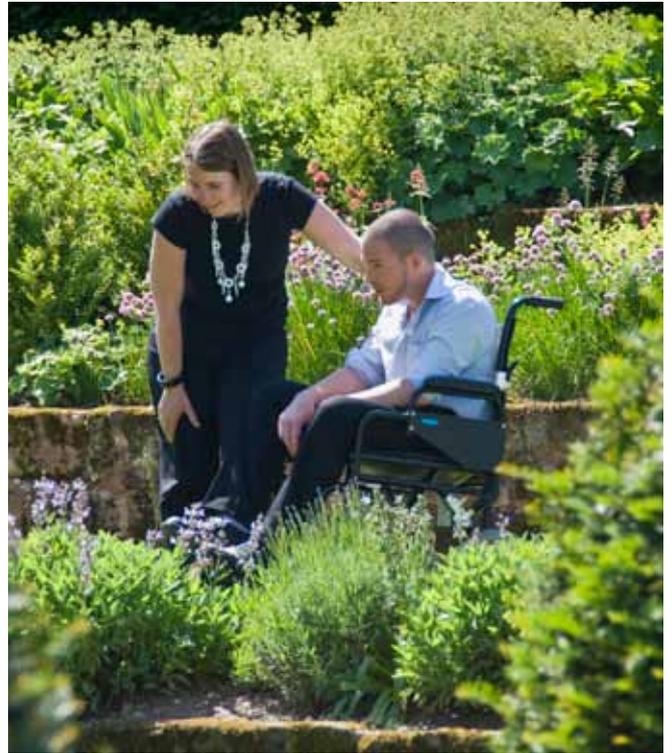




Historic England

# Easy Access to Historic Landscapes



# Summary

Historic Buildings, landscapes and places exist for the enjoyment and appreciation of everybody. Too many people think of the historic environment as being inaccessible. Historic England knows that this need not be the case. On the contrary, we know that good quality access can enhance our understanding of the historic environment and ensure its sustainability. What we have learnt is that with the right kind of thought and discussion a way can be found round almost any barrier. We also recognise that people's expectations – and the technical opportunities to meet them – are constantly evolving. While the needs of disabled people must be a priority, we also know that easier access will benefit almost all of us at some stage in our lives. Whether during pregnancy, as a parent pushing a buggy or an older person who is finding steps a bit harder to manage, we all value thoughtful and effective design for our access needs. We want to see the broadest possible public access to the historic environment and to the interpretation that makes it come alive. For that reason we will continue to promote good quality solutions that make access easier while simultaneously encouraging responsible care of the historic places that matter to us all. In its search for a more inclusive approach to the historic environment Historic England is keen to celebrate access solutions that combine conservation with excellent and innovative modern design. Our publications on *Easy Access to Historic Landscapes* and *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* show how this vision can be turned into practical reality.

This revised guidance note has been prepared by Rowan Whimster and Whimster Associates with Jenifer White, Rachel Hasted, David Pickles and Russell Walters.

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[www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/easy-access-to-historic-buildings-and-landscapes/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/easy-access-to-historic-buildings-and-landscapes/)

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Historic landscapes come in many shapes and forms, from formal urban gardens to open countryside spaces. Whether in private, public or charitable ownership they provide unique opportunities for quiet relaxation. The access issues they pose are equally diverse, but with careful thought almost all of them can be overcome.



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### The Treehouse, Alnwick Garden

© Alnwick Garden Trust

The policy of the Equality Act is not a minimalist policy of simply ensuring that some access is available to disabled people; it is, so far as is reasonably practicable, to approximate the access enjoyed by disabled people to that enjoyed by the rest of the public. The purpose of the duty to make reasonable adjustments is to provide access to a service as close as it is reasonably possible to get to the standard normally offered to the public at large (and their equivalents in relation to associations or the exercise of public functions).

Equality Act 2010 *Statutory Code of Practice: Services, Public Functions and Associations*, 2011, page 90, 7.4

# Introduction

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 unable to enjoy these special places to the full. Improving access is a key way of helping everyone to understand, value, care for and enjoy this irreplaceable legacy.

The aim of this guide is to help property owners and managers provide easier access for all their visitors, whatever their age or level of ability. It will also be of value to designers, planners, and others working to open up historic sites to a wider audience.

This revised edition of the guidance, prompted by the implementation of the Equality Act 2010, promotes an inclusive approach to ensure that every visitor to a historic park, garden or landscape has a meaningful experience. It should be made clear, however, that its primary focus is on providing better access for people with



## Kenwood House, London

English Heritage has worked hard to make sure that people with disabilities have as much opportunity as anyone else to enjoy the historic surroundings.

disabilities. Encouraging a much broader range of communities to enjoy and participate in the care of historic parks and gardens is an equally strong priority but one that falls outside the scope of this current document.

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

Central to this guide is the balance that has to be struck between improving access and conserving historic character and fabric. It will show that access can often be significantly enhanced without major interventions. It will also show that improving the skills and approach of staff and volunteers can be just as important as making physical changes.

## Key principles

Historic landscapes provide some of the most valued places for public recreation and education, but they are often vulnerable. The aim of conservation is to maintain them in ways that not only sustain their existing significance but, where appropriate, add to them.

Improving access is about much more than meeting legal requirements. It is an opportunity to improve the quality of experience for all visitors, attract new audiences, and increase the likelihood of repeat visits.

Access improvements benefit all sorts of 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,

including older people, families with young children and people with temporary health problems.

Access needs to be thought about in its widest sense. How easy is it for people to explore the landscape, enjoy it and feel comfortable in it? Standard solutions rarely work. Access improvements should be planned to respect the special qualities of a particular site.

The Equality Act 2010 requires a reasonable approach to improving access. Expectations of what is reasonable are likely to evolve as inclusive approaches are more widely used and technology improves. To meet their responsibilities under the Act service providers need to be willing not only to make practical changes on the ground but also to change the way they and their staff behave and operate.



### Hesketh Park, Southport

Public open spaces are enjoyed by all. The local authority has a statutory duty to provide equality of access.

© Sefton Council

## What this guide covers

The focus of this guide is on approaches that can be sustained over time, and especially those that make 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 Equality Act 2010, 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.

**Part 3** discusses how visitors find out about, reach and enjoy a site. It also highlights the importance of comfort and enjoyment.

The **supporting information section** provides information on the legislation, with particular emphasis on the Equality Act 2010. It also identifies sources of further information and advice.

This guide has been produced as a companion to the revised edition of Historic England's *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* (2015). It also refers to the Building Regulations and the minimum standards set out in Part M of these regulations. Guidance on access to the countryside and nationally agreed standards is provided by Natural England, the Fieldfare Trust and others.

**Landscape  
Institute**  
Inspiring great places

The first edition, published in 2005, was developed by a partnership of English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Trust, Countryside Agency (now Natural England), Historic Houses Association, Historic Scotland and the Sensory Trust. The publication was awarded the Landscape Institute's Landscape Policy Award and President's Award in 2006.

This revised edition has been produced to take account of the new statutory duties imposed by the *Equality Act* 2010. Although increased devolution of powers within the UK means that its technical guidance is specific to England, the underlying principles that it advocates should remain relevant to the owners and managers of publicly accessible historic parks and gardens everywhere.

# 1 Why Access Matters

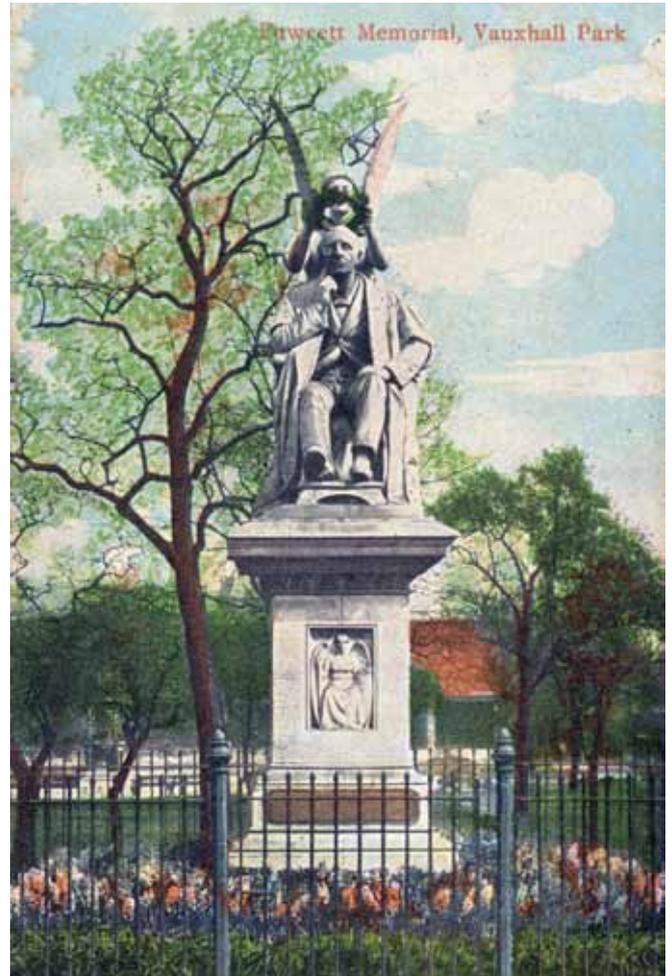
## 1.1 Access and conservation: getting the balance right

Historic parks, gardens and landscapes are some of the most popular visitor attractions in England. In 2011, 80 million day visits were made to country parks, gardens, historic houses, palaces and castles. Natural England's survey shows there are some 558 million visits to parks in our towns and cities each year. In the case of English Heritage sites we also know that approximately 39 per cent of visitors are coming for a second or subsequent time.

