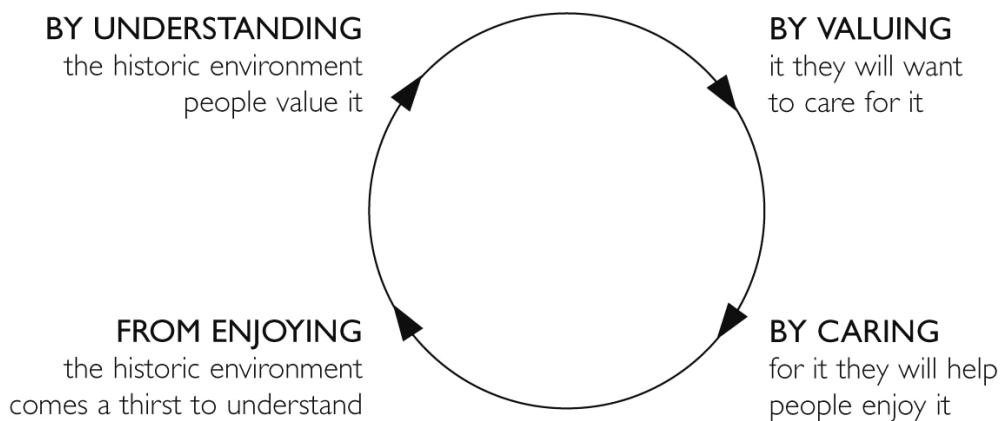


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

English Heritage Properties Access for All Policy

English Heritage's vision is that all visitors are empowered to participate fully in the Heritage Cycle.



This cycle is underpinned by six strategic aims:

1. Understanding: Help people develop their understanding of the historic environment;
2. Valuing: Get the historic environment on other people's agendas;
3. Valuing: Enable and promote sustainable change to England's historic environment;
4. Caring: Help local communities to care for their historic environment;
5. Enjoying: Stimulate and harness enthusiasm for England's historic environment; and
6. Make the most effective use of the assets in our care.

English Heritage will achieve this vision by actively engaging with visitors to remove barriers to enjoyment of our properties. Our strategy relates to improving access in its broadest sense at our properties. Access is more than the physical environment of a property, but includes the usability of services and the enjoyment of cultural heritage. Our strategy focuses on customer service, physical and interpretative access.

At English Heritage, we believe that improving access for disabled people means that access is improved for everyone. This means that whilst this policy often refers to the needs of disabled people, it may also aid everyone, including parents of young children, older people and other groups of people with specific needs.

Since 1995 English Heritage has carried out physical access audits at all of our 411 properties. A range of physical improvements have been made across the portfolio; from induction loops to the provision of ramps where necessary. In addition audio tours have been introduced at key sites to benefit our visually impaired visitors.

Welcome All training is provided annually for all of our Visitor Operations staff. We have produced the second edition of our *Access Guide* which includes detailed access information for anyone planning a visit.

This strategy is informed by the Social Model of Disability and forms a key plank of meeting our *Disability Equality Scheme* objectives. Widening participation and removing barriers is about taking measures to improve access for the whole community including, but not limited to, disabled and Deaf people, families, older people, children and young people.

English Heritage is committed to involving disabled people in the implementation and review of this strategy. Disabled people and Scope were actively engaged in developing this strategy.

This strategy is effective from 1st April 2008 and covers a period of five years until 31st March 2013.

The strategy is supported by an *Access Improvement Plan*, which sets out the actions we will take to improve physical, interpretative and customer access to our properties. The plan will use a range of data, most importantly through our best practice *Integrated Access Assessment Toolkit*.

We believe that successful implementation of the "*Properties Access for All Policy*" will benefit the whole community – our visitors, stakeholders, employees and volunteers. English Heritage believes that good access benefits the whole community.

Tim Reeve, Properties Director

Introduction to this policy

Making properties accessible to the whole community is a key part of English Heritage's five year corporate strategy¹. We wish to include everyone.

