



## **Access Policy for Properties in Care and Associated Collections**

**APRIL 2024**

# Access Policy for Properties in Care and their Associated Collections

## 1. Our Aim

To enable everyone to engage with and enjoy Scotland's Properties in Care and their Associated Collections, both now and in the future.

## 2. Introduction

Scotland's portfolio of 336 Properties in Care and their Associated Collections is managed and operated by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) on behalf of Scottish Ministers under the terms of two Schemes of Delegation<sup>1</sup>. The Properties and their Associated Collections are cared for and protected in law to ensure their long-term conservation and to provide access for present and future generations.

HES has a broad Access and Equalities remit; this policy relates only to the Properties in Care and their Associated Collections under the Schemes of Delegation but nests within the HES Mainstreaming and 2021-25 Equality Outcomes Report<sup>2</sup>. This clearly aligns with the Vision set out in the HES Corporate Plan, Heritage for All: 'The historic environment is cherished, understood, shared and enjoyed with pride, by everyone.'<sup>3</sup>

This policy was informed by the results of consultation with multiple user groups and organisations including VisitScotland, Euan's Guide, Deaf Action, English Heritage and Cadw. It is delivered in conjunction with a wide range of partners including public bodies; advocacy groups; other groups including charities representing disabled people and particular audiences; and advisory groups with specific areas of expertise.

## 3. Legislative context

HES's key legal duties in relation to Properties in Care and Associated Collections (PICACS) are 'to manage the properties in care, ensuring their investigation and conservation, articulating and safeguarding their cultural

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<sup>1</sup> HES Scheme of Delegation Documents: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/who-we-are/corporate-information/schemes-of-delegation/> <sup>2</sup> HES Mainstreaming and 2021-25 Equality Outcomes Report: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationid=266d581c-bcb7-42ea-86bb-ad1901520e21> <sup>3</sup> HES Corporate Plan, Heritage for All: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/who-we-are/heritage-for-all/>

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significance and providing public access for current and future generations, and managing the associated commercial operations’.

In relation to the provision of access HES has a specific duty to: ‘afford controlled public access to a property in care, and the power to provide necessary facilities and information or other services for the public’.

Other relevant legislation includes the Equality Act (2010), the Gaelic Language Act (2005) and British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

#### 4. Definitions

In the context of this document the following definitions apply:

**Access:** The ability of everyone to engage with Properties in Care and their Associated Collections, so people feel welcome and able to explore our properties and collections either in person, online or through other means.

**Barriers to access:** Anything that reduces a person’s ability to engage with Properties in Care and their Associated Collections.

#### 5. Approach

We believe that making Scotland’s Properties in Care and their Associated Collections accessible to all is about more than access to tangible places and objects. It is also about accessing stories, intangible cultural heritage and sense of place.

To achieve this HES will:

- recognise the social model of disability which views the barriers created by society as the cause of disadvantage and exclusion, rather than the impairment itself
- consider diversity in its widest sense, including socio-economic, cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as groups covered by equalities legislation.
- reduce or remove barriers to access and equality in the broadest sense.
- embed access in our processes and operations
- continue to be guided by the principles of the Ename Charter for the Interpretation of Cultural Heritage Sites <sup>2</sup>
- recognise that public perceptions of heritage vary, and seek to understand how people value properties, collections and their stories.

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<sup>2</sup> ICOMOS Ename Charter for the Interpretation of Cultural heritage Sites, 2007.  
<http://www.enamecharter.org/downloads.html> The principles guide the HES Interpretation Principles and Standards..

We will strive to achieve a balance between our legal duty to provide access to our properties and collections and our legal duty to conserve and protect them. Each property and object requires a specific approach. To meet the challenge effectively for as many people as possible, we will deliver effective access solutions which do not damage or reduce the cultural significance of our properties and collections.

## 6. Delivering Access for All

To achieve these objectives HES will:

- **apply** high standards and share guidance
- be **inclusive** by working with a wide range of partners
- **raise awareness** in customer care and visitor-facing delivery
- **improve understanding** of cultural differences/preferences of audiences
- **enhance inclusive access** through all aspects of audience experience
- **learn** and understand visitors' access requirements through engagement and research
- **present** diverse histories developed through meaningful engagement

and deliver through:

- **Access-led planning:** embedding accessibility into all project, programme and operational development
- **Access-awareness training:** ensuring that staff attitudes to inclusive access are informed, positive, non-judgemental and responsive
- **Accessible communication:** to ensure that all communication is delivered to high access standards – through access-aware graphic and UI design, positive language, plain English, high quality translation, British Sign Language and audio descriptive tours, etc
- **Clear pre-visit information:** enabling people to make informed choices when planning a visit and delivered through appropriate accessible media
- **Diverse interpretive methods:** using appropriate media such as online/digital content, guided tours, events or on-site interpretation including graphic panels, exhibitions, guidebooks, audio tours, downloadable materials, costumed interpreters, tactile and sensory displays, learning and public programmes, staff-facilitated access to collections not on public display, outreach activities etc
- **Inclusive content:** researching and sharing diverse and representative stories, images and cultural experiences
- **Improved visitor infrastructure:** improving access through inclusive infrastructure, including accessible paths, ramps and handrails, lighting, induction loops, audience-specific resources such as ear-defenders, seating and accessible parking spaces, mobility aids, courtesy cars for those with limited mobility.

During the lifespan of this policy, we will continue to evaluate and improve our deliveries and processes through ongoing engagement and feedback with a wide range of user groups and organisations.

**APPROVAL DATE**  
**APPROVED BY**  
**REVIEW DATE**

**APRIL 2024**  
**DAVID MITCHELL, DIRECTOR OF CULTURAL ASSETS**  
**APRIL 2029**