



A Guide to Filming at Historic Environment Scotland Sites

1. Introduction

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) manages over 330 diverse sites, from early farming settlements and Pictish stones to palaces, castles, abbeys, cathedrals and churches; from military fortifications and industrial sites to 19th century houses.

This wide portfolio can provide ideal locations for any type of filming: major film and TV productions, advertisements, editorial photography or smaller independent productions.

Professional photography of any nature follows the same procedures outlined in this document, as do sound recordings.

You can browse all the sites we manage www.historicenvironment.scot/visit

Alternatively, you can explore our shortlist of [popular and inspiring filming locations](#).

We welcome enquiries to film and photograph our sites. However, we must ensure that they remain protected throughout the process and that the visitor experience is not significantly compromised. For this reason we will not allow film crews to ask visitors to move out of shot etc. However, with sufficient planning we can close sites and parts of sites to the public. We can also facilitate early opening or late closing times. We will explore options to meet your production needs, while fulfilling our obligation to safeguard the sites.

2. Permission, Timeframes, Fees

Filming **must not** take place at a HES site unless prior, written permission has been issued through your filming liaison contact.

The length of time required to plan a piece of filming and issue permissions will vary based on the details and complexity of your proposal. For example, we may be able to accommodate a very small crew with only handheld equipment in under 10 working days.

If your proposal involves equipment or arrangements that could potentially impact the built or ground structure of the site, Scheduled Monument Consent is likely to be necessary (see Section 6 for details). Where this additional consent is sought, a **minimum of three months** is advised for the paperwork, but productions should get in touch as early as possible to ease the process.



Requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis taking in to account factors such as likely visitor numbers, existing scheduled events, planned maintenance work and site-specific sensitivities such as access, masonry, or wildlife habitats.

Fees will apply to all filming at HES sites, except:

- Promotional filming – where HES and our sites are being directly promoted or where filming has been commissioned by Scottish tourism partners (see Section 4 for details)
- Student filming – filming carried out as non-commercial, educational projects by students/school children will be charged a nominal administration fee only but must adhere to certain parameters (see Section 9 for details)

All other types of filming will be subject to fees. These will vary depending on the nature of your filming, crew size and specific site and are always subject to negotiation. We use a pricing structure, available on request, where fees start from £300 for up to 2 hours on site.

Additional charges may be applicable depending on your requirements. For example, the cost to HES of providing additional staffing to supervise your filming or loss of admissions income if the site needs to close to visitors. Other elements that carry additional charges include:

- Road closures in Holyrood Park
- Special parking provision for vehicles or base units
- Use of a UAV (drone)
- Late notice applications (less than 5 working days)
- Cancellation of confirmed filming

These fees offset the costs of facilitating filming and any profits are contributed back for use towards our charitable objectives, such as conserving and maintaining our sites. For full information on fees, discuss your project with us using the contact details below.

3. Contact Information

If you are interested in filming at a Historic Environment Scotland property, please contact the below mailbox, where our colleagues will start the process for you.

filming@hes.scot

+44 (0)131 668 8747

4. Promotional Filming

Historic Environment Scotland defines filming as Promotional where our organisation and our sites are being directly promoted as places to visit, as opposed to media



exposure only.

Filming commissioned by Scottish tourism partners in receipt of Scottish Government funding may be considered as Promotional, depending on content.

Filming for factual, non-dramatised productions with a primary focus on the history of a site(s) may be classed as Promotional Filming, but this is at our discretion and can be further discussed with your filming liaison contact at Historic Environment Scotland.

Promotional Filming will typically only be considered under the following parameters, to reduce impact on site(s):

- A maximum of 5 people (cast and crew) on-site for the filming
- A maximum of 2 hours on-site
- Equipment to be kept to a minimum, and not requiring Scheduled Monument Consent

5. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (Drones)

Requests to use UAVs at our sites will be considered on a case-by-case basis. We will only allow UAV filming if the following requirements are met:

- The flying is carried out by a CAA accredited operator, whose credentials must be proven to Historic Environment Scotland by providing your CAA certificate
- A comprehensive Risk Assessment and method statement including flight paths and area control, submitted by the UAV operator, which must be approved by our Conservation team and our own CAA accredited drone operators
- The operator must abide by all CAA guidelines for UAV usage

If a site has visitor opening hours, UAV filming must take place outside these to ensure flyover areas are unoccupied by the public. For sites without set opening hours more in-depth planning will be required to minimise risk to the public.

Please read our full guide to using UAVs at our sites, available on [our website](#).

