning day for the grounds of Bethlem Royal Hospital, London, can lead to new ways of thinking about access issues, and produce good ideas for tackling barriers and improving the experience for visitors.

Access strategy

The access strategy is a top-level document that sets out the organisation's access policy and the ways in which it will put the policy into practice. The access strategy needs to include:

- A commitment to develop and sustain inclusive practices
- How the document links to other plans and strategies, such as a conservation management plan and policies
- Plans for preparing an access audit and access plan, and related costs
- Aims and targets for improving access to services and facilities, together with timescales, priorities, inclusive design implications and budgets
- Involvement of disabled people in the development and ongoing review of the access strategy
- How the access strategy will be monitored and reviewed and who will be responsible

Improving access must be seen as an ongoing process, not a one-off exercise. The access strategy and planning process encourages continuous improvements.

Access audit

Being aware of the barriers to access on a site is an essential early step in planning access improvements. An access audit is a useful tool that identifies and records existing barriers. It should address the requirements of the whole range of

disabilities. Many audits focus on physical access. A thorough audit should also include sensory and intellectual barriers, and whether disabled people have been involved in access planning for the site.

The audit should follow the journey around a garden or landscape, starting from information available to plan a visit, the arrival areas, through the choice of walks, gardens and features, services and facilities available on site like guided tours, interpretation, cafés and toilets, and finishing with the exit route.

Access audits are usually commissioned from an independent expert. The audit brief needs to identify the full range of issues to be included, for example if there are features of special historic significance or areas that present particular access difficulties. A clearer brief will result in a more useful audit. It is important to select an access auditor with experience of assessing historic sites. The National Register of Access Consultants lists auditors with a wide range of specialist skills. Access and training organisations offer courses to develop audit skills and qualifications.

Conservation management plan

Planning for managing, restoring or developing historic landscapes is well established. The key to planning change is an authoritative knowledge of the landscape's development and its significance in all senses – historical, archaeological, cultural, ecological, character and its role as an amenity.



Plans need to take account of the relationship between a landscape and its associated buildings. There are often barriers to access associated with narrow openings. This new visitor centre at Trebah Gardens, Cornwall, has created a wide, level entrance to invite people into the garden.

Conservation management plans are used to appraise what matters and why, and to determine how to manage, maintain, present and use the historic landscape in an ever-changing environment. Access strategies will be an important component of conservation management plans for sites open to visitors. Plans identify opportunities and constraints and establish policies and programmes of work for conservation and, where relevant, for opening up the site for public enjoyment.

The term 'conservation management plan' reflects the two-stage process of developing a plan.

The conservation assessment includes:

- A description of the historic landscape and all its features
- An analysis of how the historic landscape has changed over time and how it is currently used
- An assessment of its significance
- A review of issues and opportunities including access
- Policies for conservation management including access

The management part includes:

- Management and maintenance prescriptions including access improvements
- Budgets and work programming, including access works
- Monitoring and review processes

The conservation assessment involves researching a site's history, its historic design, how it has changed over time and its current management and uses. It also addresses how and why visitors value the site and any gaps in knowledge about it. It may be necessary to commission additional specialist reports from experts such as landscape historians, archaeologists, or ecologists. Much of the research collated for conservation management will also be useful for the access plan. The site's history and archaeology can provide information for access projects such as identifying new routes and designing interpretation materials.

Historic landscapes are vulnerable. The conservation plan should highlight any potential threats arising from the current use or management of the landscape, for example pressure from high visitor numbers or deterioration of historic features like steps and terraces from lack of repair.

Access plan

Access plans are recommended as tools to programme access improvements. An access plan is based on the access strategy and brings together the findings from the access audit and the conservation management plan. It identifies work required and informs the site's overall plans for the short, medium and long term. The access plan needs to identify timescales and who is responsible for delivering each agreed action point. Access plans can also help show how DDA duties are being addressed.

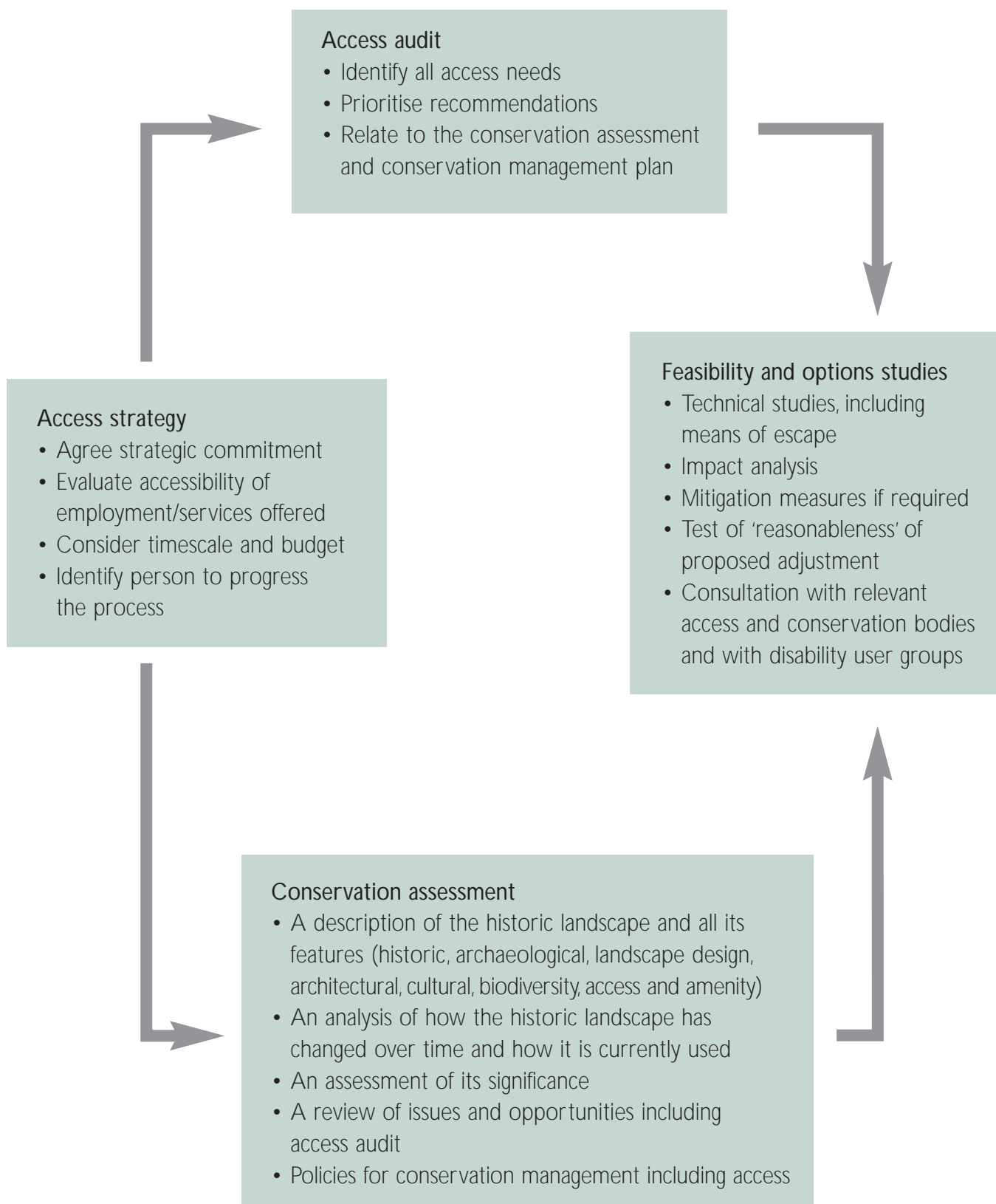
For historic gardens and landscapes the access plan should include:

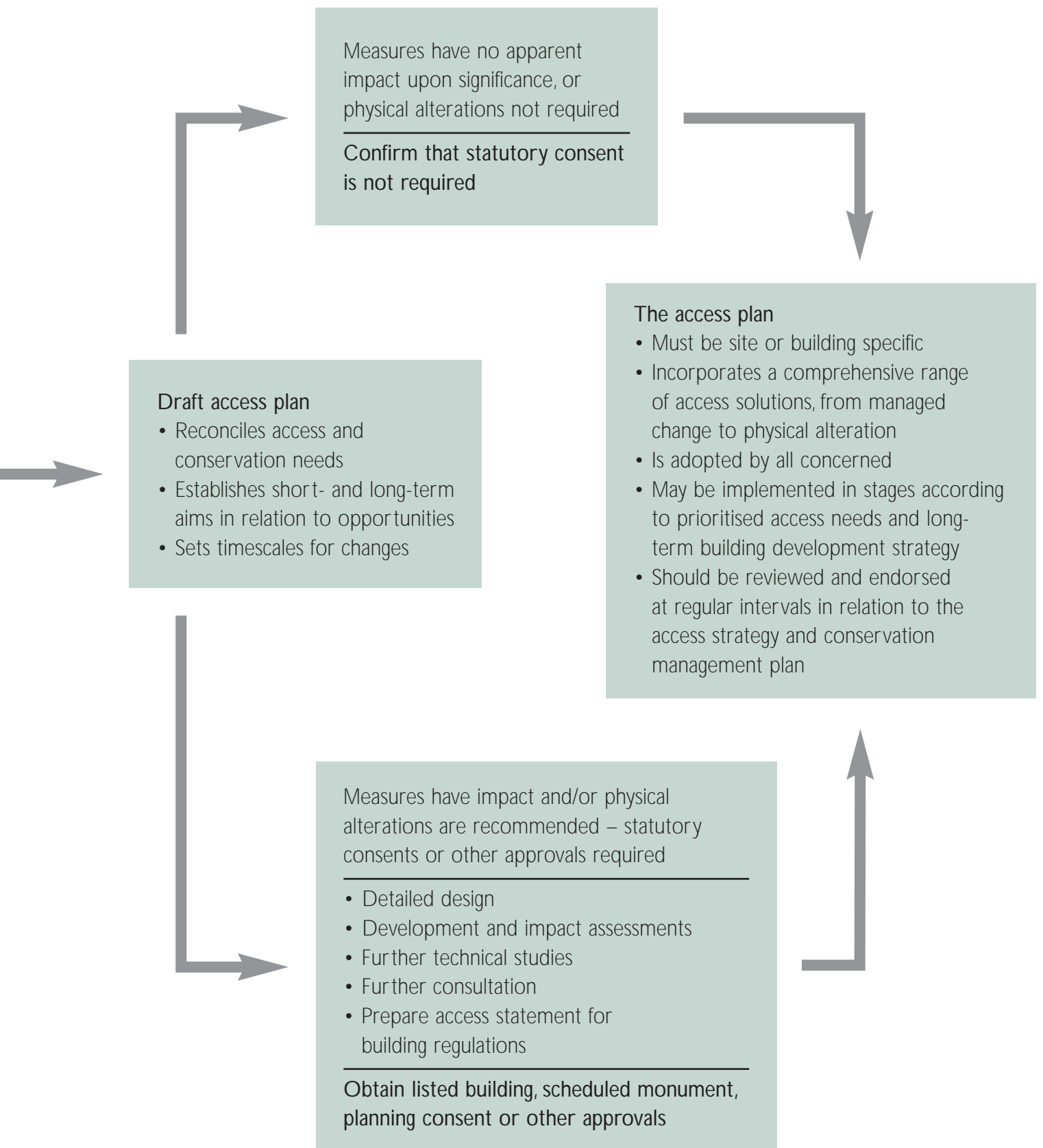
- A summary of the different options and their implications for access improvement, conservation of historic significance, and quality of visitor experience
- Plans for providing alternative services during building works
- Cost projections and plans to secure the necessary funding
- Priorities for implementation and plans to phase the work
- An access audit and a list of suggested improvements

Service providers are more likely to be able to comply with their duty to make adjustments in relation to physical features if they arrange for an access audit of their premises to be conducted and draw up an access plan or strategy. Acting on the results of such an evaluation may reduce the likelihood of legal claims against the service provider.

DRC 2002. *Code of Practice: Rights to Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises*

The access planning process





Supporting the process

Access statements

An access statement should record progress and the decisions made in relation to the access plan. It should explain how and why these decisions have been made, and how they have been influenced by the context of the site and advice from other parties. It is valuable for guiding future decisions, and communicating approaches both internally and externally.

The development of an access statement is recommended in *Approved Document Part M* (see page 11). Even when there are no requirements relating to planning or building regulations, this is a useful document to produce. An access statement should be prepared at the start of any project and updated throughout all stages of the work.

The Disability Rights Commission website includes a guide on access statements for planning, designing and managing buildings and spaces. Templates for producing access statements can be downloaded from the Sensory Trust website.

Funding

At the time of writing there is no funding source specifically to support access improvements for historic landscapes. Where access work is eligible as part of a bigger grant scheme, the funding organisation is likely to require an access strategy, audit and plan, together with a conservation management plan for a historic landscape. All funders are likely to require an inclusive approach to planned improvements.

Some local authorities offer access grants. Eligible work may include provision of ramps, accessible toilet facilities and upgrading of signage. The local authority access officer or volunteer bureau will be able to advise on funding sources. Some private grant-making trusts will also help with the costs of access improvements. The Directory of Social Change produces useful reference guides on sources of grants.

Organisations like the National Trust have fulltime access advisors to support staff, volunteers and properties. The Historic Houses Association offers its members the services of an advisor to undertake audits and advise on access provision for disabled visitors and employees. The access advisor can also define access limitations and propose ways of overcoming them.

There are no specific funds available from English Heritage, Historic Scotland or the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for access improvements. HLF currently funds physical access improvements to historic landscapes or sites if the improvements are part of a wider project and meet other HLF criteria. Since 1994 HLF has granted £3.3 billion to 16,000 awards for projects which have increased access to heritage for disabled people. The environmental stewardship scheme run by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) offers grants towards capital costs of access features such as the upgrading of path surfaces. Historic environment protection is also one of the scheme's objectives and there are options within

Barriers to access

this for historic landscapes. The Northern Ireland Environment and Heritage Service do make grant-aid available for access routes of significant length within rural historic landscapes, where entry is free. The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund includes a land- and community-based grant scheme. This scheme supports projects that reduce the effects of land-based aggregate extraction on access, biodiversity, communities, geodiversity, informal recreation and landscapes, and the scheme can sometimes help with access improvements.

Barriers prevent or dissuade disabled people from visiting, enjoying or learning about a site. They are diverse and some are more obvious than others. The most familiar are physical constraints such as steps, slopes, uneven or loose surfaces and narrow paths. Other barriers, such as a lack of seating where people can rest, or inaccessible information, are often overlooked. Some barriers work together, for example loose gravel will be more difficult on a slope.

A barrier may be an important historic feature, or an essential part of a landscape's character. Alternatively, it may be a more recent feature of no historic significance. This must be clarified so that the appropriate solutions can be found. There is usually greater freedom to remove or alter barriers if they do not have high historic significance. In other cases, it may be necessary to consider how to provide an equivalent experience by alternative means.



This sign at Tintern Abbey alerts visitors to the presence of a trip hazard. This clear pictorial sign can be seen by many people with visual impairments and understood by many with learning disabilities.

Identifying barriers

Identifying the barriers in a historic landscape is an essential early step in planning improvements.

Disabled people are the best informed on what is a barrier to them and barriers will affect people in different ways. Sometimes a barrier to one person may be a positive feature to another. For example, steps may be a barrier to wheelchair users, but can be easier than ramps for some older visitors and other semi-ambulant people to negotiate. The aim is to achieve compromise and the best way is to involve a representative mix of disabled people in identifying barriers and possible solutions. Contacts can be found through the local authority access officer, or through a local disability group or organisation.

When reviewing barriers, people should be encouraged to identify potential solutions as well as simply listing problems, as this will help to balance the ideal with the achievable. It is important to tell people about existing constraints, such as limited budgets, and to highlight the special qualities of a site.

Access barriers beyond a site must be included in any full assessment. For instance, the decision to visit relies on adequate information about access. Similarly, a lack of accessible transport will be a barrier to some people.

Renovation work can create temporary barriers to access. Plans for renovations or other building work must include solutions to any access barriers caused by work in progress.

Work at Trafalgar Square, London, has resulted in improved access. Steps now have double-sided handrails for left or right-handed people, tactile warnings and contrasting step nosings.



Seasonal changes or weather conditions can lead to temporary barriers such as muddy or icy paths. It is important that visitors are informed of any temporary barriers that cannot be removed.

Identifying barriers must be an ongoing process. Landscapes change with time, signs deteriorate, paths become worn and gates, hinges and latches become difficult to open. Adding obstacles such as more tables, extra display stands, or making use of spaces for storage, can cause difficulties for wheelchair users or visitors with impaired vision.

The way that visitors use a place may change too. For example, increasing numbers of older and disabled people use self-drive vehicles, also known as buggies or scooters, to visit historic sites. These vehicles have transformed mobility for many people and have made it possible for them to experience more challenging parts of the landscape, such as meadows, gravel paths and long-distance routes. The use of these vehicles has not been fully recognised in much of the existing design guidance, which focuses on wheelchair use. Paths, turning circles, gate widths and toilets designed for wheelchair users may not be adequate for self-drive vehicles.



If plants were positioned nearer the railings, this would provide added sensory experiences.