These landscapes are tangible links to our past. They are important not only as expressions of landscape design but also for their association with notable people, historic events, art and culture, and as wider landscape settings.

Nationally significant designed landscapes are included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. The designation reflects their aesthetic qualities, rarity, state of survival, and their contribution to the history of landscape design. Registered parks and gardens often represent layers of design through different historic periods as well as the work of important designers, as do many of their non-registered but locally important counterparts.

Parks and gardens were designed for pleasure. Their paths, drives, vantage points, pavilions and terraces show how the landscape was originally intended to be used and enjoyed. Once private, many are now open to the public and a constant flow of visitors is important to keeping them viable. However, few historic landscapes were originally planned to be accessible to disabled people. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them present access challenges in terms of their



### Vauxhall Park, London

Making gardens easily accessible has a long and honourable history. Henry Fawcett (1833–84) was a blind academic, statesman and postmaster-general who campaigned for public open spaces. Sadly, his statue was demolished by the local council in the early 1960s.

topography and design features. For example, the narrow paths and gateways of an intimate private garden may be difficult for wheelchair users or people with pushchairs when this garden is opened up to the public.

Carefully planned and maintained access improvements can help attract new audiences and improve the visitor experience. However, they need to be balanced against maintaining the integrity of the historic landscape. This in turn requires an understanding of its architecture and design; its historic and cultural associations; its archaeology, and scientific or wildlife interest; its aesthetic qualities and its role as an amenity. Part of the property manager's challenge is to appreciate these potentially conflicting interests and find the most appropriate solutions to improving access.

*Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* sets out a consistent approach to making decisions about all aspects of the historic environment, and reconciling economic and social needs. The principles define conservation as the process of managing changes to a place and its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage significance while recognising

opportunities to reveal or reinforce its qualities for present and future generations.

Those principles 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 other values may be in conflict with one another.

Historical survey and analysis are essential to understanding the significance of individual components, optimising values and planning the sensitive integration of new access provision. Interventions and decisions should be recorded for future interest and original material salvaged.



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### **Lichfield Garden of Remembrance**

Sensitively installed ramps allow visitors with different mobility needs to move easily from one part of the garden to another without compromising the historic character of the place.

© Parks Agency

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

The principles of good conservation neither imply nor rule out working in historic styles but do require respect for the significance of the historic landscape. Major interventions should be valued as features in their own right in the future. Short-term or temporary solutions need to be reversible and should not delay or obstruct well-designed permanent improvements. Upkeep is essential. Paths, signs and other access features should always be kept in good condition.

New sensory gardens and features like raised borders with scented plants are often developed to add interest to sites. However, with proper maintenance the whole garden can be made into a sensory experience for everyone, not just a small part of it set aside for people with sight loss.

Reconstructing or re-creating a historic landscape or feature can be a way of adding interest or aiding interpretation. However, such developments need to be accurate, based on sound evidence and fully recorded. Straightforward maintenance and repair is nearly always preferable.



#### Leeds Castle

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.

© Peter Wenham

Disability spans all age groups, backgrounds and circumstances. It is estimated that one in five people in the UK has a disability. 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. Older people, who make up a significant proportion of visitors to historic landscapes, may not consider themselves disabled but can experience many of the same barriers through reduced stamina, mobility, sight and hearing.



### Arley Hall

The double herbaceous border dates from 1846 and is one of the oldest in the country. By tradition and for aesthetic reasons, flower borders of this kind are often set against lawns, although some wheelchair users will find grass surfaces difficult.

## 1.2 The statutory framework

### The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Act covers discrimination because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These categories are known in the Act as ‘protected characteristics’. The Act sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

People and organisations who own, manage or occupy historic places in England, and who have duties under the service provider, employer, education and other provisions of the act, need to ensure that they do not discriminate against people with protected characteristics. When considering physical access to historic landscapes it is necessary to take account of duties relating to disabled people and to consider potential barriers to access.

The Government’s Office for Disability ([www.gov.uk/government/statistics/disability-facts-and-figures](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/disability-facts-and-figures)) estimates there are:

- 11.6 million disabled people in Great Britain
  - 5.1 million are over state pension age
  - 0.8 million are children
- In 2011-12, it was estimated that in Britain there were:
- 6.5 million people with a mobility disability
  - 6.3 million people with difficulties with lifting and carrying

- 2.8 million people with manual dexterity issues
- 1.8 million people with continence problems
- 2.2 million people with communication disabilities
- 2.5 million people with memory and concentration issues
- 0.8 million people with problems recognising when in danger
- 2.7 million people with physical coordination disabilities

## Employers

All employers, large and small, have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage to disabled employees. The duty to make these changes is not speculative, but relates to the actual needs of a specific individual who is disabled. It may, however, be more cost-effective to consider access improvements as part of a programme of planned refurbishment, thereby allowing for disabled people to be employed in the future without the need for further alterations.

## Service providers

The duty to make reasonable adjustments requires service providers to take positive steps to ensure that disabled people can access services at a standard that is as close as possible to that offered to the public at large. This duty may require service providers to make reasonable adjustments to any physical features, including furniture and displays, wherever disabled customers or potential customers would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people.

Unlike the duty imposed on employers, this is an anticipatory duty; service providers are required to anticipate the needs of disabled people and to accommodate them in a wide variety of ways. The duty to make reasonable adjustments is also a continuous one and service providers will need to review the changes they have made at periodic intervals.

## Volunteers

Volunteers may also be protected under the Equality Act 2010. If volunteers have a contract and receive more than just out-of-pocket expenses then they may be treated as employees. Other volunteers may also be protected as guidance states that providing someone with a volunteering opportunity counts as providing them with a service and so service provider duties come into play.

## Educational institutions

Post-16 educational institutions have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students, including modifications to physical



### Top: Audley End

The historic garden has an 18th-century parterre that was restored in the 1980s. The fountains add to the sensory experience of the garden.

### Bottom: Chedworth Roman Villa

Accessible sites are ones that allow disabled and non-disabled visitors to enjoy the experience together, as here on the sloping paths that connect different parts of the villa.

© National Trust Images/Arnhel de Serra

features. This duty is similar to that imposed on service providers and is again anticipatory.

Where educational establishments are used for weddings, events and other non-educational purposes, this is likely to give rise to service provider duties.

Where there is a physical barrier, the service provider's aim should be to make its services accessible to disabled people and, in particular, to provide access to a service as close as it is reasonably possible to get to the standard normally offered to the public at large. When considering which option to adopt, service providers must balance and compare the alternatives in light of the policy of the Act, which is, as far as is reasonably practicable, to approximate the access enjoyed by disabled persons to that enjoyed by the rest of the public.

*Equality Act 2010 Statutory Code of Practice: Services, Public Functions and Associations, 2011, page 106, 7.58*

### The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty, which is made up of a general equality duty supported by specific duties, is part of the Equality Act 2010 and applies to certain public sector bodies including key organisations such as local authorities and the providers of health, transport and education services. Those bodies must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups. This duty encourages consideration of physical access for disabled people and the making of appropriate adjustments.

The Equality Act 2010 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 Building Regulations 2010: Approved Document M (2004)

Part M of the Building Regulations is about access to and use of buildings. It applies to material alterations of and extensions to non-domestic buildings and to material changes to some non-domestic uses. The regulation requires reasonable provision to be made for people to gain access to the building and to use its facilities. Approved Document M gives guidance on meeting the regulation and sets out minimum standards for access.

Part M applies primarily to buildings but it 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 borne in mind:

- 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

### Access statements and Part M of the Building Regulations

Departure from the guidance set out in Approved Document M can be explained by an access statement supporting the application. Essentially this 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.

### **BS 8300:2009 + A1:2010 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people: Code of practice**

BS 8300 provides guidance on good practice in the design of buildings and their approaches to allow convenient use by disabled people. The extent to which the standards apply to historic landscapes will be determined on an individual basis. It should be noted that in certain respects guidance in the British Standard differs from that in Approved Document M.

### **How to look up listings and other designations**

The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) [www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/) is an up-to-date database of all nationally designated heritage assets, including:

- Listed buildings
- Scheduled monuments
- Protected wreck sites
- Registered parks and gardens
- Registered battlefields
- World Heritage Sites

## **1.3 Permission and consents**

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

### **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.

A planning application normally needs to be supported by a design and access statement that sets out the principles that have been applied to the proposal and then goes on to provide information about how inclusive access is to be achieved. It needs to make particular reference to the needs of disabled people, and can be used to explain any proposed reasonable adjustments to existing physical features.

### **Listed building consent**

Historic landscapes often include notable buildings and garden structures. Under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) consent is required for any works of demolition, alteration or extension that will 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.

When 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. Even if consent continues to be refused, there is likely to be a means of appeal. Whether or not the service provider's duty to take all reasonable steps to ensure accessibility includes pursuing an appeal will depend on the circumstances of the case.

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 that are not fixed in place and which are removed after use do not require consent.

### Scheduled monument consent

Some historic landscapes and their structures may be protected under the Ancient Monuments Act (1979). Consent is required for any work to a site or building that has been designated as a scheduled monument. In England, applications for consent are dealt with by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, acting on advice from Historic England.

### Historic gardens and landscapes

Parks, gardens and other designed landscapes of special historic interest may be included on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens. The register contains a diverse range of sites: gardens, squares, cemeteries and parks. If planning permission is required for any proposed alterations, the local planning authority must consult the Garden History Society in all cases, and Historic England in the case of sites registered as grade I or II\*.

