

7. Burial Grounds for All – Welcoming all abilities into your burial ground



This sheet explains the steps that can be taken to make your burial ground as accessible as possible based on what you already have in your grounds.

A CULTURE OF WELCOME

Making as many people as possible welcome in your burial ground is not as difficult (or expensive) as you might think. Accessibility is not only about ramps and wheelchair accessible paths, and whilst this is a great thing to do if possible and affordable, there is a lot you can do if it isn't. Remember to work with what you have, if only part of your site is or can be made accessible then that is better than no access at all.

Helping people to plan their visit

Whether people with access needs are visiting for an event, a service, to visit a grave or simply to enjoy this beautiful place, being able to plan and know exactly what to expect can be the single thing that allows somebody to visit. This knowledge allows potential visitors to make informed choices about whether they can visit independently or might need help. It can help soothe anxieties and offering detailed access information shows consideration and a spirit of welcome to all people.

Getting there

How do people arrive at your churchyard, cemetery or chapel yard?

Give as much information as you can including the location of bus stops or train stations and which bus routes it is on. What is the journey distance and conditions from leaving public transport to the burial ground entrance? How long is it, is there a pavement, crossing points, steep slopes up or down and are there any seats along the route? Does the bus stop have a shelter and seat?

For people arriving by car, describe the parking available and how to get to it, whether the postcode will get a visitor directly to the parking or whether further directions are required. Describe the surface of the car park and whether there are designated spaces marked for disabled visitors. If the parking is on the roadside, make that clear, are there kerbs and pavements? Is the most accessible route between designated parking and the entrance to the site easy to find and clearly marked? If there are multiple entry points, which are the most accessible ones, and can you park near them? This is helpful for people who are

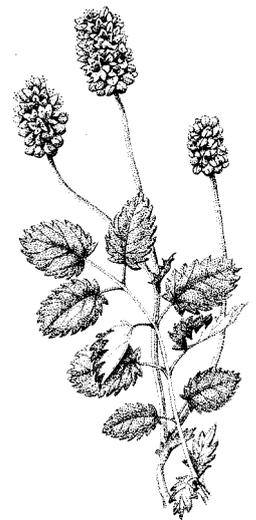
getting a lift or taking a taxi, so that the driver can be directed to the best entrance.

Making a site welcoming to all need not be expensive or difficult. You have a responsibility to maximise access but not to make everywhere fully accessible. Most burial grounds have some parts which are not particularly easy. Do what you can to make reasonable adjustments, particularly when planning a change such as a new path, notice board or car park layout.

Once there

Tell visitors what they can expect once they have arrived. Is the ground level or not, what are the surfaces of paths and how does this change with the seasons? Are paths swept clear of wet autumn leaves or treated for ice? Are there steps, steep slopes or ramps and can these be avoided by selecting a different route? Describe any steps or slopes; is there a handrail, how many steps are there and how steep, are they lit on dull days or for evening events? Most people will have some sort of access need during their lifetime and your detailed knowledge of your grounds is a valuable thing to share.

An accessible toilet is a real bonus for visitors, if your burial ground has one then do let people know. If you have additional facilities such as a change table or a



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hoist, make that clear too. When is the loo open and is it easy to get there from a designated parking place?

Many people need to stop and rest frequently and knowing where they can sit will allow them to explore. Does your site have any seating and how far it is in metres from the parking to the first seat? You can estimate this by taking long strides of about 1m or measuring on an accurate map. Are there more seats and if so where?

Say something like; 'you can find several seats in the new part of the churchyard, at about 40m intervals. The older section has one bench, which is about 150m away from the nearest seat along a grassed path.'

Think about how to reduce or remove any barriers that stop people accessing and enjoying your site. Do they need more information to be able to plan their visit? Where will they find this information? Is access made as easy as possible with information that is clear and useful? What extra things you can do to make your churchyard or cemetery interesting for all visitors?

How will visitors find this information?

Think about where people can learn about the accessibility of your site and any other interesting information that you want to share. Would a map or a series of photos on a website be a good way to let people know about what to expect or how about a short video? Is information available in a different form for those who have difficulty reading?