Further information may be obtained from the Civil Aviation Authority website www.caa.co.uk

For clarity, please note that all other filming guidelines in this document also apply to UAV filming.

6. Scheduled Monuments

HES manages sites on behalf of Scottish Ministers, on account of their cultural significance to Scotland and the sensitivity of their conservation. As a result every care must be taken to ensure that no damage is caused by visiting film crews.

Most of our sites are legally designated as ‘scheduled monuments’. This means that prior written consent of Scottish Ministers is required for any works at those sites. These should be the minimum necessary and remain consistent with the preservation of the site.

If your proposal involves equipment or arrangements that could potentially impact on the built structure or ground of the site you will probably need to apply for [scheduled monument consent](#) before we can grant filming permissions. Please allow at least 3 months for the full process, as applications take around 8 weeks to be decided upon once submitted. Your filming liaison contact can help with your application but the decision will ultimately lie with our specialist regulatory department within HES. Pre-application discussions are encouraged, and may assist in identifying arrangements that do not require scheduled monument consent.

For example, without Scheduled Monument Consent all stands must have rubber footings, nothing must penetrate the ground and no attachments whatsoever can be made to stonework or the fabric of any monument. With a Scheduled Monument Consent application, some of these operations may be permitted provided sufficient detail is given and less invasive alternatives have been explored and shown to be non-viable. These will be on a case by case basis and depend on the monument, sensitivity and intended works. Generally we encourage creative freestanding and non-invasive solutions that avoid the need for Scheduled Monument Consent.

Any person carrying out works or allowing works to be carried out on a scheduled monument without consent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted.

We can, through discussion, generally find solutions to reasonable filming requests that comply with our responsibility to protect the monuments.

7. Equipment, Crew, Props and Effects

As outlined above, without Scheduled Monument Consent equipment cannot be attached to any part of a monument. All lighting, tripods and any other structures must be freestanding and have rubber footing to avoid any damage to the monument.

For example, freestanding counterweighted rigs may be used for overhead camera shots.

Nothing must penetrate the ground of a Scheduled Monument. This is to protect any undiscovered archaeological remains.

7.1. Film Crew Size

We may ask you to reduce your numbers depending on the nature and details of your production and the site you are filming at. Film crew size also impacts your fee. Vehicle parking requirements must also be discussed at point of enquiry.

A select number of our sites may be able to accommodate base units, using either generators or mains connectivity. Fees for base units and special parking requirements are by negotiation.

7.2. Physical and Special Effects

All applications that include the use of smoke or other effects must state:

- the effect you wish to use/achieve
- where within the site you intend to use the effect
- the chemical composition of the materials involved in the effect

It may be possible to use certain effects in some areas (e.g. on grass) and not others (e.g. on or near stone). Each effect will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be included in the Risk Assessment.

7.3. Replica Weapons

Prop weapons such as swords and other bladed weapons can be brought on site as long as they are blunted and risk assessed. We must see certification for any replica guns before filming begins.

Fort George and Edinburgh Castle are run in partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and both have a military presence. The MOD will be told of all requests to use replica weapons at these sites and they may ask to inspect such items.

7.4. Use of Animals

You may be able to use animals on site in certain circumstances as long as:

- they are controlled properly
- their use is risk assessed and their welfare appropriately safeguarded
- you hold the relevant paperwork for the movement of any livestock

8. The Application Process

Filming requests are processed through discussion and negotiation, but the key steps are as follows:

- 1) Pre-application advice and receipt of blank filming application form.
- 2) Submission of completed form, Risk Assessment, Public Liability Insurance and other documentation if required.
- 3) Site meeting held if appropriate.



- 4) Discussions of plans and revision of proposal and Risk Assessment if necessary.
- 5) Fees agreed if applicable.
- 6) Legally binding contract signed, Permission Letter issued
- 7) Payment requested if applicable.

Please provide as much detail as possible when completing the initial form: proposed dates and times, potential locations, content and nature of the script, detailed description of any equipment to be brought on site, set dressing, number of vehicles, cast, crew and extras.

Your request will be circulated internally to relevant teams within Historic Environment Scotland for comments. Straightforward requests may not require a site meeting and the process can continue through telephone and e-mail correspondence with your filming liaison contact.

For more complicated requests a site meeting may be necessary. This may involve colleagues from various Historic Environment Scotland teams, to cover practical aspects such as impact on visitor operations or site conservation and infrastructural concerns.

Any questions, concerns or issues are discussed at this stage to determine whether your request can be accommodated at our site(s). At this point we will be able to confirm whether or not we can take your request forward. All being well an informal agreement will then be reached.