Where planning permission is not required but the proposed changes may affect the design, layout, character or appearance of the garden or landscape, it is still advisable to seek professional guidance. Historic landscapes not included in the register may be of considerable local value and any changes should be considered in this context.

The significance of the setting of listed buildings may need to be considered too. Planning permission may be required.



### Quarry Bank Mill, Styal

Well-surfaced paths rising at a gentle angle provide easy access to the restored Victorian gardens that overlook the Mill.

© Jane Satchwell



### Defining disability

Improving access for disabled people is often assumed to mean providing for wheelchair users, but it is estimated that only 5 per cent of disabled people are permanent wheelchair users. Their needs are important but must be considered together with other types of disability.

### Chatsworth

An inclusive approach ensures that all visitors feel they can experience the glory of the Cascade, a 300-year-old ribbon of water that gushes over 24 groups of steps. © Sensory Trust

## 1.4 An inclusive approach

An inclusive approach recognises everybody 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 that will benefit as many people as possible.

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 blind and partially sighted visitors. An inclusive approach recognizes 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 needs of disabled people will also address issues of age, gender and background provided that disability is thought about 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.

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 visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing 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 the solutions that work best within a particular historic landscape.



### Witley Court

A group of disabled people was invited to help English Heritage staff understand the physical and intellectual barriers and work out practical ways to overcome them.

## Principles of an inclusive historic landscape

### 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

### Easy to use

How easy is it for people to get to and around a historic designed landscape, and to use its facilities? The main issues are usually about 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 also 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 depends on a network of facilities that includes toilets, food, help points and seating. Comfort is important for all visitors, but particularly those who tire easily and need to rest more often. Providing seating and shelter allows 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 bowls 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. 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 fundamental. Health and safety policies and practices must address everyone. Feedback from visitors, frontline 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 a positive approach being adopted by everyone involved in staff and volunteer recruitment, events management, landscape design and management, education programmes and ongoing maintenance.



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#### Top: Belsay Hall

Well-maintained paths provide good access through the quarry gardens. Ease of access between garden areas also needs to be considered.

#### Bottom: The Camel Trail

Volunteers help a group of visitors negotiate barriers designed to prevent vehicular access.

© Sensory Trust

## 1.5 Developing skills

Disability awareness training is designed to increase people's understanding of disability and access issues. It 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 staff who work behind the scenes, senior managers, board members and volunteers.

Some of the best ideas for improving access, especially in relation to operational practices, come from front-line staff. Arranging visits to other sites is a useful way of sharing ideas and to see examples of good practice. As well as helping staff see the benefits of developing inclusive practices it can show them how access improvements can be made without compromising the special qualities of a historic landscape.

Ideally, a training programme will include some sessions focused on specific disabilities such as a deaf awareness session or understanding the impact of sight loss as well as general



### Witley Court

Young volunteers from Wyre Forest LAFS (Laugh, Achieve, Fun, Socialise) and Worcestershire Lifelinks created a wildlife garden and pond, a willow sculpture, new interpretation and activity leaflets.

English Heritage gained from their 600 Millennium Volunteer hours at the site and they received accredited learning opportunities.

awareness. Some of the most effective training is gained by working and consulting with disabled people. Trainers also need to understand the practicalities of historic property conservation and the appropriateness of different options for enhancing accessibility.

Visitors judge an organisation or site by the welcome and support they receive, not just on what the place has to offer. Effective change therefore relies on developing skills and understanding amongst staff and volunteers. It is crucial that everyone in the 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.

## 1.6 Consulting with people

It is important to involve disabled people as early as possible when planning access improvements. This consultation should include people who have not visited the place in order to find out why. To participate fully everyone first needs to understand why a particular piece of historic landscape is significant, what has to be done to protect it and how it needs to be interpreted and presented. This is to make sure that the views of users and conservators are considered alongside one another at a stage when there is greatest scope for addressing the needs of both.

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 organisations that might get involved, such as disability groups, retirement communities, clubs, conservation groups, schools and training centres.

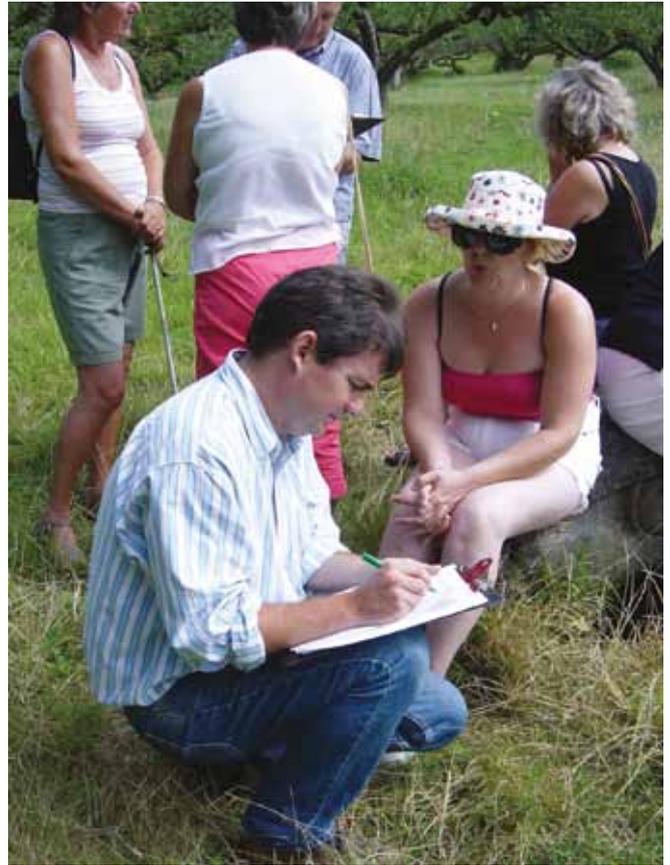
Most people will welcome the opportunity for their ideas and views to be sought. Their involvement will demonstrate a positive commitment to improving access, and this can help reassure visitors who may feel frustrated with current access difficulties. Although they may not expect to receive a fee for this advice it may be appropriate to offer refreshments and at least to cover their travel expenses.

Consultation must never be a just token effort to involve people. One of the most common criticisms from people who have given time to share their views is that they were not told what happened as a result of their contribution. Ongoing contact is vital, not only to make people feel their input was valued but to keep them informed about 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.

Effective consultation relies on establishing clear parameters about:

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



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#### North Downs Way

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. © Sensory Trust



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### Chiswick House, London

Volunteers discussing access to the grounds. Consultation should be convenient and accessible so that people find it easy to participate. This includes accessible venues, appropriate times and transport if needed. Any supporting documents and information should be accessible.

# 2 Planning Better Access

## 2.1 What are the objectives?

Good access provision does not happen by accident. On the contrary, it is the result of a property team's commitment to the needs and enjoyment for all its visitors, whatever their abilities. Organisations that manage historic properties should aim to make an inclusive approach integral to everything the organisation does.

Careful planning is the key to successful access projects – ones that maximise the benefit to visitors while respecting the special qualities of a historic landscape. Because most designed landscapes have limited capital and revenue budgets, planning also ensures that available resources are used to best effect.

Strategic commitment from the top of the organisation is another vital component, as is the presence of someone who will be responsible for implementing and reviewing the measures identified in the access planning process.