Overgrown plants and widened joints may add character but can result in hazards or inconvenience for visitors.

Examples of barriers

Organisational

- Lack of staff or volunteers to support sites
- Negative or uninformed staff attitudes
- Lack of support for access improvements from owners or managers

Physical

- Lack of accessible transport to or around a site
- Lack of accessible signage, information, education and interpretation materials
- Narrow paths and entrances, loose or uneven path surfaces, steep slopes and long distances
- Steps, plinths, kerbs or raised edges and stiles
- Lack of seating and shelter
- Deterioration of routes, signs, facilities and features through lack of repair
- Lack of accessible toilets, baby feeding and baby and adult changing facilities

Intellectual

- Complex information
- Information does not cater for different learning styles
- Text-only information

Sensory

- Limited options to touch features
- Poor acoustics
- Visitors are not aware of sensory highlights
- Absence of visual and tactile warnings

Social and cultural

- Publicity does not promote access
- Inaccessible website
- Lack of information shared with local community
- Lack of opportunities for volunteering or friends groups

Financial

- Entrance fees
- Charges for activities like guided tours and events
- Cost of goods in café or shop
- Cost of travelling to and from a site
- Expenses for volunteers

Examples of solutions

Organisational

Training to improve skills and attitudes of staff and volunteers
 User-testing sessions involve people of different ages, genders and with a range of disabilities
 Develop an access strategy and appoint an access champion

Physical

Links with transport companies to improve transport
 Clear information about key facilities and features, for example accessible parking and toilets, opening times, entrance fees and safety notices
 Signage to help visitors find their way around
 Education programmes have accessible venues and materials
 Regular maintenance for path surfaces, signs, trimming back overhanging vegetation and so on
 Uneven paving relaid or repointed
 Where appropriate, paths are widened, passing places are provided or alternative routes are created
 Accessible toilets, baby feeding and baby and adult changing facilities are provided
 Provision of drinking fountains and picnic locations
 Links with community transport organisations

Intellectual

Information follows 'easy-to-read' guidelines and is accompanied by pictures
 Information is offered in different formats
 Guided tours and education programmes are designed to accommodate different needs

Sensory

Hearing loops are installed at ticket desks, information points and meeting areas
 Portable hearing loops are available for guides and education workers
 Touch tours focus on tactile exploration for visually impaired visitors
 Where appropriate, visitors are able to touch sculptures and features of tactile interest
 Areas and features with high sensory interest are located on an accessible route
 Tactile indicators are provided at the approach to hazards, and step nosings are highlighted

Social and cultural

Publicity is distributed through local disability networks and groups
 Links are made with the local community, for example local schools, disability groups, retirement communities and healthy walking initiatives
 Accessible pre-visit information informs people about what they can expect
 Surveys help identify who the missing visitors are and the reasons why
 User-consultation programmes target groups that are currently under-represented

Financial

Discounted entrance fees and free admission for companions
 Some activities are provided free
 Adequate compensation of expenses for volunteers and focus groups

The technique of sensory mapping has been developed by the Sensory Trust to help people identify what appeals to their senses. This group of visually impaired visitors used it to find areas of sensory experience that could be made more accessible.



Companion Cycling is a volunteer scheme in Bushy Park, London. It opens up more active use of the park to disabled people.



Identifying the most popular viewing or gathering points helps plan accessible routes, and location of seating.



Everyone uses their senses to fully engage with and enjoy a garden or landscape. Being aware of existing sensory opportunities is the first step in creating richer experiences for all visitors.



Visitor experience

Making a place physically accessible does not automatically mean that people will want to spend time in it. Considering the quality of experience for all visitors is equally important.

Working with disabled people will help identify the highlights of a site and which should be priorities for access improvement. It is important to include people whose disabilities are often overlooked, for example those with hearing impairment, learning disabilities and mental illness. It is also important to consider the quality of experience for carers and companions.

Access to the broadest range of experiences on offer is important. Access improvements are often based on a perception of disabled people as observers rather than active participants. This can overlook the benefits of opening up opportunities for disabled people to engage in activities like volunteer or education programmes. It is useful to review the following:

- Existing sensory qualities and opportunities to enhance them
- Identification of principal features
- Opportunities to enhance visitors' understanding and appreciation through interpretation
- Shelter and seating
- Areas that provide quiet space, as well as more social areas

© Drew Bennelick

Visitor surveys

Discovering what a site offers visitors lies in establishing who uses the space, how they use it and why. Links with the past may provide the main motivation for a visit to a historic landscape. Equally, many sites are valued for their beauty and the recreational facilities they provide.

Visitor surveys can help build a picture of users and patterns of use. These should be undertaken on a regular basis so that the impact of any changes can be assessed.

It is equally important to consider the people that are not using a place and the reasons why. It is advisable to look at these issues throughout the sequence of a typical visit: from the initial decision to visit, to getting there and away, and through the experience on site.

Decision to visit

Lack of information is one of the most significant barriers to access. A site may have invested considerable money and effort in access improvements, but these will have limited effect if potential visitors do not know about them.

Clear, accessible information allows people to make informed decisions on whether to visit and what to do when they are there. Pre-visit information is the first link in the chain of events that make up a visit. There are two aspects to consider: the nature of the information, and how it is delivered.

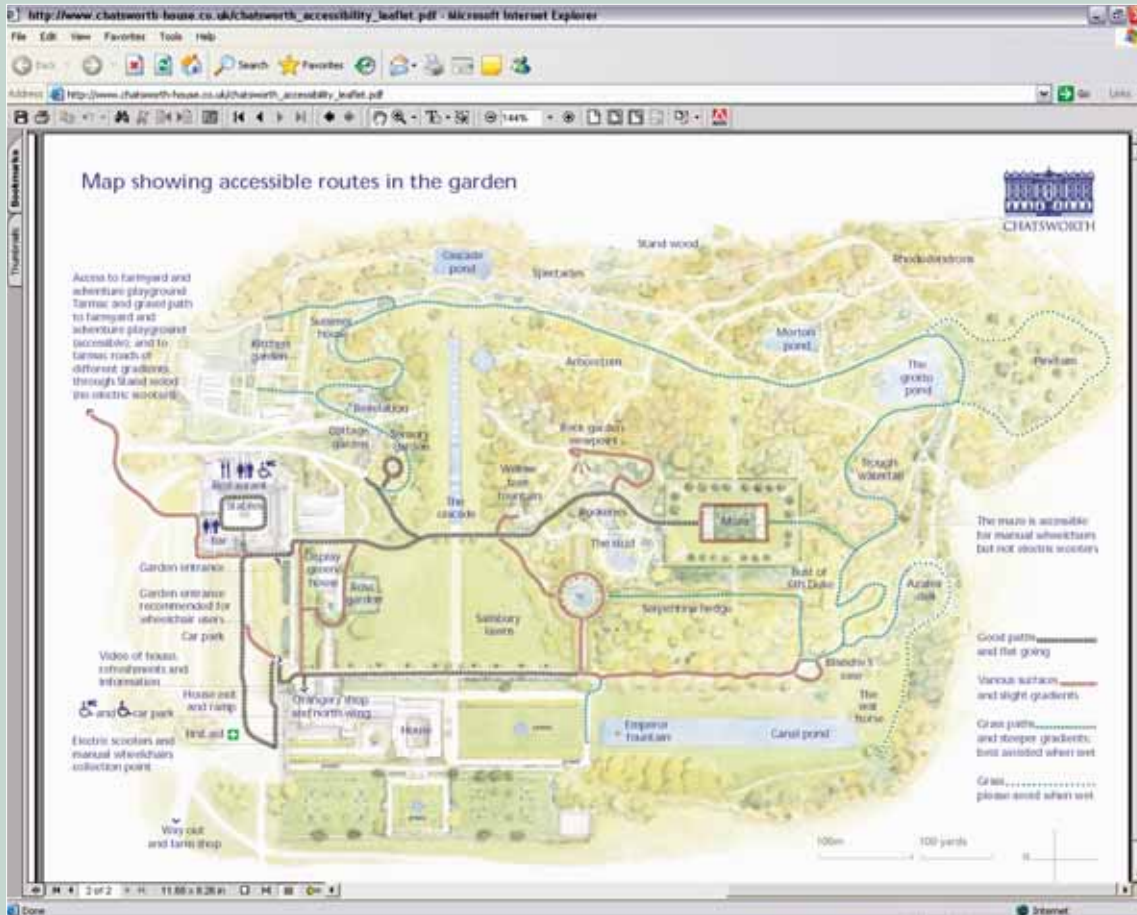


Ticketing and reception staff are ideally placed to record the number and range of visitors. Even an informal approach can help assess the impact of access improvements.

Information should be clear and concise. It should describe the location and accessibility of facilities such as toilets and cafés, as well as principal features of interest.