Fees are agreed. Fees will apply to all filming except Promotional Filming or Student Filming. All fees are subject to negotiation based on the details of your request. Additional charges may be applicable, your filming liaison contact will discuss these with you.

For all requests a comprehensive Risk Assessment is required before the Permission Letter can be issued. This will be examined by our Conservation team, and any issues or inadequacies must be resolved in order to receive your Permission Letter and commence filming. These may have been discussed at the site visit. If you are unsure of how to write a Risk Assessment, seek guidance and further information from the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk/risk.

We will also always require proof of Public Liability Insurance, to a claim value of £5 million; although higher levels may be required or lower levels accepted in certain circumstances.

When all agreements are in place, we will issue our Terms & Conditions document. This **must** be signed and returned in full before filming can take place. No changes to our contract, of any nature, will be accepted and the document must be signed as presented in order to proceed.

Following this, your Permission Letter will be issued and filming can commence as agreed.

Invoices will be issued to you as agreed. For larger or complex productions this may mean a payment prior to commencement of filming and/or a refundable remediation deposit (See Section 10).

9. Student Filming Requests for Educational Projects

Historic Environment Scotland recognises the educational benefit of accommodating filming projects for students of media and other subjects. We will consider student requests, applying many of the same processes as for other clients, but with some modifications. Your project will need to meet the following requirements:

- A thorough Risk Assessment
- Public Liability Insurance to the value of £1 million
- A letter from your lecturer, course organiser or equivalent, confirming that the project forms a required part of an accredited course of study
- A maximum of 5 people (cast and crew) on-site for the filming
- A maximum of 2 hours on-site
- Equipment and set to be kept to a minimum, and not requiring Scheduled Monument Consent
- Students aged 16 or under must be accompanied by a teacher or group leader
- Student filming is not permitted at Edinburgh Castle or Stirling Castle during April-September or during December due to operational challenges

A nominal administrative fee of £50 will be charged for facilitating your project. If additional staffing is required either to provide access to the site outside normal opening hours or to specifically supervise the filming, we will need to charge the cost of this back to your project. Fees can be invoiced to either the individual student or educational institution provided written consent to the fees has been provided by your course organiser.

As with all filming requests, submitting your request as far in advance as possible is strongly advised for the best chance of obtaining permission.

10. Fees & Remediation Deposits

Fees will apply to all filming except Promotional Filming or Student Filming. For details on how we define Promotional Filming, see Section 4. If additional staffing is required to facilitate Promotional Filming, we will charge for these costs. For all other types of filming, prices start from £300 for 2 hours on site. All fees are subject to negotiation based on the details of your request.

Additional charges may be applicable depending on your requirements. For example, the cost to Historic Environment Scotland of providing additional staffing to supervise your filming or loss of admissions income if the site needs to close to visitors. Other elements that carry additional charges include:



- Road closures in Holyrood Park
- Special parking provision for vehicles or base units
- Use of a UAV (drone)
- Late notice applications (less than 5 working days)
- Cancellation of confirmed filming

For full information on fees, including our detailed pricing structure, discuss your project with us by emailing filming@hes.scot.

Remediation Deposit: Should we judge that your filming poses a risk of damage to a HES site, a refundable remediation deposit will be required prior to commencement of filming. The level of deposit and responsibility for before and after conditions surveys will be negotiated prior to permissions being issued, based on severity of potential damage. This may be as simple as taking photographs of the ground conditions before and after or may be more complex according to the details of your filming. If no damage occurs the full deposit will be refunded to you by an agreed date at the end of the filming. If any remedial works are required at HES expense, these will be deducted and the balance refunded.

Cancellation Fee: Once filming arrangements have been confirmed and your Permission Letter issued, cancellation will incur a charge of half the agreed fee. Cancellation with less than 48 hours' notice will be charged the full agreed fee.

11. Filming Not Considered

Not all themes for filming will be considered by Historic Environment Scotland.

Political filming – HES is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) with charitable status, caring for our sites on behalf of Scottish Ministers. As such we must remain strictly politically neutral at all times. For this reason we do not allow any filming of a political nature whatsoever.

Paranormal filming – HES does not promote the use of its sites for the investigation of alleged paranormal activity and we do not allow activities that might damage the integrity of the site. Filming requests of this nature are unlikely to be granted permission.

Inappropriate filming – HES will not permit requests for filming that are deemed unsuitable insofar as they do not align with the organisation's objectives or are considered to be blasphemous, salacious or derogatory in nature.