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



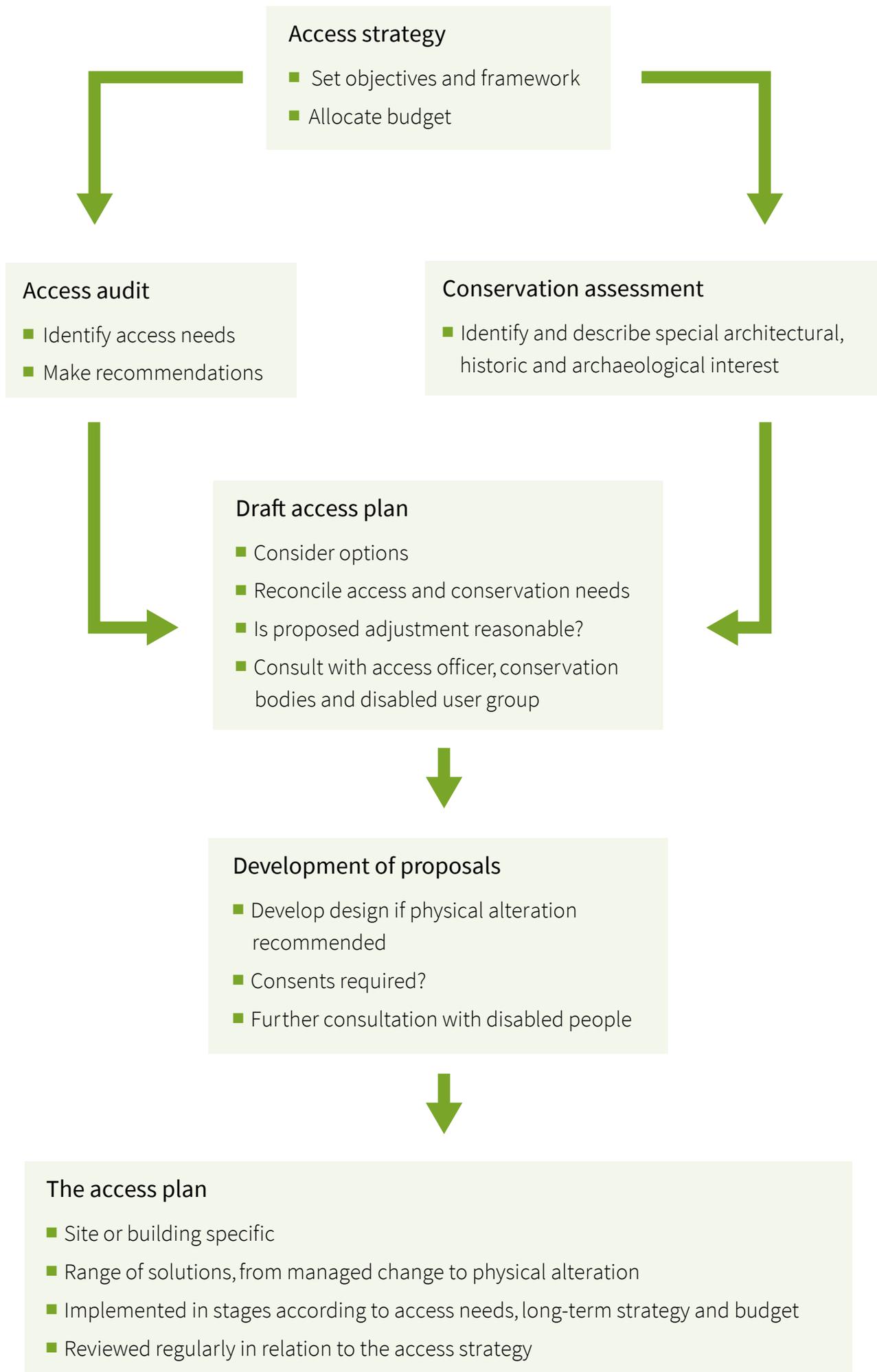
### Anglesey Abbey

Involving people as early as possible in the consultation process, as at this 'Opening All the Gates' seminar, can lead to new ways of thinking about access issues, and produce good ideas for tackling barriers and improving the experience for visitors.

© Jane Satchwell

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The diagram on page 20 shows the sequence of steps in planning access improvements. Access strategies, audits, conservation assessments and access plans are described in detail below. These plans will vary according to the scale and complexity of a garden or landscape, but the principles remain the same.



## Access strategy

Any organisation, be it a visitor attraction, college, or hotel, that wants to make it easier for people to use its historic surroundings is strongly advised to start by establishing an access strategy – a document that answers six simple questions:

- what is it that needs to be improved – is it the landscape itself, the way it is managed or a combination of the two?
- what would be a reasonable adjustment?
- what are the statutory obligations that have to be met?
- which are the conservation considerations that need to be taken into account?
- who is going to be responsible for balancing these requirements?
- how much will it cost and how long is it going to take?

The secret of a successful strategy is clarity – making sure that the needs of visitors and users are as clearly understood as the sensitivities of the landscape that will be accommodating them. With careful planning it should be possible to provide suitable access for disabled people without compromising a landscape's special interest.

## Access audit

The first step in planning access improvements is to undertake an access audit. This will assess and document barriers to access that exist within a landscape and its buildings. A good audit will consider the requirements of wheelchair users, ambulant disabled people and those with sensory impairments and learning disabilities. It will consider intellectual access as well as physical access and can take into account the needs of families with young children and older people. The aim of an access plan should be, as far as is reasonably practicable, to provide a standard of access for disabled people equal to that enjoyed by the rest of the public.

The audit should follow the journey around a garden or landscape – from arrival on foot, by car or public transport, through the choice of walks, gardens and features, then to services like cafés and toilets and finally to the exit route. An audit can also consider how people would be helped to leave in the event of an emergency.

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 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.

Local authority access officers advise on development proposals in relation to planning policy and Part M of the Building Regulations. They often have contact with local access groups. Access officers should be consulted as early as possible in development of an access plan.



### Connecting people and gardens

The Opening All the Gates Partnership (OAtG) was set up in 2010 by the Historic Houses Association, National Trust, Association of Garden Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society. Building on the legacy of the Gateway Gardens Trust, its aim is to encourage participation in gardens heritage – in particular, how to encourage gardens owners and managers, historic gardens trusts, heritage organisations and community groups to create their own access projects.

During 2010 and 2011 a series of on-site seminars, demonstrated that gardens have the potential to improve health and well-being, to support communities socially and economically, to engage children and adults in new ways of learning and to simply provide time out from the hectic lifestyles of the 21st century.

The OAtG Partnership is teaming up with the Heritage Alliance to create a website that provides a permanent ‘one stop shop’ for advice and support on historic gardens access.

[www.hha.org.uk/learning-and-outreach-2/heritage-for-all/opening-all-the-gates.html](http://www.hha.org.uk/learning-and-outreach-2/heritage-for-all/opening-all-the-gates.html)

### Top: Trebah Gardens

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 visitor centre has created a wide, level entrance to invite people into the garden.

© Sensory Trust

### Bottom: Weston Park

Inspired by ‘Opening All the Gates’, the Weston Park Foundation worked with the local Education and Resource Centre in Wolverhampton to design and create a new sensory garden.

© Weston Park Trust

### Conservation management plans

The use of conservation management plans for the upkeep, repair and restoration of historic landscapes is well established. The key to any plan is an informed understanding of the designed landscape’s cultural and natural heritage values, its history, fabric and character and why the place is valued and by whom. The plan identifies opportunities and constraints and establishes policies and programmes of work for conservation, and opening up the site for public enjoyment.

The term ‘conservation management plan’ reflects the two stages of its development.

The conservation assessment includes:

- A description of the historic landscape and all its features
- An analysis of how it 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:

- Prescriptions for management and maintenance, including access improvements
- Budgets and work programming, including access works
- Monitoring and review processes

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

Much of the research collated for the conservation management plan will also be useful for the access plan. For example, information about the site’s history and archaeology can help with the identification of new routes or the design of interpretation materials.

### Access plan

An access plan brings together the findings from the access audit and the conservation assessment. It identifies work required and

informs plans for the short, medium and long term. It also needs to identify timescales and who is responsible for delivering each agreed action point. Access plans can also help show how duties under the Equality Act 2010 are being addressed.

For historic gardens and landscapes the access plan should include:

- A summary of the different options for improving access, conserving historic significance and providing a better visitor experience
- The access audit and a list of suggested improvements
- Plans for providing alternative services during building works
- Cost projections and plans for securing the necessary funding
- Priorities for implementation and plans for phasing the work

## 2.2 Supporting the process

### Access statements

An access statement records progress and the decisions made in relation to the access plan. It should explain why these decisions have been made, and how they have been influenced by the context of the site and advice from other parties. As well as helping to guide future decisions it will be useful for communicating approaches both internally and externally.

The development of an access statement is recommended in Part M of the Building Regulations (see [part 1](#)). Even when there are no requirements relating to planning or building regulations, it is still a useful document to produce. It should be prepared at the start of a project and updated throughout all stages of the work and can be integrated with the regular reviews and updates of the conservation management plan.



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### Wrest Park

Understanding the original design of a park or garden can help to make it more accessible for modern visitors as well as ensuring that its most significant features are properly protected. English Heritage used archaeological excavation to determine the position and composition of the historic paths it wanted to bring back into use as accessible routes.

## Funding

Neither Historic England nor the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is in a position to provide the owners of historic landscapes with money specifically to improve access. However, HLF welcomes applications to fund physical and sensory access improvements to historic sites when they form part of a wider project to repair and open up a park or garden to the public, including those supported through its Parks for People programme. HLF can also grant-aid the completion of an access audit as part of the development phase of a project.

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 a fulltime access advisor to support staff, volunteers and properties. The Historic Houses Association can offer its members advice on on access provision for disabled visitors and employees and access audits.

The agri-environment scheme run by Natural England includes some grants towards capital costs of access improvements such as the upgrading of path surfaces.

Where access work is eligible for funding 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.

## 2.3 Barriers to access

A barrier is anything that prevents or dissuades disabled people from visiting, enjoying or learning about a site. Barriers take many different forms 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 more easily 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. 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.



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### Warwick Castle

This clear pictorial sign at Warwick Castle can be seen by many people with visual impairments and understood by many with learning disabilities.

© Peter Wenham



## Identifying barriers

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

Disabled people are the best judges of what constitutes a barrier to them. A barrier to one person may be a positive feature to another. For example, steps may be an obstacle to wheelchair users, but can be easier than a ramp for older or semi-ambulant visitors. The best way to achieve compromise 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 local access group.



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

Barriers to access beyond the site itself must be included in any full assessment. For instance, a lack of easily available information about access may deter potential visitors. Similarly, an absence of accessible transport will be a barrier to some people.

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### Top:

Positioning plants nearer the railings would provide added sensory experiences.

### Bottom:

Overhanging plants, uneven joints and changes of surface may add character but can result in hazards or inconvenience for visitors.

© Peter Wenham

Renovation work can create temporary barriers to access. Plans for repair and improvement projects should therefore include alternative methods of access while the work is in progress.

Seasonal 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 tables, extra display stands or spaces for storage can cause difficulties for wheelchair users or visitors who are blind or partially sighted.

The way visitors use a place may also change. For example, increasing numbers of older and disabled people use self-drive buggies or scooters to visit historic sites. These vehicles have transformed mobility for many people, making it possible for them to experience more challenging parts of the landscape such as meadows, gravel paths and long-distance routes. However, paths, turning circles, gate widths and toilets originally designed for wheelchair users may not be adequate for self-drive vehicles.



The Equality Act 2010 outlines four options for overcoming a barrier caused by a physical feature. These are:

- Removal of the feature
- Alterations to the feature
- Providing a reasonable means of avoiding it
- Providing the service by a reasonable alternative method if none of the preceding options is viable

#### **Trafalgar Square, London**

These steps at have double-sided handrails for left or right-handed people, tactile warnings and contrasting step nosings.