Information should be objective to take into account all levels of use. For instance, a path described as 'unsuitable for wheelchairs' may not be a problem for a wheelchair user with a high degree of fitness. It is better to describe the path objectively to allow each user to decide for themselves, for example: 'Path: maximum gradient 1 in 12. Loose gravel surface'. A diagram might also be useful to help inform people who are not familiar with gradients.

Information for visitors



Chatsworth House provides an information leaflet and access map on its website www.chatsworth-house.co.uk to outline the most accessible routes and paths, as well as the location of important facilities.

Surfaced and grass paths are shown on the map.

A revised map will have improved tonal contrast and more information on gradients and the location of seating and shelter.

This map is also available at Chatsworth.

© Chilterns Conservation Board



The Chilterns Conservation Board website www.chilternsaonb.org includes walks suitable for people with impaired mobility, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs. One of the walks is at the National Trust's Ashridge Estate and includes the Duke of Bridgewater monument, erected in 1832, and views of Ivinghoe Beacon – scheduled hillfort monument. The map includes information on the direction and maximum gradients of slopes, path surfaces, accessible toilets, accessible parking and seating.

The way information is delivered must also be accessible. It is important to include access information in general publicity materials, such as leaflets, websites and guides. It is also useful to provide the most important, critical and detailed information on access and facilities for disabled people in appropriate alternative formats, such as Braille, audio and large print. These alternative formats should be promoted in information provided for all visitors.

Designing general information with larger font sizes, clearer graphics and clear text layout that is easy to read can minimise the demand for large print versions. It will also make this information more accessible to everyone, including visitors for whom English is a second language. Some sites may find it appropriate to produce their main information in other languages too.

The internet is a good place to provide information since many disabled people use it to plan visits. Text can be downloaded and processed in the way that people find most convenient, for example using screen-reading software, or printing it out in large print. It is a good idea to provide pre-visit material as plain text files online. Websites should conform to accessibility standards set by the Web Accessibility Initiative (see page 64) and tested by disabled people.

Bolton Abbey

Bolton Abbey is a 12,500-hectare moorland estate in the Yorkshire Dales with a 12th-century Augustinian priory church. Previous visitors have included Turner, Landseer and Wordsworth.



© Bolton Abbey Estate

Bolton Abbey has a holistic approach to providing access for disabled visitors. This includes providing good quality physical access, information services and interpretation. Consultation with disabled people is integral to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment. The needs of people with sensory impairments have been considered in consultation with Henshaw's College for visually impaired, and otherwise disabled students and other groups in Yorkshire.

To enable disabled people to make an informed choice about whether paths and trails meet their individual needs, footpaths are graded, ranging from those that are barrier free to paths that meet *Countryside for All* standards. The Bolton Abbey leaflet provides useful access information including distances and descriptions of the terrain and barriers such as steps and stiles. The 850m Cumberland Trail, for example, is designed to appeal to all visitors and offers interpretation of the woodland environment. Access information, including the outdoor scooter and wheelchair loan scheme for disabled visitors, is available on the estate's website.

Bolton Abbey is very conscious of the benefits of working with the disabled community, and continues to develop, monitor and review its services.

Distribution of pre-visit information is another issue to consider. Leaflets in hotels will be found by disabled people only if those hotels are themselves accessible. It is important to think of alternative distribution points such as surgeries and community halls, as well as distribution via access and disability groups and organisations.

Pre-visit information should let disabled people know they are welcome and will be able to enjoy their visit. Quite subtle details can make a difference. For example, including disabled and older people in promotional pictures can help show that they would be welcome.

Getting there and home

A person's decision to visit will be influenced by how easy it is to get there and back again. Some people rely on public transport, for example people with visual impairments. Others who depend on cars may include people with limited mobility, wheelchair users and older people. The most accessible sites are usually those that offer different travel options.

The use of self-drive buggies poses new access issues for historic landscapes, for example path wear and visitor safety. More visitors are using these vehicles to travel to or around a site and any access plans must consider their potential value and impact.



Public transport provision is an important factor to consider when planning access improvements. There may be opportunities to liaise with transport providers on issues like timetables, routes and even the type of transport provided. The DDA has implications for providers of public transport, some of whom have already introduced 'easy-access' buses and taxis.

Adequate car parking is a major challenge for many historic landscapes, especially for small gardens and sites with large visitor numbers. The most accessible option is to locate car parking near the main pedestrian entrance, but this may not be acceptable if it impacts on the historic setting and fabric. If car parks are located some distance from the main entrance there are other measures that can help people with limited mobility or stamina – for example, providing on-site transport or allowing cars to pick up and drop off passengers close to the entrance.

Car parking spaces designated for disabled people should be clearly marked and signposted. It is useful to provide at least one designated space near the main pedestrian entrance, or near other key locations that are a long way from the car park. It is important to consider the design of associated features, for example hard surfaces, kerbs, and pedestrian routes to and from the car park. *Part M* provides guidance on the design of these features.



Parking reserved for disabled visitors at a Kirkstone Pass viewpoint. The Lake District has been nominated for World Heritage Site status.



The Causeway coaster accessible bus service in Northern Ireland is the result of a site owner working with a local transport company to provide easy access.



Parking reserved for disabled people next to the entrance at Abbotsbury Gardens in Dorset. Ideally, parking bays should be laid out following guidance in *Part M*.

Getting there and home – examples of good practice

- Create links with providers of local community transport or public transport
- Publicise the availability of easy-access transport
- Produce bus timetables and taxi phone numbers in accessible formats
- Provide drop-off and pick-up points near the main pedestrian entrance, with seating and shelter
- Provide clear, accessible signs to indicate the location of easy-access parking, pick-up and drop-off points, bus stops and cycle racks
- Allocate four to six per cent of car parking spaces for disabled people
- Designate parking spaces for disabled people following *Part M* recommendations
- Clearly sign the pedestrian route from the car park to the main entrance, and to pick-up points for public transport
- Provide seating along the route to and from the car park
- Make available wheelchairs or self-drive vehicles for loan and locate them within easy reach of arrival points
- Provide staff or volunteer support and ensure that they are trained in disability awareness
- Reserve 'front row' locations for disabled people at viewpoints
- Provide information for pre-visit planning on the internet

Good arrival points offer choice, like this one at Sheffield Botanic Gardens. This design provides equal access: disabled people are not forced to use a separate entrance.



Arrival

It is important to consider the experience of arriving at a site, what sort of first impression visitors get and the range of facilities in place to support them. This is the place where people will make decisions about what they are going to do on site, so it is both the first and the best opportunity to provide information and inspire people to explore it. Competent friendly staff are probably the greatest asset here.

A primary aim of an access plan is to ensure that the main pedestrian entrance is accessible to everyone. A disabled person's first experience of a beautiful landscape should not be through a side gate and past the dustbins.

In some historic landscapes the main entrance is an integral part of the historic fabric. Typical barriers to access include steps, raised thresholds and narrow

openings, and options for modification will depend on the nature of the particular site. Options for physical modification may be limited and alternative measures may have to be considered, for example providing temporary ramps for visitors who cannot negotiate steps, and having trained staff on hand to help.

Arrival – examples of good practice

- Identify the historic significance of points of entry and options for modification to improve access
- Define the main entrance as the one that all visitors will be able to use
- Provide access information about routes, for example gradients, steps and resting places
- Ensure that entrances are welcoming and clearly signed
- If more major adaptations are possible, provide both ramp and steps
- Explore options for providing visual or textural cues for visually impaired visitors
- Make available aids and facilities, for example wheelchairs for loan, portable seats, maps, guides, battery charging facilities, puncture repair kits and audio materials
- Provide staff or volunteer support and make sure that staff are trained in disability awareness

Getting around

The aim is for visitors of all ages and abilities to be able to use and enjoy a landscape and its facilities. If it is not possible to provide access for everyone to all parts of a historic landscape, it is important to identify how best to provide alternative routes or experiences.

The following approaches can help:

- Offer vehicular access to more remote parts of a site
- Provide wheelchairs or self-drive buggies for loan
- Provide a selection of routes so that visitors can choose according to their abilities and preferences
- Provide interesting circular routes of different lengths
- Identify vantage points that enable visitors to view areas that are not accessible
- Train staff or volunteers to advise disabled visitors about access to more challenging areas

Decisions about access improvements will be influenced strongly by the historic significance of the landscape. For example, a cobbled surface may be identified in an access audit as a significant barrier, but a conservation management plan may identify it as historically significant. The option may be limited to seeking an alternative, more accessible route. In contrast, the same surface in a situation where it has no historic significance could be changed or altered.



A feature of Mount Edgcumbe Park in Plymouth is a classical staircase in the Italian Garden. Alternative, gently sloping routes enable visitors to avoid the staircase and enjoy all areas of the gardens.