Since 1995 English Heritage has carried out physical access audits at all of our 411 properties. A range of physical improvements have been made across the portfolio; from induction loops to the provision of ramps where necessary. In addition audio tours have been introduced at key sites to benefit our visually impaired visitors.

Welcome All training is provided annually for all of our Visitor Operations staff. We have produced the second edition of our *Access Guide* which includes detailed access information for anyone planning a visit. The *Access Guide* is available in paper format or can be viewed on the English Heritage website.

We welcome over 10 million people to our sites each year and wish to widen their participation. Widening participation is about taking measures to improve access for the whole community including, but not limited to, disabled and Deaf people, families, older people, children and young people.

Our Customer Service Standards underline our commitment to Access for All and have a commitment that staff at English Heritage:

"will ensure that all our properties are safe, accessible and welcoming as far as possible, for all our visitors."

This Five Year Properties Access for All Policy contributes to meeting English Heritage's Strategic Aim 5, which is to *"Stimulate and harness enthusiasm for England's historic environment"* (Enjoyment of Heritage).

Underpinning this policy is the concept of the 'Heritage Cycle', which demonstrates how the historic environment can become part of people's lives through 'understanding, valuing, caring and enjoying the historic environment all around.'

Successful implementation of the "Properties Access for All Policy" will benefit the whole community - our visitors, stakeholders, employees and volunteers. English Heritage believes that good access benefits the whole community.

"Properties Access for All Policy": our vision

English Heritage's vision is that all visitors² are empowered to participate fully in the Heritage Cycle. English Heritage will achieve this vision by actively engaging with visitors to remove barriers to enjoyment of our properties.

¹ *'Making the Past Part of Our Future, the English Heritage Strategy 2005-2010'*

² The definition of *visitor* is broad and includes members of the public who visit a site, cyber visitors or individuals who use our literature or teaching packs

“Properties Access for All Policy”: our mission

English Heritage is committed to providing the fullest access possible to properties for all of our visitors within the resources available. All visitors can reasonably expect to enjoy independent, supported and dignified access to all of our properties. They can expect accurate and detailed visitor information, high standards of customer care, access to a range of public events, a willingness to anticipate a range of access requirements and a choice of interpretation.

We will achieve this by removing the common barriers experienced by visitors in the heritage environment: attitudinal, physical, sensory and intellectual.

Principles of the “Properties Access for All Policy”

The English Heritage Disability Equality Scheme states that:

“We recognise that people are disabled by physical and social barriers rather than individual impairments or conditions. The “problem” of disability results from social structures and attitudes, rather than from a person’s impairment or medical condition. We also recognise that not everyone who is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act definition of disability will consider themselves disabled. Some Deaf people, who use British Sign Language consider themselves as a linguistic minority, with a lifestyle, history and specific culture, rather than as ‘disabled’.”

Disabled and Deaf people’s equality will only be achieved through removing existing barriers to social inclusion and, specifically, by removing barriers to the enjoyment of heritage.

Using the Social Model of Disability means that our services will be accessible to the whole community. The use of this model does not imply that this policy is only relevant for disabled people. English Heritage recognises that it has a duty to consider the different needs of men and women, especially as carers and parents, when planning access to our services and sites. We also aim to provide for the needs of different age groups. This policy aims to cover all the needs of these different groups.

The scope of this policy

Access is more than just getting in, around and out of buildings. Access is more than the physical environment of a property, but includes the usability of services and the enjoyment of cultural heritage.

English Heritage aims to achieve a fine balance between ensuring access for all and preserving and enhancing the significance of historical places within the resources available. English Heritage aims to thoughtfully and appropriately reconcile our responsibilities under access legislation and in relation to managing the historic environment and to balance these two roles.