## 2.4 Examples of barriers

### Organisational

Barrier	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of staff or volunteers to help visitors</li> <li>■ Negative or uninformed staff attitudes</li> <li>■ Lack of support for access improvements from owners or managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Training to improve skills and attitudes of staff and volunteers</li> <li>■ User-testing sessions with people of different ages, genders and disabilities</li> <li>■ Develop an access strategy and appoint an access champion</li> </ul>

### Physical

Barrier	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of accessible transport to or around the site</li> <li>■ Lack of accessible signage, information and interpretation materials</li> <li>■ Steps, plinths, kerbs or raised edges and stiles</li> <li>■ Narrow paths and entrances, loose or uneven surfaces, steep slopes and long distances</li> <li>■ Deterioration of routes, signs, facilities through lack of repair</li> <li>■ Lack of seating, shelter and drinking water</li> <li>■ Lack of accessible toilets, baby feeding and baby and adult changing facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Links with bus companies and community transport organisations</li> <li>■ Clear information about opening times, entrance fees, accessible parking and toilet signage to help visitors find their way around</li> <li>■ Ramps and crossing places provided where appropriate, or alternative accessible routes clearly indicated</li> <li>■ Uneven paving relaid or repointed; paths widened or alternative routes created</li> <li>■ Regular maintenance of path surfaces, signs and overhanging vegetation</li> <li>■ Accessible seating with backs and arms, picnic tables without attached benches, drinking fountains provided</li> <li>■ Accessible toilets, water bowls for assistance dogs and baby and adult changing facilities are provided</li> </ul>

### Intellectual

Barrier	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Complex information</li> <li>■ Information that does not cater for different learning styles</li> <li>■ Text-only information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Information follows 'easy-to-read' guidelines and is accompanied by pictures</li> <li>■ Information is offered in different formats</li> <li>■ Guided tours and education programmes accommodate different needs</li> </ul>

## Sensory

Barrier	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Limited opportunities to touch features</li><li>■ Poor acoustics</li><li>■ Visitors not made aware of sensory highlights</li><li>■ Absence of visual and tactile warnings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Touch tours focus on tactile exploration for blind and partially sighted visitors</li><li>■ Induction loops installed at ticket desks, information points and meeting areas; portable induction loops available for guides and education workers</li><li>■ Areas and features with high sensory interest located on an accessible route</li><li>■ Tactile indicators at the approach to hazards; step nosings are highlighted</li></ul>

## Social and cultural

	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Publicity and website do not promote access</li><li>■ Information not shared with local community</li><li>■ Failure to reach out to all potential visitors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Accessible pre-visit information informs people about what they can expect</li><li>■ Publicity distributed through local disability networks and groups, schools, retirement communities and healthy walking initiatives</li><li>■ Surveys help identify who the missing visitors are and the reasons why</li></ul>

## Financial

	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Entrance fees</li><li>■ Charges for guided tours and events</li><li>■ Expenses for volunteers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Discounted entrance fees and free admission for companions</li><li>■ Some activities and events are provided free</li><li>■ Adequate compensation of expenses for volunteers and focus groups</li></ul>

# 3 Making Access a Reality

## 3.1 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 where access is most urgently in need of improvement. It is important to include people whose disabilities are sometimes overlooked – for example people who are deaf or hard of hearing, people with learning disabilities, or with mental illness. It is also important to consider the quality of the experience for carers and companions.



### Bushy Park, London

Companion Cycling is a volunteer scheme that allows people with special needs, regardless of their age or ability, to take healthy exercise in the peaceful surroundings.

© Sensory Trust

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 them to become volunteers or engage in education programmes. It is therefore useful to review the following:

- The principal features of a place – what makes it special
- Its sensory qualities – and where they can be enhanced
- Visitors' understanding of it – and how it can be increased through interpretation
- Their comfort – whether in form of shelter, seating, catering or toilets
- Their enjoyment – areas that provide quiet space, as well as more social ones

### Visitor surveys

Finding out why people visit historic landscapes and what they do once they get there is the first step towards improving visitor facilities. For some people it is links with the past that are the main motivation; for others it is the beauty of the place and the recreational facilities it provides.

Surveys undertaken on a regular basis are also useful for identifying the people who are not yet visiting a place – and more importantly why they are not. The best way of exploring these issues is through the sequence of a typical visit, from the

initial decision to come, the journey there, then the actual experience on site, to the journey home again.

### 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 little effect if potential visitors do not know about them.

Clear, concise description allows people to make informed decisions on whether to visit and what to do when they are there. It should explain the location and accessibility of facilities such as toilets and cafés, as well as principal features of interest.

Information also needs to take account of the varying abilities of visitors. 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 therefore better to describe it objectively in a way that allows each user to decide for themselves; for example: 'Path: maximum gradient 1 in 12. Loose gravel surface'. A diagram might also be useful for people who are not familiar with gradients expressed in numbers.

Leaflets, websites and guides need to provide the most critical information on 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, whether or not they are themselves disabled.

Larger font sizes, clearer graphics and easy-to-read text layouts can all help to minimise the demand for special large-print versions. It will also make information more accessible for everyone else, including visitors for whom English is a second language. Some properties may find it helpful to produce their main information in other languages too.

The internet is particularly useful for providing disabled people with information. Text can be downloaded in the way that best suits individual



#### Top:

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.

© Sensory Trust

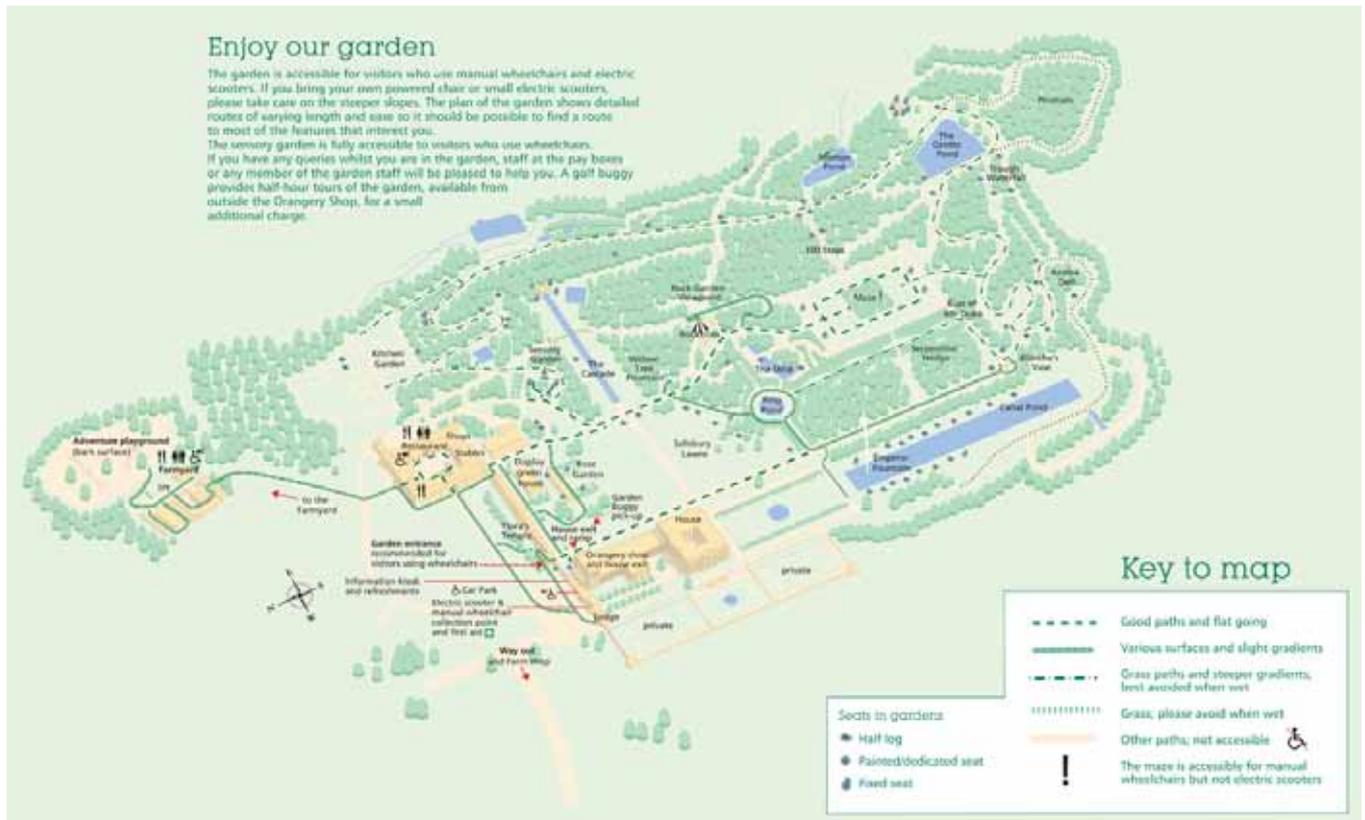
#### Bottom:

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

© Sensory Trust

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needs, whether via screen-reading software or printed out in large print. It is therefore a good idea to provide pre-visit material as plain text files. Websites should also conform to the standards set by the Web Accessibility Initiative and tested by disabled people.



### Ashridge Estate Walks

Walks likely to be suitable for people with impaired mobility and users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs

The Ashridge Estate is a large area of ancient woodland and downland on the top of the Chilterns escarpment. There is car parking, visitor centres, toilets and refreshments available.