© British Waterways

British Waterways' award-winning floating towpath along the historic Limehouse Cut canal creates an attractive route away from traffic, and links the Cut with other paths. It provides a stable surface for users.

Many historic features present barriers to access. These include paths surfaced with loose gravel, cobbles or crazy-paving; terraces divided by series of steps; routes across grass; routes that are difficult to follow without a map; steps with poor visual contrast between treads and risers; and narrow paths and gateways.

It is not appropriate to give standard solutions to these aspects as access improvements must be assessed in the context of a particular site. However, the following sections identify approaches that can help improve access in view of these specific features and other more general landscape barriers.

If the landscape is registered or features are listed, advice must be sought from a conservation expert before making alterations, and planning permission or consents may be required.

Problems often occur where there is a change of surface, as in this example at Eltham Palace, London. The grass will be repaired as part of the garden maintenance programme. At other sites it may be possible to change the visitor route or upgrade the path surface.



Paths and routes

While many historic landscapes suffer gradual decline, it is the network of paths and drives that often remains intact and provides evidence of how the designer intended the landscape to be experienced. Paths were often laid out to lead a visitor past a series of framed views or designed spaces in a particular way. Altering paths or drives may therefore change the way a garden or landscape works.

For example, some Victorian public parks were designed with a strict hierarchy of paths. Wide, hard-surfaced carriage drives were built around the perimeter, narrower serpentine footpaths crossed the centre and sinuous gravel paths provided access to features such as shrubberies and lakes. The drives, or avenues, were designed for grandeur and to impress the visitor. The other paths were designed to have less impact on the view while providing access to features set within the landscape.

Routes – examples of good practice

- Research historic significance of routes
- Involve disabled people in regular access reviews
- Undertake regular maintenance, for example repair eroded path surfaces, cut back overhanging vegetation and remove obstacles
- Identify options for access improvement with regard to path surfaces, grades, widths and edgings
- Identify a hierarchy of routes in respect of their accessibility
- Ensure that principal facilities, for example toilets, cafés and shops, are located on an accessible route
- Provide a choice of routes in terms of distance, challenge and experience
- Prioritise development of accessible routes to key features and highlights
- Create alternative routes to provide a choice of shorter loops or to bypass difficult sections
- Widen narrow paths by adding flush edges in appropriate materials, by cutting back overhanging vegetation or by adding passing places
- Incorporate dropped kerbs
- Provide information, maps or signs to help visitors find their way around

Archaeology can reveal evidence about paths. A trench can determine the original width, edge details, drain routes, construction depths and path surfaces. Historic plans can reveal the scale and changes to the path network. Landscapes evolve and paths may have been widened, added or removed, narrowed or become overgrown. Reinstating a lost path may provide a new, accessible route while a steep path may be a more recent addition that can be removed.

Path design

Historically, the expense of transport and availability of local materials often meant that paths were formed of local gravels, beaten soil, sand or stone dug from quarries nearby or on-site. This local supply helps to link a historic landscape to its setting and provides regional variations such as the cream-coloured crushed gravels of the Cotswolds or the rounded river gravels of the River Thames.

Many paths were designed for occasional use, so modern traffic or heavy footfalls can make traditional materials unsuitable without intensive maintenance. It is still important to retain the character of the original surface in colour and texture. The selection of surface must also respect the location of the site. Care needs to be taken not to damage the archaeology when changing paths on historic sites. A rural site may require a more rustic low-key solution than an intensively used urban park.

Historic edgings can provide a contrasting colour to an edge or serve as an upstand to act as a tapping rail for some visually impaired visitors. The contrast between the colour of surfacing and the adjoining ground is important. A dark path in grass may be easy to follow, while a bark path through a shrub bed may require edgings to act as a colour contrast and guide. Upstanding edges should be provided at hazards or drops but drainage will be needed to prevent puddles. Edgings may create a barrier for wheelchair users and there may be a need for ramps or gaps in raised edges.

Paths were generally designed with a camber or crossfall to facilitate drainage. A steep camber will make access difficult for wheelchair users. Gully gratings and manhole covers should be well maintained to prevent them becoming hazards.



Paving, shown here at Plas Brondanw, North Wales, can become uneven over time and may be slippery when wet. As with other historic surfaces, good maintenance is essential to ensure access.

At Edinburgh Castle different types of surfacing have been integrated to make access easier.



© Historic Scotland

This earth ramp at the end of a pavement at Blists Hill, Ironbridge, is an example of a low capital cost access improvement that has little permanent impact on the historic fabric. However, it requires frequent checking and repair to remain accessible.



This gently sloping path, which allows wheelchair access to much of the rockery in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, has been surfaced with self-binding gravel. Careful selection of the material and good construction preserve the informal character and create an accessible all-weather path.



Path surfaces

Common problems with stone paving are the movement of slabs creating wide joints, heaving or subsidence, the loss of pointing, build-up of algal growth, and wear. Regular maintenance, such as the use of silver sand to reduce algal growth, is essential. Cobbles present particular problems, but it is often possible to provide an alternative route avoiding such hazards or to provide a smooth stone path through, or around, the edge of a space. If well laid, setts should not prove an access barrier. Textural paving like cobbles and setts can also be used as alerts for hazards ahead.

The use of naturally occurring self-binding gravels such as hoggin, Coxwell stone or Breedon gravel is common in historic gardens. When well maintained these surfaces are suitable for all visitors but when worn or badly drained they present hazards. The key factors are the size and shape of the gravel, the quality of construction and the proportion of loose particles on the surface.

Binders can be used to secure gravel on paths. Bitumen tar spray and chip has been used successfully within the London Royal Parks for many years but requires recoating over time. Modern resins are now more common but are costly. Resin can be used to bond gravels to tarmac surfaces so as to create a gravel texture with little loose material and a good non-slip surface. Gravels completely bound in resin tend to look too modern and lack character or texture.

The use of gas-tar was developed in the 1880s, and during the second half of the 19th century new asphalt and tarmacadam paths were increasingly common in urban parks. Tarmac provides a firm, level surface and may be appropriate in historic urban parks.

Grass can provide a firm, reasonably level path but relies on good drainage and regular maintenance. The join between grass paths and paving often erodes due to wear, creating trips or hazards. Reinforcing the grass or alternating the routes can reduce the problem.

Surfaces – examples of good practice

- Research historic significance of routes and their materials
- Undertake regular maintenance to repair damage to path surfaces
- If there are options for modification, replace loose surfaces with an alternative firm, non-slip surface
- Re-lay uneven setts or slabs to create a level surface
- Point slabs or setts to create a level surface
- Incorporate a firm, level route within an area of cobbles or uneven surface

Steps

A wide variety of steps is found in historic landscapes. Steps are used not only for vertical movement but also to divide and create spaces, add grandeur and spectacle, and provide interest along routes. Steps are an obvious barrier to access but it is always important to understand their design, origin and reason for being in a particular place before proposing changes or considering their removal. Where steps form an architectural feature or significant design element within the landscape there will be less option for change. Features like steps could be listed and consent may be required before making alterations.

Some steps create greater barriers than others. Shallow steps with landings between flights may be easier to negotiate than a steep narrow flight. Some people find steps easier than steep gradients or stepped ramps. Seats at landings can be useful if space allows.

Steps can present a considerable hazard for visitors with visual impairments especially if there is minimal visual contrast between the treads and risers. *Part M* gives guidance on the use of tactile paving on the approach to steps and ramps, although this may not always be appropriate in a historic landscape. Similarly, it is unlikely to be appropriate to add contrasting nosings or tactile paving on steps that form sculptural compositions or terminate grand vistas. It may be necessary to consider more creative solutions, such as contrasts

These steps at Brodsworth Hall in Yorkshire are a significant element of the design. Access improvements that impact on the appearance would be inappropriate here. An alternative route allows visitors access to the lower part of the grounds.



in surfacing that tie in with existing site materials or indicating the hazard on a tactile map or audio guide.

Handrails are important for safety on both steps and steep paths. Such features can look out of place in a historic landscape where the intention may be to disguise the existence of paths. However, visually impaired visitors rely on good visual contrast between furnishings and their background. The answer may be to create the handrail out of materials appropriate to the setting and to try to achieve the best contrast possible without introducing new materials or colours. The design of handrails should follow the criteria and dimensions set out in *Part M*.