We will remove the barriers described above by considering the following four elements of access:

- **Attitudinal access** as high quality customer care and an organisation which is responsive to the requirements and needs of disabled people.
- **Physical access** as access to the properties and services provided for all disabled people with a wide range of impairments and conditions.
- **Information and intellectual access** as access to the presentation, interpretation and dissemination of built and landscaped heritage and our collections. Access is achieved by means of physical improvements to the site, aids, services, and alternative formats that are accessible to people with a wide range of impairments and conditions.

Our commitment to removing barriers recognises that disabled people are a diverse group of people and that this diversity of experiences and identity is something to be valued and harnessed.

We may all have different access needs at different times in our lives. Pregnancy, parenthood, caring responsibilities, illness or just our age, can affect the facilities we need. This policy covers how we will address the wide range of visitors' needs and ensure that our sites offer the widest possible access for all.

Who is responsible for the Properties Access for All Policy?

Strategic oversight of this policy rests with English Heritage's corporate Social Inclusion and Diversity Programme Board (SID). The Chair of SID is Deborah Lamb, Director of Policy and Communications.

Operational ownership and responsibility for implementation rests with Properties and Outreach through the Properties Action Group (PAG). The Chair of PAG is Rebecca Kane, Visitor Operations Director, London

Every Department, Team and member of staff has a responsibility to contribute to the implementation of our Properties Access for All Policy in accordance with our Customer Service Standards.

Local Management Agreements should manage in line with Disability Discrimination legislation.

Embracing the Disability Discrimination Act

English Heritage welcomes its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act as part of its commitment to making inclusion happen.

English Heritage recognises that it has a:

- Duty not to discriminate.
- Duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- Duty to anticipate and plan for the inclusion of disabled and Deaf visitors
- Duty to involve disabled people

In order to meet these duties, English Heritage may be required to:

- Remove or alter or avoid physical barriers to services or provide an alternative method of access to the service
- Provide auxiliary aids and services
- Review policies, practices and procedures which may put disabled people at a disadvantage
- Anticipate and plan for the requirements of disabled people ('anticipatory duty')

English Heritage's Disability Equality Scheme

This "Properties Access for All Policy" is a key part of achieving the aims of English Heritage's Disability Equality Scheme. The purpose of our Disability Equality Scheme is to ensure disability equality becomes part of English Heritage by:

- Showing how we have involved disabled people in developing the scheme and taking the decisions we have made;
- Explaining the arrangements we have in place to gather information on our performance on disability equality;
- Explaining our arrangements for assessing the impact of our activities on disability equality;
- Explaining how we will use the information we gather in reviewing the effectiveness of our actions; and

Key actions from the Access Improvement Plan will be included in the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan, monitored and reviewed as part of English Heritage's corporate commitment to Disability Equality.

An impact assessment on the design of this policy has been completed and is available for public reference, please refer to Appendix I.

Involving Disabled People

Scope was commissioned to develop this policy in collaboration with English Heritage and has done so with the active participation of disabled people.

English Heritage is committed to involving disabled people in the establishment, implementation and review of this policy. We recognise involvement as a key part of meeting our requirements under the Disability Equality Duty. We will ensure involvement takes place through our rigorous impact assessment process.

The Properties Action Group (PAG) will review the implementation of the policy four times a year.

English Heritage will seek advice from expert access consultants as well as other relevant agencies, disability equality consultants and advocacy bodies when considering access at more complex and high visitor number sites. Every effort will be made to ensure that these consultants/experts are disabled people. The primary source of information and engagement will be disabled people with lived experience of societal barriers. Engagement of consultants will not take precedence over the involvement of disabled people.

Disabled people will be involved in developing plans for major re-developments and restorations of properties.

Meeting the Gender Equality Duty

English Heritage has a duty under the Equality Act 2006 to ensure that we consider the different needs of men and women in planning our public services and consult where necessary. We need to make sure that we do not discriminate against women on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity and that our services are equally available to parents and carers.