#### Path Information

There are two routes with a firm surface and no stile, gates or other obstructions. The 5km circular route around Medway Meadow is flat with a firm surface. The longer 2km linear route to Clippertown has a more natural surface and some gentle slopes. For those wanting to explore there are many natural "challenging" paths but you must not use the National Trust self-drive mobility scooters to explore these. The map shows the two routes with information about surfacing and slope to help you to decide if they are suitable for you.

#### Visitor Information

- Estate open from 9am until dusk.
- Self-drive mobility scooters are available free (2-5pm) to take you along the two trails but must be booked in advance: 01442 851227. Training is provided.
- Public and disabled toilets (RADAR key).
- The Visitor Centre and Tea Room are open daily from the end of March to December. Weekdays 1-5pm. Weekends 12-5pm. Tea Room closed Mondays.
- Dogs are welcome but must be kept under control.
- The Estate is managed by The National Trust. Call 01442 851227 for more information about the Estate or to report any problems. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

This leaflet is one of a series of walks in the Chilterns area suitable for people who are less mobile. [www.chilternsaonb.org/access/walks/](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/access/walks/) to download other walks or call 01944 271305.

**How to get there**

Visitor centre is at the end of Monument Drive which is off the B4506 between Berkhamsted and Ringshall. Buses from Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Dunstable stop 1/2 mile from the entrance. Call 0870 8032608 for bus times.

**Path surfaces**

- Hard, slightly bumpy path with occasional loose stones less than 20mm
- Tarmac road, can be used but beware of vehicles
- Natural earth path. Firm but bumpy. Uneven with puddles/mud after rain. Some tree roots or loose stones up to 40mm

**Key to symbols**

- direction of slope
- max gradient of slope
- length of slope
- Disabled parking
- Toilets (accessible)
- Car park
- Visitor Centre
- Refreshments
- Seating
- Viewpoint

THE NATIONAL TRUST  
Chilterns Conservation Board  
The Countryside Agency

AN Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



### Top: Chatsworth House and Garden

As well as telling visitors about the many attractions of the gardens this map also provides information about the surfaces and gradients of the paths and the location of shelter, seating and other facilities. As well as being available in printed form at the property it can also be downloaded in advance from [www.chatsworth.org](http://www.chatsworth.org)

© Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

### Bottom: Ashridge Estate, The Chilterns

The Chilterns Conservation Board website ([www.chilternsaonb.org](http://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, the map for which includes information on the direction and maximum gradient of slopes, path surfaces, accessible toilets, accessible parking and seating.

© Chiltern Conservation Board

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 via access and disability groups and organisations.

Above all, 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 blind and partially sighted people. Wheelchair users, older people and others with limited mobility tend to depend on cars. The most accessible sites are usually those that offer different travel options.

Public transport 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.

Adequate car parking can be a major challenge, especially for smaller 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.

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 of the Building Regulations provides guidance on the design of these features.



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#### Top:

Reception staff are ideally placed to record the number and range of visitors and find out more about what they are hoping for from their visit. Even an informal approach can help assess the impact of access improvements.

© Sensory Trust

#### Bottom:

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.

© Sensory Trust



**Top: Anglesey Abbey**

Parking reserved for disabled visitors is clearly marked and signposted. Ideally, such bays should be laid out in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

© National Trust / Robert Morris

**Bottom: Kirkstone Pass viewpoint, Lake District**

Parking reserved for disabled visitors.

**Getting there and home – examples of good practice**

- Create links with providers of community 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 easy-access parking, pick-up and drop-off points, bus stops and cycle racks
- Allocate 4 to 6 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 and to pick-up points for public transport
- Provide seating along the route to and from the car park
- Provide wheelchairs or self-drive vehicles within easy reach of arrival points
- Make sure paid and volunteer staff are trained in disability awareness
- Reserve 'front row' locations for disabled people at viewpoints
- Provide information for pre-visit planning on the internet



### Arrival – examples of good practice

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



#### Top: Chatsworth House

A tractor-drawn trailer conveys visitors and their wheelchairs from the main car park.

© Sensory Trust

#### Bottom: Sheffield Botanical Gardens

Good arrival points offer choice. An important feature of this design is that it 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 property – what is the visitor’s first impression of the place and its support facilities? This is also the stage at which people decide what they are going to do during their visit, so it is the best chance to provide information and inspire them to explore. 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 parks and gardens the main entrance is an integral part of the historic fabric. Typical barriers to access include steps, raised thresholds and narrow openings. Options for physical modification may be limited and alternative measures may have to be considered – for example temporary ramps for visitors who cannot negotiate steps, and having trained staff on hand to help.



### Mount Edgcombe Park, Plymouth

A classical staircase in the Italian Garden. Alternative, gently sloping routes enable visitors to avoid the staircase and enjoy all areas of the gardens.

## Getting around

The aim is for visitors of all ages and abilities to be able to use and enjoy a landscape and its facilities as freely as they wish. If it is not possible to provide access for everyone to all parts of a garden or park, it is important to identify alternative routes or experiences.

The following approaches can help:

- Offer vehicular access to more remote parts of a site
- Lend people wheelchairs or self-drive buggies
- Allow visitors to choose from a selection of routes to suit their abilities
- Provide interesting circular routes of different lengths
- Identify vantage points from which visitors can view inaccessible areas
- Train staff and volunteers to advise disabled visitors about access to more challenging areas

Many historic features present barriers to access – 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; narrow paths and gateways.

There are no standard solutions because every access improvement must be assessed in the context of its own site. However, the following sections identify approaches that can help improve access in a range of common situations.

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



### Limehouse Cut, London

British Waterways' award-winning floating towpath along the historic canal creates an attractive route away from traffic. As well as providing a stable surface for users it links the Cut with other local paths.

© British Waterways

### Paths and routes

Even if other features have been lost, networks of paths and drives often remain intact and provide 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. Altering them 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.

An archaeological trench can prove the original width, edge detail, drain routes, construction depth and surface of a path. Historic plans can reveal the scale and changes to the path network over time. Reinstating a lost path may provide a new, accessible route while a steep path may be a more recent addition that can be removed.

### Routes – examples of good practice

- Research the historic significance of routes
- Involve disabled people in regular access reviews
- Regularly repair path surfaces, cut back overhanging vegetation and remove obstacles
- Identify options for improving surfaces, grades, widths and edgings
- Provide a choice of routes in terms of distance, challenge and experience
- Prioritise development of accessible routes to key features and highlights
- Make sure that toilets, cafés and shops are located on an accessible route
- Provide maps and signs to help visitors find their way around



### Path design

Paths were traditionally made of gravel, beaten soil, sand or stone dug from nearby quarries. This use of local materials helps to give historic landscapes their particular character – for example the cream-coloured crushed gravels of the Cotswolds or the rounded river gravels of the Thames Valley.



Many paths were designed for occasional use and their traditional materials are unsuitable for modern traffic or heavy wear. Replacement surfaces should replicate the colour and texture of the original as well as respecting the overall character of the site – for example a rural garden may require a more rustic low-key solution than an intensively used urban park. Care also needs to be taken not to destroy archaeological evidence when altering historic paths.



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#### Top:

An irregular and poorly maintained path surface is bad for everyone, whether walking, in a wheelchair, driving a mobility scooter or with impaired vision.

© Peter Wenham

#### Middle:

When restoring a historic path it is important to check that the gradients will be suitable for both walkers and wheelchair users.

#### Bottom:

Traditional granite setts can become uneven over time and may be slippery when wet. As with other historic surfaces, good maintenance is essential to ensure access.

© Peter Wenham



**Left: Tintagel**

This new path provides visitors with a safer and more secure route down the cliffside. Elsewhere a metal handrail would also have been provided, but would have been visually intrusive in such a wild rural setting.



**Top right:**

Provided that it has firm, level foundations, an informal woodland path can still provide an acceptable surface for disabled visitors.

© Peter Wenham



**Bottom right: Dunwood Park, Oldham**

Mixed paving allows easy wheelchair access around the restored park – a green space originally created in 1912 as a healthy environment for the local community and mill workers.

© Heritage Lottery Fund

Historic edgings can help to define the margins of a path or serve as a tapping rail for visually impaired visitors. The contrast between the colour of the path and the adjoining ground is also important. A dark path in grass may be easy to follow, but a bark path through a shrubbery may need the guidance of coloured edgings. Upstanding edges can be used as warnings of hazards or drops, provided there is sufficient drainage to avoid the formation of puddles. However, raised edgings can in turn create

barriers for wheelchair users and so may need to be interrupted by occasional gaps or ramps.

Paths were traditionally designed with a camber to facilitate drainage. Steep cambers are difficult for wheelchair users, however, and may therefore need to be recontoured. Manhole covers and gratings over gullies should be well maintained to prevent them becoming hazards.

## Path surfaces

Common problems with stone paving are the heaving or subsidence of individual slabs, the loss of pointing and the buildup of algal growth. 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 a smooth stone path through, or around, the edge of a cobbled space. Well-laid setts should not prove an access barrier. Cobbles and setts can also be used as textured alerts for hazards ahead.

Naturally occurring self-binding gravels such as hoggin, Coxwell stone or Breedon gravel are common in historic gardens. When well maintained they 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 has been used successfully within the London Royal Parks for many years but requires periodic recoating. Modern resin substitutes, though more costly, can achieve a good non-slip surface while retaining the texture of the original gravel. However, gravels completely bound in resin tend to look too modern and lack character.

Asphalt and tarmacadam paths became increasingly common in urban parks during the second half of the 19th century. These surfaces provide firm, level paths.

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

The *Streets for All* streetscape manuals set out good practice for street management and design of pavings.

