

Environmental Alert - Archaeology

Areas of archaeological interest are significant as they are an irreplaceable record of the past protected by law and planning requirements.

Historical artefacts are a part of our heritage, and have significant value for education, research, leisure, tourism and the economy. We have a responsibility to mitigate any potentially harmful effects that development may have on these.

Archaeology in Construction

Archaeological mitigation requirements will be communicated to the project team through the Environmental Management Plan (EMP – produced by MWHT) and the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI – produced by a third-party archaeologist).

Requirements for intrusive investigations can include evaluation (trial trenching), open area excavation or works to be carried out under an archaeological “watching brief”. These may be required prior to works (e.g. trial trenching) or during works (e.g. when undertaken topsoil stripping).

Archaeological requirements can affect what machinery, controls, and methods we use so it is important to be aware of the requirements before starting works. This needs to be discussed with the project Environmental Planner as early as possible.

All archaeological works (surveys, watching briefs, excavation) should have a WSI prior to commencing.

Consequences



Potential consequences due to non-compliance:

- Legal Penalties: Fines and legal action can be taken under heritage protection laws.
- Project Delays: Construction projects can be halted.
- Financial Costs: Due to fines, legal fees, standing down time and any additional work required to address archaeological issues.
- Reputational Damage: We risk being seen as negligent or disrespectful towards cultural heritage, which can potentially affect future business opportunities and relationships with stakeholders.
- Loss of Planning Permission: In severe cases, planning permission for a project can be revoked.

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Examples of Incidents

The construction of a new tank required excavations in the assumed buried location of Hadrian's Wall. A Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was obtained. However, a subsequent design change resulted in the slab base for the kiosk being installed in a different location, which was not covered in the original SMC. Further investigations by an archaeologist confirmed no harm occurred, however the outcome could have been much worse!



Four drill pits were excavated without archaeological presence. A Watching Brief was required by the Archaeology Advisor to the Local Planning Authority and detailed in the approved WSI.



A ditch adjacent to a Scheduled Monument was cleared without archaeological monitoring or supervision.

These have subsequently been addressed.

What Do You Need to Do

- Consult the Environmental Management Plan or Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) to understand any archaeological mitigations that may be required on your project.
- If unsure, contact your Environmental Planner or Environmental Advisor before starting works.
- Brief the mitigation measures to all site staff (including sub-contractors) and undertake the toolbox talk on [Archaeology](#) (EVTT01-59).
- Make a note on project drawings, mapping areas requiring a watching brief or trial trenching. Include areas identified as having archaeological constraints including Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments on the project Constraints Map
- Ensure a start date for works has been included in the project programme. The project Environmental Planner will ensure a contractor has been appointed - for watching briefs, at least 3 weeks' notice is required.
- Include requirements in Daily Briefings and discuss them in weekly programme meetings as a reminder.
- For more information, please refer to the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Guidance Document – EVGD01-59 ([Environmental Guidance](#))