In applying this policy, we will seek to remove barriers to access that affect families and carers, by assessing where we can offer breast feeding, nappy changing and buggy access or alternative means of carrying young children. We will promote family friendly customer care and work with contractors to offer family friendly service in our site cafes (including high chair and bottle warming provision).

We will continue to deliver family friendly events at our sites and will provide information on access facilities for families in our Access Guide.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all customers of English Heritage as well as employees and volunteers.

Access Improvement Plan

This policy is supported by a five year Access Improvement Plan (further details of which, are supplied in part II of this document).

Policy Timeframe

This policy is effective from 1st April 2008 and covers a period of five years until 31st March 2013.

Communication of the Properties Access for All Policy

Copies of this policy will be made available upon request at all sites and properties and the Executive Summary will be displayed where possible.

This policy will be available online to members of the public and from our Customer Services Department. Electronic copies will be downloadable from the English Heritage website: www.english-heritage.org.uk. The policy is available in alternative formats including audio, Braille and easy read versions from our Customer Services Department (see address below).

The policy will be included as part of the programme for corporate induction for new people to the organisation at English Heritage and as part of the Properties and Outreach site induction for all staff.

All of our contractors will be made aware of this policy through contract compliance documentation and their responsibilities in helping English Heritage to achieve its aims and objectives.

What does this policy cover?

This policy relates to access at all English Heritage sites including historical properties which are open to the public, visitor centres, museums, gardens, restaurants and public events.

How can you make a comment on or raise a complaint about the “Properties Access for All Policy”?

If you wish to raise a complaint, comment or issue concerning this policy and its implementation, you should in the first instance address this to our Customer Services Department:

English Heritage Customer Services Department
PO Box 569, Swindon, SN2 2YP
Telephone: 0870 333 1181
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 01793 414878
E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk

Part II: Access Improvement Plan

Introduction

The Access Improvement Plan comprises six elements:

Action	Owner	By when
Physical audit of all properties	Properties Action Group	31.03.08
Access assessment of all staffed properties	Properties Action Group	31.03.13
Electronic storage system of access data, integrated into Health and Safety database		TBA
Access Improvement Plan in place collating all actions using the prescribed methodology	Properties Action Group	01.09.08
Implementation of Access Improvement Plan	Properties Action Group	31.03.13
Review and evaluation of Access Improvement Plan	Properties Action Group	31.03.13

English Heritage views access as a continuous improvement process based on the customer's experience and expectations. The Properties Action Group (PAG) will review and update the policy six months before it expires. It will also be reviewed on a quarterly and annual basis when the PAG group meets.

Gathering the evidence

Physical Audits

Since 1995 we have carried out physical access audits at 100% of our 411 properties. As a result, a range of physical improvements have been made across the portfolio.

Access Assessment

The integrated Access Assessment has been designed externally by Scope to:

- facilitate a clear and consistent means of assessing access provision
- encompass the physical, intellectual and customer service provision at our sites
- enable it to be used internally and externally
- provide clear and prioritised recommendations which can be stored in a database
- assess need, as determined by disabled visitors

Small and medium staffed sites

The four Territory Health & Safety Co-coordinators (THS&C) have been trained in completing access assessments for this category of staffed sites. Each THS&C is committed to delivery of four assessments per territory per annum.

Complex and high volume customer sites

English Heritage commits to engaging external access consultants to undertake audits of properties, which are visited by a large volume of people each year. We believe that this is appropriate to do because of the complex nature of these sites, which require specialist knowledge and innovative solutions to improve access. These sites are included at appendix I.

This selection is determined by two factors (1) the level of visitor numbers (100,000 visitors numbers per year or more) and (2) by the complexity of the site.

Non-staffed sites

English Heritage will treat non-staffed sites differently from staffed properties when achieving the aims of the "Properties Access for All Policy". The reason for this approach is that most of these sites generally have low visitor numbers and disproportionate, potentially prohibitive costs of making significant adjustments. English Heritage is prioritising changes to our staffed properties, where visitor numbers are significantly higher.