## Surfaces – examples of good practice

- Research the historic significance of routes and their materials
- Regularly repair damage to path surfaces
- Where appropriate, replace loose surfaces with an alternative firm, non-slip surface
- Re-lay or re-point uneven setts or slabs to create a level surface
- Incorporate a firm, level route within an area of uneven cobbles

## Steps

Many different kinds of steps are found in historic parks and gardens. They are used not only for vertical movement but also to divide and create spaces, add grandeur and spectacle, and to provide interest along routes.

Steps are obvious barriers to access but before proposing to remove or alter them it is important to understand their reason for being in a particular place. Steps that form an architectural feature or significant design element within the landscape will be less easy to change. Some may even be listed and will require consent before they can be altered.

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 who are blind and partially sighted, especially if there is little visual contrast between the treads and risers. Part M of the Building Regulations 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. For example, tactile paving or contrasting nosings are unlikely to be appropriate for steps that form parts of sculptural compositions or terminate grand vistas. More creative solutions may instead be necessary – for example visually contrasting surfaces that tie in with existing materials or warnings on a tactile map or audio guide.

Handrails are important for safety on both steps and steep paths but can look out of place in a historic landscape where the intention may have been 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 that provide the best possible contrast without adding new colours. The design of handrails should follow the criteria and dimensions set out in Part M of the Building Regulations. *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* (2015) includes advice on stairs, landings, handrails and lifts.



### **Brodsworth Hall**

These steps 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.

#### **Steps – examples of good practice**

- Find out if architectural or archaeological features need to be protected
- Design new ramps and steps in keeping with the historic setting and consider providing a choice of ramps or steps if possible
- If appropriate, highlight approaches and nosings with a visual or tactile contrast
- Provide seating and resting points between flights of steps
- Install handrails on both sides of steps or ramps
- 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



### Ramps and gradients - examples of good practice

- Find out if there is a need to protect architectural or archaeological features
- Provide ramps and steps that are appropriate to the setting
- Install handrails on both sides
- Provide seating and resting points along a sustained slope
- Provide tactile indicators on the approach to a ramp
- Ensure ramp surfaces are slip-resistant
- Highlight locations of ramps on tactile maps or in audio guides

#### Top: Geffrye Museum, London

This ramp and steps combination offers a choice of access routes in a compact space.

#### Bottom: Well Hall Pleasaunce, London

An example of balancing historic significance with access improvement to accommodate changes of level.

Some historic landscapes are set within particularly challenging terrain, which may be a distinctive feature of the site. Achieving a level route may be impossible but access improvements should still be considered. Advance warning, handrails, powered buggies and seating are all ways of improving access in such situations.

### 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 of the Building Regulations 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.

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.

Ramps should be designed as integral features even where they are initially installed as temporary solutions. An increasing range of portable ramps is 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 to locate the steps and visitors with limited mobility can 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. *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* (2015) includes a section on ramps, stairs and handrails.

### On-site transport

Some larger historic parks and gardens 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. It 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. They are among the best ways of improving the quality of experience of disabled visitors but it is crucial that the site can accommodate them safely. They have a greater impact on path surfaces and will require extra space to manoeuvre.



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#### Top: Witley Court

This use of resin-bonded gravel allows the creation of subtle ramps that do not impact on the overall appearance of the site.

#### Middle: William Morris Gallery, Lloyd Park, Walthamstow.

A forecourt of bonded gravel and a terrace of gently curving ramps provide an elegant but easily accessible route to the front entrance.

© Parks Agency

#### Bottom: Chatsworth House

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

© Devonshire Collection / Chatsworth



## On-site transport - examples of good practice

- Seek the opinion of access advisors and disabled people
- Undertake a risk assessment
- Offer vehicular tours as an option for people who cannot walk far
- Select self-drive buggies and wheelchairs appropriate to the terrain
- Encourage visitors to bring their own self-drive buggies
- Prepare a training and instruction manual for staff
- Offer training sessions to visitors when they arrive at a site
- Provide information on suitable routes, and on areas that should be avoided
- Maintain a log for checking out vehicles and recording feedback
- Implement a regular vehicle maintenance programme



### Hyde Park, London

Liberty Drives allow 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.

© Sensory Trust

## Garden features

Rockeries, grottoes, glasshouses, follies, temples and bridges may present particular access challenges. Ideally visitors should be able to visit all of them but in reality achieving full access may be extremely difficult. In such circumstances it may be possible to create a viewpoint from which the feature can be seen - for example a path with vantage points looking down over a rockery. Glasshouses are often narrow with slippery metal gratings but it may be possible to provide a view in from one end. Elsewhere, alternative routes may be designed to avoid bridges with steep crossings or low parapets yet still provide access to the water's edge.

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. If all else fails, video displays on the spot or at an interpretation centre, audio guides, illustrated guidebooks or guided tours may be acceptable alternatives.

## Information and interpretation

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.

Inappropriately designed or located signage can detract from the aesthetic qualities of a historic landscape - for example a signpost or interpretation panel installed on the axis of a key vista, or that uses inappropriate materials or colours.

Display panels and leaflets can be valuable ways of communicating information but other approaches can open up the site to a wider audience. For example, tactile maps allow visually impaired visitors and people with learning disabilities to enjoy a site independently.



### Top:

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

© John Watkins

### Bottom: Wrest Park

Garden features like this Chinese bridge 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.

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## 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.



**Top:**

Information boards should be displayed at a height that suits both standing and seated visitors.

© Peter Wenham

**Bottom:**

Signs must be not only legible but also sensitive to the feelings of disabled visitors.

© Peter Wenham

It may be best to produce leaflets for general use in an easily readable print size. The Royal National Institute of Blind People recommends a 'clear print' standard of 12 point (as used in this publication), with versions of the text enlarged to 14 point or more, ready for printing 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. EasyRead, Moon, Widgit and Makaton are amongst systems developed for people with learning disabilities that use pictorial symbols in place of words. These can be incorporated into general information and interpretation.

Signs should be simple, short, and readily understood. Lettering and background colours need to contrast and the style and size of font should be appropriate for easy reading outdoors and at a distance. A consistent style will help everyone get around the site. Careful consideration needs to be given to the location of signs and signboards, both in terms of the requirements of visitors and the impact in the landscape setting.

**Braille guides**

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

**Easy reading**

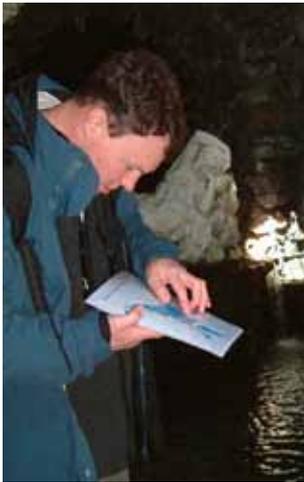
Easy-to-read leaflets can help many people, such as those with limited literacy skills, a learning disability or with dyslexia. They may also be helpful for children learning to read but who want their own guide. Such information is clearly and simply worded, presented in a good point size, and supported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

**Hands-on interpretation**

Most blind and partially sighted visitors rely on touching objects to gain direct experience and information. Gardens and landscapes - and in particular their mature trees, sculpture and ornamentation - can be rich resources for tactile exploration. New installations should be specifically 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 depend on the availability of trained staff or volunteers. Skilled describers can accompany visually impaired visitors as part of a sighted guide programme.



**Top left:**

Sometimes an important message can be strengthened through a dose of gently applied humour.

© Peter Wenham

**Right: Down House**

Visitors are able to use a downloadable audio guide to help them navigate their way around Charles Darwin's garden.

**Bottom left: Stourhead, Stourton**

A tactile plan allows visually impaired visitors to better understand the layout of the 18th-century grotto.

© National Trust

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 people who require this interpretation 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', CDs, MP3 players, smart phones and tablet computers. Players of audio guides for blind and partially sighted visitors should be easy to use, with tactile indicators on buttons.

Audio content for blind and partially sighted visitors should be developed to include information appropriate to their needs, such as descriptions of scale and colour.

**Digital technology**

Well-established digital technology has the potential to offer visitors imaginative alternative visual interpretation of inaccessible areas. Computers can simulate visits to features such as a steep rockery, or provide a virtual view into a decoy to 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.

Many people now like to download digital content using their own smart phones before or during a visit and this can be a good way of offering different access options for disabled visitors, providing that it is well promoted. QR codes and web links posted at key parts of the site can give instant access to online content in this way.

### Tactile models

Models of the site are of interest to most visitors. They can be an excellent way of enabling blind and partially sighted visitors and people with learning disabilities to appreciate the scale and overall layout, and to put important features into context. Thought needs to be given to the best location for these models, balancing the convenience of visitors with preservation of the landscape setting.

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#### Top: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Visitors can download a free app for their mobile phones to help them find their way to features and hidden gems around the gardens.

© Royal Botanic Gardens

#### Bottom:

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

© Sensory Trust

## Comfort

Seating, shelter and facilities such as toilets and refreshments are important to all visitors, but especially those who are older, disabled or accompanied by young children.

## 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.

The style and location of seating and shelter are sometimes 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 hard level surface, rather than on a raised platform. Grass is a difficult surface for people with mobility impairments. 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 the 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 as part of their original design and these could be incorporated into an improved network of shelter and seating. Follies, grottoes, arbours and groves of trees can all provide opportunities for shelter or seating, provided they are accessible from the main visitor route.

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.



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### Top:

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

© Sensory Trust

### Bottom: Eltham Palace, London

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



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**Top: Kenwood House, London**

A sensory experience may be just as much about peace and quiet. A successful access plan opens up the full range of experiences to as many people as possible.

**Bottom:**

This informal group of picnic tables includes at least one with space for a wheelchair. However, the thoughtful selection of furniture is marred here by the uneven bark-chip surface.