Steps – examples of good practice

- Appraise options for overcoming steps and whether there is a need to protect architectural or archaeological features
- Provide both ramp and steps and ensure their symmetry and proportion is in relation to the historic feature
- If appropriate with the setting, highlight approaches and nosings with a visual or tactile contrast
- Provide seating and resting points between flights of steps
- Provide handrails on both sides of steps or ramps, if possible
- Provide seating or resting points near steps or on landings
- Avoid single steps as they are easily overlooked
- Highlight the location and number of steps on tactile maps and audio guides
- Ensure steps are kept clear of loose gravel and algal growth

Steep paths and gradients

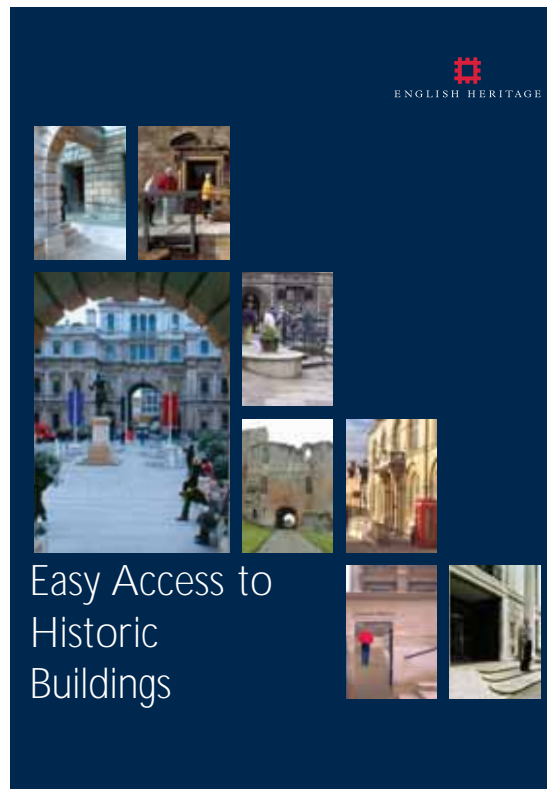
Any gradient will present a challenge to people with limited mobility or stamina. A level route is defined in *Part M* as a gradient of less than 1:60, and any slope with a gradient of 1:20, or steeper, is defined as a ramp. It is often assumed that a ramp is the best solution to resolving a gradient. This is not always the case. Many people with walking difficulties find it easier to negotiate steps with the aid of a handrail. Surface materials can be significant, for example, ramps formed of loose gravel or smooth stone can be hazardous. Offering a choice of routes is the best solution.



This ramp and steps combination at the Geffrye Museum in London offers a choice of access routes in a compact space.

It is accepted that some historic landscapes are set within particularly challenging terrain which may be a feature of a particular site. Achieving a level route may be impossible but access improvements should still be considered. Advance information about routes, handrails, powered buggies and seating are all ways of improving access in such situations.

Gradient must always be considered together with distance. In some places a short ramp with a slightly steeper gradient may be more accessible than a long ramp of lesser gradient. Level areas and seating are crucial on long, steep ramps to allow visitors to rest and get their breath back. For example, on a 1:20 slope a resting stop would be needed every 16.6m.



Publications such as English Heritage's guide to providing access to historic buildings include further advice and examples on topics like ramps, stairs and handrails.



This use of resin-bonded gravel at Witley Court, Worcestershire, allows subtle ramps to be created that do not impact on the appearance.

Ramps should be designed as integral features even where they are initially installed as temporary solutions. There is an increasing range of portable ramps available, and these can be helpful where it is impossible to install permanent ramps. However, unless selected carefully, they often look alien in a garden setting.

Stepped ramps create a number of hazards. Visually impaired visitors may find it difficult

Ramps and gradients – examples of good practice

- Appraise options for overcoming a change in level, and whether there is a need to protect architectural or archaeological features
- Provide both ramp and steps and ensure their symmetry and proportion is in relation to the historic feature
- Provide handrails on both sides, where possible
- Provide seating and resting points along a sustained slope
- Provide tactile indicators for visually impaired visitors on the approach to a ramp
- Ensure ramp surfaces are slip-resistant
- Highlight locations of ramps on tactile maps or in audio guides

to locate the steps and visitors with limited mobility may find the sloping treads difficult to negotiate. If stepped ramps are unavoidable, handrails with tactile markings at each step riser can help visitors to negotiate them.

Although guidance provided in *Part M* relates to ramps and slopes on the approaches to buildings, the principles are equally relevant to the wider landscape.

On-site transport

Some larger historic landscapes provide transport to help visitors experience the site more easily. Accessible transport is particularly valuable for people with mobility impairments and people who tire easily. Such transport may include minibuses, land trains or electric buggies. The impact of vehicles on the aesthetics of the landscape may need to be considered.

The option of providing self-drive buggies needs careful consideration. These vehicles provide one of the most effective means of improving the mobility and quality of experience of disabled visitors. However, it is crucial that the site can accommodate them safely. These vehicles will have a greater impact on path surfaces and will require extra space to manoeuvre.

The following actions can help:

- Prepare a training and instruction manual for staff
- Provide training sessions for visitors when they arrive at a site
- Seek the opinion of access advisors and disabled people
- Undertake a risk assessment
- Implement a regular vehicle maintenance programme
- Maintain a log for checking out vehicles and recording feedback
- Identify and provide information on suitable routes, and on areas that should be avoided
- Select vehicles that are appropriate for the terrain

On-site transport – examples of good practice

- Provide accessible on-site transport to help visitors get around
- Provide wheelchairs or self-drive buggies
- Encourage visitors to bring their own self-drive buggies
- Offer vehicular tours or vehicular access as an option for people who cannot walk far
- Undertake visitor surveys to find out the value of the service and how it can be improved



© Drew Bennelick

It is good practice to provide an induction session for visitors borrowing self-drive buggies.



Liberty Drives in Hyde Park, London, allows people with limited mobility to enjoy areas of the park that were previously inaccessible to them. This vehicle is designed so that people do not have to transfer from their wheelchairs. It also provides seating for companions.



© John Watkins

Routes to, and within, garden features such as glasshouses should also be considered. Visitors who cannot venture inside can at least get some sense of the structure inside from the entrance.



Garden features like this Chinese bridge at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, may be difficult for some visitors to cross and alternative routes may need to be devised. Access to the water's edge would offer another sensory experience.

Garden features

Rockeries, grottoes, glasshouses, follies, temples and bridges are examples of features often found within historic landscapes that may present particular access challenges. Where possible visitors should be able to visit all such features but in reality achieving full access to features, like a grotto set within a rocky outcrop, may be extremely difficult.

The visitor route around a site should aim to take in such features and it may be possible to create a viewpoint from which the feature can be seen, for example a path over the top of a rockery with vantage points. Glasshouses are often narrow with slippery metal gratings but it may be possible to provide a path through a glasshouse or a view in from one end. Alternative routes may be designed to avoid bridges with steep crossings or low parapets yet still provide access to the water's edge.

Alternative forms of interpretation may offer access solutions to difficult areas. Video displays on the spot or at a central interpretation centre, audio guides, illustrated guidebooks, photographs or guided tours may be options.

When assessing the accessibility of a site it is important not to leave out garden features. Often, simple improvements can be made by ramping a small step or providing a handrail which may then make an area previously inaccessible open to a wider group of visitors.

Information and interpretation

Inappropriate location or design of information, for example placing a signpost or interpretation panel on the axis of a key vista, or using inappropriate materials or colours, can detract from the aesthetic qualities of a historic landscape. The historic and aesthetic qualities of the landscape need to be considered in interpretation design.

On-site information and interpretation are often confined to display panels and leaflets. These can be valuable but other facilities and approaches open up the site to a wider audience. For example, tactile maps allow many visually impaired visitors and people with learning disabilities to enjoy a site independently.

Good information will provide what people need in a format that they can use. Information should be designed in partnership with disabled people to make sure it is accessible and appropriate.

On-site information

Accessible information allows people to make informed choices. Leaflets should contain a map with indications of distances, gradients, position of seats and any obstacles or hazards. Symbols, names of features and other information should be mirrored in the site's signage. A clearly designed leaflet with good information could reduce the need for signage.



It may be best to produce leaflets for general use in an easily readable print size. The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) recommends a 'clear print' standard of 12 point, and enlarging the text to 14 point or larger in versions that can be printed off as needed for people with impaired vision.

Incorporation of information as graphics can be valuable for people who do not speak English, or have learning difficulties. Widgit is a system using pictorial symbols in place of words, developed for people with learning disabilities. It can be incorporated into general information and interpretation.

Braille guides

It may be helpful to provide a Braille guide as long as it is well advertised to visually impaired people. Braille text can be easily

Large print guide and access map provided at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire.



Signs must be maintained in order to remain accessible. This sign telling wheelchair users that they can ring for assistance is virtually unreadable through lack of maintenance.