English Heritage aims to ensure that these non-staffed sites are as accessible as possible. As part of the "Properties Access for All Policy" we have introduced a physical access assessment, using pictograms for these sites. This assessment will gather information around key access elements such as the availability of accessible toilets and accessible car parking at non-staffed sites.

A short access guide will be developed for each site using this information and will be shared publicly via English Heritage's website. Further details on this are contained in the Access Improvement Plan.

Access improvements at non-staffed sites will comprise a key element of the review of this five year strategy in 2013. In the meantime we seek to improve access through existing programmes where possible, including the Free Sites Unlocked project.

Access Improvement Plan

The access information compiled by the physical audits and access assessment will provide the evidence for and feed into the 'Access Improvement Plan'.

The Access Improvement Plan will be owned by the Properties Access Group, who will have responsibility for evaluating and reviewing achievement of actions in this plan.

This plan indicates a level of urgency by using a system of high/medium/low impact adjustments based on the needs of our customers. High impact means that the issue needs to be addressed in the short term in order to ensure the full participation and inclusion of all customers. High impact will also indicate where a property is not meeting its Disability Discrimination Act requirements. Medium impact, on the other hand, indicates that work can be phased over the life of the Access Improvement Plan. Low impact indicates aspirational items, which are unlikely to be addressed during the life span of this strategy.

This methodology will help to establish phasing of the improvement plan over a five year period and linked to the access improvement budget for the lifespan of this strategy.

Phase I: High Impact

High impact relates to access issues that need to be addressed in the short term. High impact is defined by:

1. An access issue, which could be seen as a breach of English Heritage's legal duties in relation to physical access.
2. An access issue, which could be seen as a breach of English Heritage's legal duties in relation to finding alternative means of providing the service e.g. intellectual access or customer service.
3. A substantial number of complaints about the access of a service or element of a service from visitors.
4. A 'quick win' i.e. an access issue that can be addressed easily within existing resources such as regular cyclical maintenance or re-development / restoration of a property.

Judgements on high impact will also relate to customer numbers at the site, with high customer volume sites likely to be seen as a high impact priority.

Phase 2 – Medium Impact

Medium impact relates to access issues that need to be addressed in the medium term to ensure that the service has best practice access. Medium impact is defined by:

1. A physical access issue, which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, but still makes it difficult for customers to access the service and is not best practice.
2. A non-physical access issue (intellectual or customer service), which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, but still makes it difficult for customers to access the service and is not best practice.
3. A substantial number of complaints about the access of a service or element of a service by English Heritage staff.
4. Few or no complaints have been raised about the access of a service or element of a service by disabled people.

Judgements on medium impact will also relate to customer numbers at the site, with low customer volume sites likely to be seen as a medium impact priority.

Phase 3 – Low Impact

Low impact relates to access issues that need to be addressed in the longer term but are aspirational in the context of this five year strategy. Adjustments that are prohibitive on the basis of cost will also be included here.

Decision making process for making adjustments under “Properties Access for All Policy”

All completed site assessments will be tabled at the property’s Site Team meeting (STM) as chaired by the relevant Visitor Operations Director. Membership of this meeting forum is cross group and ensures that the appropriate disciplines (e.g. Interpretation, curatorial, visitor operations, estates) are represented in order to facilitate thorough discussions, decision making and the generation of realistic action plans.

Site Team meetings will have operational responsibility for assigning activities in the regional Access Improvement Plan. These activities will be submitted to the Territory Property Steering Groups (TPSG) where budget allocations are agreed. The Properties Action Group who will oversee regional plans and develop the corporate Access Improvement Plan.

Responding to customer comments

This methodology will be used to respond to and take action on any specific comments regarding access from our customers.

*“Properties Access Policy for All” prepared by Chris Sherwood, Scope
(May, 2008)*

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact
our Customer Services department:
Telephone: 0870 333 1181
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 01793 414878
E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk