

## **Access for all in the historic environment**

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### Situation/purpose of study

At the National Trust, our vision is “to look after special places, for ever, for everyone”. Looking after places ‘for ever’ brings complex challenges for our conservation work but we also have an equally important duty in ensuring we are looking after these special places “for everyone” to enjoy. The historic environment presents an interesting conundrum when aiming to maintain the integrity of the site and providing for the needs and changing requirements of disabled people, the changing expectations of disabled tourists, and opportunities to connect disabled people with culture.

### Approach and/or methodology

The methodology will cover the development of legislation, policies and procedures, and their role in shaping how the historic environment becomes more accessible. It will also discuss the involvement of disabled people in the decision-making process. The focus will not just be on adaptations to built structures, but will look at how to develop a more inclusive interpretation offer to broaden the opportunities for a range of disabled people to visit a historic property and have access to culture.

The discussion of the conundrum will cover the process from identification of the requirement to increase access, exploration of any ‘conflict’ of ideas between conservation and access professionals, through the decision-making process and discussions, to the identification of the solution and its implementation. The Trust’s approach to staff and volunteer training will also be included as will the evolution of thinking about accessibility and the connection between disability history and accessibility of heritage.

### Results/conclusions

The session will be illustrated by examples of practical applications of solutions in specific Trust places. The session should help people feel more confident in taking the approaches discussed here and raise awareness of what is possible in the historic environment. It will also show the role the historic environment can play in an accessible tourism offer.