© Peter Wenham

### Seating and shelter - examples of good practice

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

# 4 Published Sources of Information

## 4.1 Primary legislation

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Equality Act 2010

Planning Act 2008

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Equality Act 2010 *Code of Practice: Services, Public Functions and Associations* Statutory Code of Practice. London: Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011

*Physical Accessibility Standards*. Fieldfare Trust.

*National Planning Policy Framework*. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012  
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

*Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide*. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2003

*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans*  
[www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa1-historic-environment-local-plans/](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa1-historic-environment-local-plans/)

## 4.2 Official guidance and policy documents

Building Regulations 2010. *Approved Document M: Access to and Use of Buildings*. NBS (National Building Specifications), 2004 edition with 2010 changes

BS 8300:2009+A1:2010. *Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People: Code of Practice*. British Standards Institute, 2010

BS 9999:2008. *Code of Practice for Fire Safety in the Design, Management and Use of Buildings*. British Standards Institute, 2008

Equality Act 2010 *Code of Practice: Employment* Statutory Code of Practice. Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011

*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*

[www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/)

*Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets*

[www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/)

### 4.3 Sources of publications and information

British Standards are available from the British Standards Institution at [www.bsigroup.co.uk](http://www.bsigroup.co.uk)

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) publications can be downloaded at [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Historic England publications are available from [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications)

Building Regulations Approved documents can be downloaded at [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) and Stationery Office documents are available from [www.tso.co.uk](http://www.tso.co.uk) UK, legislation is available at [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

For general enquiries about statutorily protected listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens in England contact [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk) or visit the National Heritage List for England at [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/)

Further guidance materials and fact sheets on access to the natural environment are available from the Fieldfare Trust [www.fieldfare.org.uk/](http://www.fieldfare.org.uk/) and the Sensory Trust [www.sensorytrust.org.uk](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk)

### 4.4 General reading

Barker, Peter and Fraser, June 2000. *Sign Design Guide – A Guide to Inclusive Signage*. London: JMU Access Partnership and Sign Design Society

CABE 2006. *Design and Access Statements: How to Write, Read and Use Them*. London: CABE

CabeSpace 2004. *A Guide to Producing Parks and Green Space Management Plans*. London: CABE

Cave, Adrian, 2007. *Making Existing Buildings Accessible: Museums and Art Galleries*. London: RIBA

Countryside Agency 2005. *By all Reasonable Means*. Cheltenham: Countryside Agency

English Heritage 2005. *Streets for All* (set of eight regional manuals). London: English Heritage [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/)

English Heritage, 2008. *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*. London: English Heritage [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/)

English Heritage 2010. *The Register of Parks and Gardens: Moving towards a New Way of Managing England's Historic Environment*. London: English Heritage <http://content.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/register-parks-gardens/register-parks-garden.pdf/>

English Heritage 2013. *Practical Building Conservation: Conservation Basics*. London: Ashgate  
[www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-basics-conservation/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-basics-conservation/)

Fieldfare Trust *A Good Practice Guide to Countryside Access for Disabled People*. New online guidelines are added about the Equality Act 2010 and access audits.  
[www.fieldfare.org.uk](http://www.fieldfare.org.uk)

Heritage Lottery Fund 2012. *Conservation Plan Guidance*. London: Heritage Lottery Fund

Heritage Lottery Fund 2012. *Making Your Project Accessible for Disabled People: Good Practice Guidance*. London: Heritage Lottery Fund

Historic England 2015. *Easy Access to Historic Buildings* (2nd edition reissued). London: Historic England  
[www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/)

Historic England disability history webpages  
[www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/)

Natural England's reports and publications under the theme '[Outdoors for All](#)'

*Opening All the Gates* 2012. Connecting People and Gardens: National Capacity Building Grant 2010–11, Final Report. London: National Trust, Historic Houses Association, Royal Horticultural Society and Association of Gardens Trusts

Penton, John 2008. *Widening the Eye of the Needle* (3rd edition). London: Church House Publishing

Price, Richard and Stoneham, Jane, 2001. *Making Connections: A Guide to Accessible Green Space*. St Austell: Sensory Trust

Royal National Institute of the Blind 2011. *Designing Gardens and Nature Trails*. London: RNIB

Sawyer, Ann and Bright, Keith 2008. *The Access Manual: Auditing and Managing Inclusive Built Environments* (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell

Sensory Trust's guidance materials, fact sheets and publications [www.sensorytrust.org.uk](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk)

Stoneham, Jane and Thoday, Peter 1999. *Landscape Design for Elderly and Disabled People*. Woodbridge: Garden Art Press

Watkins, John and Wright, Tom (editors) 2007. *The Management and Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes. The English Heritage Handbook*. London: Frances Lincoln

# 5 Where to Get Advice

## 5.1 Access organisations

Accessible Countryside for Everyone  
[www.accessiblecountryside.org.uk](http://www.accessiblecountryside.org.uk)

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID)  
[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)  
020 7296 8000

Age UK  
[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)  
0800 169 6565

Centre for Accessible Environments  
[www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)  
020 7822 8232

Fieldfare Trust  
[www.fieldfare.org.uk](http://www.fieldfare.org.uk)  
01334 838629

Mencap  
[www.mencap.com](http://www.mencap.com)  
0808 808 1111

Mind  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
0300 123 3393

National Register of Access Consultants  
[www.nrac.org.uk](http://www.nrac.org.uk)  
020 7822 8232

Royal National Institute of Blind People  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
0303 123 9999

Scope  
[www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)  
0808 800 3333

Sensory Trust  
[www.sensorytrust.org.uk](http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk)  
01726 222900

Thrive  
[www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)  
0118 988 5688

Web Accessibility Initiative  
[www.w3.org/wai](http://www.w3.org/wai)

## 5.2 National amenity societies

Ancient Monuments Society  
[www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk](http://www.ancientmonumentsociety.org.uk)  
020 7236 3934

Council for British Archaeology  
[www.archaeologyuk.org](http://www.archaeologyuk.org)  
01904 671417

Garden History Society  
[www.gardenhistorysociety.org](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org)  
020 7608 2409

Georgian Group  
[www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)  
020 7529 8920

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  
[www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)  
020 7377 1644

Twentieth Century Society  
[www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)  
020 7250 3857

Victorian Society  
[www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)  
020 8994 1019

## 5.3 Other bodies

Association of Gardens Trusts and the county gardens trusts  
[www.gardenstrusts.org.uk](http://www.gardenstrusts.org.uk)  
020 7251 2610

Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers UK  
[www.algao.org.uk](http://www.algao.org.uk)  
01975 564071

Cadw (Heritage in Wales)  
[www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk)  
01443 336000

Department for Communities and Local Government  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government)  
0303 444 0000

Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-culture-media-sport](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-culture-media-sport)  
020 7211 6000

Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland)  
[www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/built-home](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/built-home)  
028 9054 0540

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs)  
03459 33 55 77

English Heritage Trust  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)  
0870 333 1181 (Customer Services)

Heritage Alliance  
[www.theheritagealliance.org.uk](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk)  
020 7233 0900

Heritage Lottery Fund  
[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)  
020 7591 6000

Historic Houses Association  
[www.hha.org.uk](http://www.hha.org.uk)  
020 7259 5688

Historic Environment Scotland  
[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)  
0131 668 8600

Institute of Historic Building Conservation  
[www.ihbc.org.uk](http://www.ihbc.org.uk)  
01747 873133

Landscape Institute  
[www.landscapeinstitute.org](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org)  
0207 685 2640

National Trust  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
01793 817400

Natural England  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england)  
0300 060 3900

Open Britain  
(An online guide to accessible places to visit)  
[www.openbritain.net](http://www.openbritain.net)

Parks and Gardens UK  
(On-line resource on historic parks and gardens )  
[www.parksandgardens.org](http://www.parksandgardens.org)  
01904 323965

Royal Horticultural Society  
[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)  
0845 260 5000

Tourism for All  
[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)  
0845 124 9971

Visit England  
[www.visitengland.com](http://www.visitengland.com)  
020 7578 1400

## 5.4 Contact Historic England

### East Midlands

2nd Floor, Windsor House  
Cliftonville  
Northampton NN1 5BE  
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Email: [eastmidlands@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:eastmidlands@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

### East of England

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24 Brooklands Avenue  
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Portsmouth PO4 9LD  
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138-142 Holborn  
London EC1N 2ST  
Tel: 020 7973 3000  
Email: [london@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:london@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

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41-44 Sandhill  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE1 3JF  
Tel: 0191 269 1200  
Email: [northeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:northeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

### North West

Suites 3.3 and 3.4  
Canada House  
3 Chepstow Street  
Manchester M1 5FW  
Tel: 0161 242 1400  
Email: [northwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:northwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

### South East

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195-205 High Street  
Guildford GU1 3EH  
Tel: 01483 252000  
Email: [southeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:southeast@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

### South West

29 Queen Square  
Bristol BS1 4ND  
Tel: 0117 975 0700  
Email: [southwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:southwest@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

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The Engine House  
Fire Fly Avenue  
Swindon SN2 2EH  
Tel: 01793 414700  
Email: [swindon@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:swindon@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

### West Midlands

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10 Holliday Street  
Birmingham B1 1TG  
Tel: 0121 625 6820  
Email: [westmidlands@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

### Yorkshire

37 Tanner Row  
York YO1 6WP  
Tel: 01904 601901  
Email: [yorkshire@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:yorkshire@HistoricEngland.org.uk)



# Historic England

We are the public body that looks after England's historic environment. We champion historic places, helping people understand, value and care for them.

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