This tactile map of Glasgow's Cathedral Precinct allows visitors with visual impairments to orientate themselves and to understand the scale and arrangement of the landscape and associated buildings.

damaged. Depending on what kind of visitor facility the site has, it may be best to locate a source of Braille reproduction and have copies made at short notice rather than attempt long-term storage. The Braille guide, and indeed any visitor guides, should emphasise any features that can be enjoyed through all the senses, including touch, hearing and smell.

Easy reading

Easy-to-read leaflets can help many people, such as those who may have limited literacy skills, those with a mental impairment and those with dyslexia. It may also be helpful for children learning to read but who want their own guide. Such information is clearly worded, with minimal text in a good point size, and supported by uncluttered illustrations.

Hands-on interpretation

Most visually impaired visitors rely on touching objects to gain direct experience and information. Gardens and landscapes can be a rich resource for tactile exploration. Mature trees, sculpture and ornamentation are common features of historic landscapes. Most are robust but a few may be fragile or may not be safe for visitors to handle. New installations should be designed for people to touch. They should be robust and should be positioned near to, or within easy access of, paths.

Guides and describers

Guided walks can help enhance the visitor experience, but this is dependent on the availability of trained staff or volunteers. Skilled describers can accompany visually impaired visitors as part of a sighted guide programme.

Signed tours should be used where and when possible using a qualified sign interpreter to join the usual tour guide. Teaming up in this way enables those with impaired hearing to enjoy a tour along with family and friends and reduces the need for special tours.

Audio

The technology for recording and delivering audio information is improving rapidly. Currently, the most common technologies are audio 'wands', cassettes, CDs and computer-based displays. Players of audio guides for visually impaired people should be easy to use, with tactile indicators on buttons.

Audio content for visually impaired visitors should be developed to include information appropriate to their needs, such as more description of scale and colour.

New technology

New technology has the potential to offer visitors imaginative visual interpretation. Videos and computers can simulate visits to features such as a steep rockery, or provide a virtual view into a decoy to



Fingerpost navigation helps visually impaired visitors find their way around independently.



Visitors to the Abbey and its herb garden in Jedburgh can take a virtual tour from within the visitor centre.

observe flocks of ducks, or inaccessible buildings like a grotto or icehouse. Computer-based interpretation can also allow the visitor to 'handle' fragile documents, for example by turning the pages of an 18th-century Humphry Repton 'red book' to see the landscape before and after his design improvements.

Tactile models

Models of the site are of interest to most visitors. They can be an excellent way of enabling visually impaired visitors and people with learning disabilities to appreciate the scale and overall layout, and to put important features into context. Careful location of these models is crucial.

Portable perching stools are available for visitors to borrow on arrival at Eltham Palace, London. This is a good way to give visitors a choice of where they sit and rest.



Visitors will rest when they need to and find shelter where they can. Observation of visitors can help when planning seating and shelter.



Comfort

The level of comfort a site offers the visitor is largely determined by provision of furnishings such as seating and shelter and facilities such as toilets and refreshments.

Seating and shelter

Seating is especially important for people who tire more easily because of age, health or disability. When there is limited scope to reduce distances or gradients, seats can give visitors opportunities to rest and enjoy the landscape at their own pace.

Sometimes style and location of seating and shelter are dictated by historic significance, but most sites can achieve sufficient flexibility to provide comfort for disabled and older people.

Seats should be positioned on a level surface, rather than on raised platforms. Grass is a difficult surface for people with mobility impairments. Where possible seating should be positioned on a hard surface.

Tables and chairs must be stable as they are likely to be used as supports by people with limited mobility. Location is important and should take into account views and sense of place from the seating height.

Providing shelter from sunshine, wind and rain is important if people are to enjoy their visit. Historic landscapes often include rest points and these could be incorporated into an improved network

of shelter and seating. Historic landscape features such as follies, grottoes, arbours and groves of trees may provide opportunities for shelter or seating, depending on how accessible they are.

At least a proportion of the seats should have backs and arm rests and be higher than standard seats to make them easier for older people to use. Space for wheelchair users should be provided beside seating and at picnic tables.



Many features were designed as shelter and resting points as well as eye-catchers in historic landscapes. The Gothic Temple is one of a series of historic vantage points for visitors touring Painshill Park, Surrey.

Seating and shelter – examples of good practice

- Ensure that some seats have arm and back rests, and are higher than standard seats to improve access for older people
- Locate furniture to avoid potential hazards to visually impaired people
- Include furniture that can be moved according to sun and wind direction, and to make room for wheelchairs and pushchairs
- Make portable seats available for loan
- Make sure that furniture materials do not create glare in sunlight or become uncomfortably hot or cold
- Provide seating at points of interest and where people will most need to rest, for example next to slopes and flights of steps



A sensory experience may be just as much about peace and quiet, as here at Mount Stewart, Co Down. A successful access plan opens up the full range of experiences to as many people as possible.

Poole's Cavern

As part of its 150th anniversary Poole's Cavern (Derbyshire), owned by the registered charity Buxton and District Civic Association Ltd,



© Poole's Cavern

undertook a project to provide access for all. Support from the Aggregate Levy Sustainable Fund was instrumental in enabling the completion of the scheme.

Reputedly the hideout of the outlaw and faker William Poole during the 15th century, Poole's Cavern has been a tourist attraction since 1853, and Neolithic and Roman finds have been discovered in the caves. It is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The challenge of providing access for disabled people to Poole's Cavern was a daunting one. It was agreed to provide full wheelchair access from the 'blue badge' parking bays through the visitor centre and into the first chambers of the Cavern. A route was constructed that meets the *Countryside for All* standard and uses materials in keeping with the cave environment.

Visitors who cannot, or prefer not to follow the full tour, which requires climbing a number of steps, can see deep into the Cavern by using one of several easy-to-use cameras provided in the visitor centre. Designed with joysticks to make them easy to use by people with limited dexterity, the camera controls are positioned to be useable by people who are standing or sitting.

The needs of people with sensory impairments are also considered at Poole's Cavern. An audio-visual presentation is available and an audio induction system is provided throughout the cave to enable people with hearing impairments to have improved access to the cave guide's presentation.

The commitment of the Buxton and District Civic Association Ltd to meeting the needs of all of its customers resulted in Poole's Cavern being awarded the Heart of England Tourism for All Gold Award in 2003.

Supporting information

Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005

The DDA has five key parts:

- Part I outlines how the Act defines disability and therefore who is protected by it
- Part II places a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled employee
- Part III gives disabled people rights not to be discriminated against in relation to the provision of goods and services, and places a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments
- Part IV places a duty on educational institutions to make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities
- Part V relates to public transport. There are complex regulations governing the layout and facilities of modern public transport vehicles to ensure accessibility

Part III of the DDA

Part III is the most relevant part of the Act for the owners and managers of historic designed landscapes when planning access. Duties under Part III have been introduced in three key stages:

- Since December 1996 it has been unlawful to treat disabled people less favourably than other people for a reason related to their disability
- Since October 1999, there has been a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, such as providing extra help or making changes to the way services are provided
- Since October 2004, Part III of the DDA has placed a duty on service providers to make reasonable adjustments to physical features that make it unreasonably difficult or impossible for disabled people to use the services provided

The DDA 2005 amends the earlier Act. One of its main provisions is to broaden the definition of disability. A summary of the Act is available at www.disability.gov.uk.

Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) was set up in 2000 to promote equality for disabled people and to advise on the working of the DDA. Together with the Government, the DRC has produced a Code of Practice that explain legal rights and requirements under the DDA. This code is not a legal statement but provide useful guidance on the legislation. The DRC also publishes policy statements, briefings and reports on a range of issues such as access to goods, services, facilities and premises; education, employment, and transport.

The DRC Code of Practice (2002) advises that service providers are more likely to be able to address their duties under the Act and prevent their employees from discriminating against disabled customers if they consider the following steps:

- Establish a positive policy on the provision of services to ensure inclusion of disabled people and communicate it to all staff
- Inform all staff dealing with the public that it is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people
- Train staff to understand the service provider's policy towards disabled people, their legal obligations and the duty of reasonable adjustments
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of such a policy
- Provide disability awareness and disability etiquette training for all staff who have contact with the public
- Address acts of disability discrimination by staff as part of disciplinary rules and procedures
- Have a customer complaints procedure that is easy for disabled people to use
- Consult with disabled customers, disabled staff and disability organisations
- Regularly review whether services are accessible to disabled people
- Regularly review the effectiveness of reasonable adjustments made for disabled people in accordance with the Act, and act on the findings of those reviews
- Provide regular training to staff that is relevant to the adjustments to be made

The DRC will issue a revised code for the DDA 1995 in light of amendments which come into force in December 2006.

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Where to go for further help

Access organisations

Access Association
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Civic Centre, Darwall Street
Walsall WS1 1TP
www.access-association.org.uk
01922 652010

The Adapt Trust
PO Box 16817
Glasgow G12 8WX
www.adapttrust.co.uk
0141 357 5515

Age Concern
Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER
www.ageconcern.org.uk
020 8765 7200

British Council of Disabled People
Litchurch Plaza
Litchurch Lane
Derby DE24 8AA
www.bcodp.org.uk
01332 295551

Centre for Accessible Environments
70 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL
www.cae.org.uk
020 7840 0125

Church Action on Disability
50 Scrutton Street
London EC2A 4XQ
www.charitiesdirect.com
020 7452 2085

Directory of Social Change: Information
and Training for the Voluntary Sector
www.dsc.org.uk
08450 777707

Disability Rights Commission
DRC Helpline
Freepost MID 02164
Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9BR
www.drc-gb.org.uk
08457 622633

Disabled Persons Transport
Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
Zone 1/14, Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR
www.dptac.gov.uk
020 7944 8011

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7–9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP
www.equalityni.org
028 90 500600

Fieldfare Trust
7 Volunteer House
69 Crossgate
Cupar, Fife KY15 5AS
www.fieldfare.org.uk
01334 657708

Help the Aged
207–221 Pentonville Road
London N1 9UZ
www.helptheaged.org.uk
020 7278 1114

JMU Access Partnership
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
www.jmuaccess.org.uk
020 7391 2002

MENCAP
123 Golden Lane
London EC1Y 0RT
www.mencap.com
020 7454 0454

Mind
15–19 Broadway
London E15 4BQ
www.mind.org.uk
020 8519 2122

National Register of Access Consultants
70 South Lambeth Road
London SW8 1RL
www.nrac.org.uk
020 7735 7845

Plain English Campaign
PO Box 3
New Mills, High Peak
SK22 4QP
www.plainenglish.co.uk
01663 744409

Radar Access Advisory Committee
12 City Forum
250 City Road
London EC1V 8AF
www.radar.org.uk
020 7250 3222

Royal National Institute of the Blind
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE
www.rnib.org.uk
0845 766 9999

Royal National Institute for Deaf People
19–23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
www.rind.org.uk
0808 808 0123

Scope
PO Box 833
Milton Keynes MK12 5NY
www.scope.org.uk
0808 800 3333

Sensory Trust
Watering Lane Nursery
St Austell
Cornwall PL26 6BE
www.sensorytrust.org.uk
01726 222900

Web Accessibility Initiative
www.w3.org/WAI

National societies: historic landscapes

Ancient Monuments Society

St Ann's Vestry Hall

2 Church Entry

London EC4V 5HB

www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk

020 7236 3934

Council for British Archaeology

St Mary's House

66 Bootham

York YO30 7BZ

www.britarch.ac.uk

01904 671417

Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland

The Glasite Meeting House

33 Barony Street

Edinburgh EH3 6NX

www.ahss.org.uk

0131 557 0019

Council for Scottish Archaeology

c/o National Museums of Scotland

Chambers Street

Edinburgh EH1 1JF

www.britarch.ac.uk/csa

0131 247 4119

Association of Gardens Trusts

70 Cowcross Street

London EC1M 6EJ

www.gardenstrusts.org.uk

020 7251 2610

Garden History Society

70 Cowcross Street

London EC1M 6EJ

www.gardenhistorysociety.org

020 7608 2409

Association of Local Government

Archaeological Officers

5 Marine Terrace

Skinningrove

Saltburn-by-the-Sea TS13 4BJ

www.algao.org.uk

01287 205863

Garden History Society (Scotland)

The Glasite Meeting House

33 Barony Street

Edinburgh EH3 6NX

0131 557 5717

Georgian Group

6 Fitzroy Square

London W1T 5DX

www.georgiangroup.org.uk

020 7529 8920

Built Environment Forum Scotland

The Glasite Meeting House

33 Barony Street

Edinburgh EH3 6NX

www.befs.org.uk

0131 556 3306

Historic Houses Association

2 Chester Street

London SW1X 7BB

www.hha.org.uk

020 7259 5688

Institute of Historic Building Conservation
Jubilee House
High Street
Tisbury
Wiltshire SP3 6HA
www.ihbc.org.uk
01747 873133

National Museums of Scotland
Chambers Street
Edinburgh EH1 1JF
www.nms.ac.uk
0131 247 4119

Scottish Civic Trust
The Tobacco Merchants House
42 Miller Street
Glasgow G1 1DT
www.scottishcivictrust.org.uk
0141 221 1466

Society for the Protection of
Ancient Buildings
37 Spital Square
London E1 6DY
www.spab.org.uk
020 7377 1644

Society for the Protection of
Ancient Buildings (Scotland)
The Glasite Meeting House
33 Barony Street
Edinburgh EH3 6NX
www.spab.org.uk/scotland
0131 557 1551

Twentieth Century Society
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ
www.c20society.org.uk
020 7250 3857

Ulster Architectural Heritage Society
66 Donegall Pass
Belfast B17 1BU
www.uahc.co.uk
028 9055 0213

Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens
Bedford Park
London W4 1TT
www.victorian-society.org.uk
020 8994 1019

Government bodies

Cadw
Welsh Assembly Government
Plas Carew
Units 5/7
Parc Nantganw
Cardiff CF15 7QQ
www.cadw.wales.gov.uk
01443 336000

Countryside Agency
John Dower House
Crescent Place
Cheltenham GL50 3RA
www.countryside.gov.uk
01242 533222

Countryside Council for Wales
 Maes-y-Ffynnon
 Penrhosgarnedd,
 Bangor
 Gwynedd LL57 2DW
www.ccw.gov.uk
 0845 1306229

Department for Culture, Media and Sport
 2–4 Cockspur Street
 London SW1Y 5DH
www.culture.gov.uk
 020 7211 6200

UK Government's Disability Policy Division
 Department for Work and Pensions
 Disability Unit
 Level 6, Adelphi Building
 John Adams Street
 London WC2N 6HT
www.disability.gov.uk

Department for Environment,
 Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
 Nobel House
 17 Smith Square
 London SW1P 3JR
www.defra.gov.uk
 08459 335577

English Heritage
 23 Savile Row
 London W1S 2ET
www.english-heritage.org.uk
 020 7973 3000 (London office)
 0870 333 1181 (Customer service)
*For general enquiries about statutorily protected
 listed buildings, scheduled monuments and
 registered parks and gardens in England:
 customers@english-heritage.org.uk*

English Nature
 Northminster House
 Peterborough PE1 1UA
www.english-nature.org.uk
 01733 455000

Northern Ireland Department
 of the Environment
 Environment and Heritage Service
 Waterman House
 5–33 Hill St
 Belfast BT1 2LA
www.ehsni.gov.uk
 028 9054 3037

Heritage Lottery Fund
 7 Holbein Place
 London SW1W 8NR
www.hlf.org.uk
 020 7591 6000

Historic Scotland
 Longmore House
 Salisbury Place
 Edinburgh EH9 1SH
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
 0131 668 8600

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
 16 Queen Anne's Gate
 London SW1H 9AA
www.mla.gov.uk
 020 7273 1444

National Trust
 Heelis
 Kemble Drive
 Swindon SN2 2NA
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
 01793 817400

National Trust for Scotland
Wemyss House
28 Charlotte Square
Edinburgh EH2 4ET
www.nts.org.uk
0131 243 9300

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
26 Whitehall
London SW1A 2WH
www.odpm.gov.uk
020 7944 4400

Royal Commission on the Ancient and
Historical Monuments of Scotland
John Sinclair House
16 Bernard Terrace
Edinburgh EH8 9NX
www.rcahms.gov.uk
0131 662 1456

Scottish Building Standards Agency
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Livingston EH54 6GA
www.sbsa.gov.uk
01506 600 400

Scottish Natural Heritage
12 Hope Terrace
Edinburgh EH9 2AS
www.snh.org.uk
0131 447 4784

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Text prepared by Jane Stoneham,
Lars Stenberg, Drew Bennelick,
Tony Crosby and Jenifer White

Assisted by Victoria Ball, Simon Blake,
Wendy Brewin, Suzanne Carter,
Jean Booker, Phil Chambers,
Jo Easingwood, Terry Eakin, Mike Fitt,
Karen McDonald, Lorna McRobie,
Lynsey Robinson, Will Salvetti,
Heather Smith, Peter Thoday,
Caron Thompson, Russell Walters,
David Watterson, Peter Wenham,
Valerie Wenham and Michael Westley

Edited by Joan Hodson, Jenifer White
and Rowan Whimster

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and Mark Freeth

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For copies of this booklet and alternative
formats (quote PC51126), please contact:
English Heritage
Customer Services Department
PO Box 569
Swindon SN2 2YP

Telephone: 0870 333 1181

Fax: 01793 414926

Email: customers@english-heritage.org.uk