If you have an accessible, interesting place to visit please try to spread this useful information. Is there a church or community website or Facebook page? Think about local tourism offices, the community Hub or café,

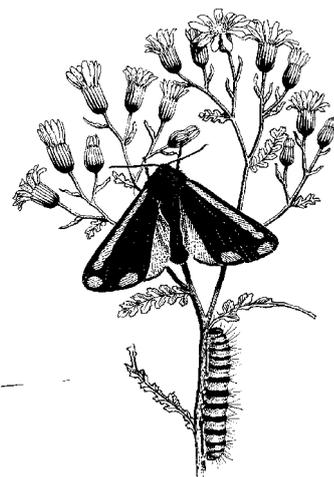
as well as local organisations that support people with access needs. Those who help plan activities on the site such as wedding planners, undertakers and those holding other events or functions need this information too. Consider providing a phone number for people to ring with access questions.

We have put together an access checklist to help you collate the information that might be helpful to anyone planning a visit. It is at the end of this sheet.

Information for visitors during their visit

Try to think of ways to welcome and help those with particular needs. Good access information on site makes it clear that all are welcome to visit and explore. If you are renewing your signage, leaflets or other interpretation then try to make it all as inclusive as possible.

How about putting Makaton symbols onto an entrance notice board? This welcomes children with additional needs. Can your signs be read when sitting down? Is text easy to read for those with partial sight or colour blindness? Can visitors receive the information by touch or sound rather than sight? It is a good idea to seek help and advice about this so see Useful Contacts for online resources and organisations offering guidance.



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Other things to consider

Accessibility also includes non-physical access needs. Are you able to present information about your site for people who cannot read or find reading difficult? Providing information through pictures and photographs makes the information immediately accessible to young children as well as non-readers. To be able to sit back and listen to a recording of nature notes, stories about the stones or a descriptive tour of the grave yard can be enjoyed by anyone with adequate hearing including those with reduced mobility and those who have forgotten their reading glasses!

Few burial grounds will be entirely accessible to everybody on every level of need; however you can be creative in how you help people to explore and enjoy as much as possible.

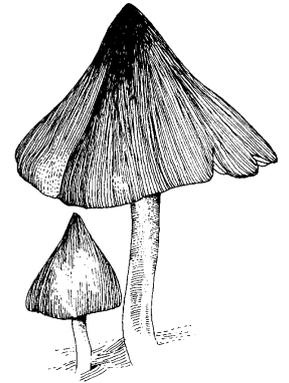
This could include:

- An album of photographs of points of interest that might be hard to reach for some visitors. These might

be the wildflowers, notable trees and interesting monuments in a further away area which is down a steep slope or flight of steps.

- A self-guided tour telling visitors what they can see, hear, smell from various (seated) points in the burial ground. This might be a podcast to download, a leaflet or a laminated map.
- A pictorial guide to the site at key moments in its history.
- A sensory garden with scented plants positioned around seating, that is easy to reach from the most accessible entrance.
- A short film available online.
- Audio recordings of the birdsong of various birds that visit the site.

If you do produce items like those above, make sure you tell people about them and where to find them.



Useful Contacts

The Sensory Trust, resources, ideas and advice on making the outdoors accessible

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/>

Creating Accessibility, a list of documents, organisations and guidelines collated by Accessible Countryside for Everyone ACE

<https://www.accessiblecountryside.org.uk/creating-access>

The Church of England Accessibility Guidance

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/accessibility>

Government guidance on designing for accessibility

<https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/>

Government guidance on accessible formats

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

Makaton symbols – this site has a free download section that covers a number of annual events and occasions <https://www.makaton.org/shop/shopping/browseStore/Free-resources>

Making your film accessible to the visually impaired.

<https://zeroproject.org/practice/pr181261tur-factsheet/>

Historic England's Easy Access to the Historic Environment document.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/>

Good practice Guidance from Disability Wales

<https://www.disabilitywales.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/WAY-TO-GO-Toolkit-E-with-links.pdf>

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Access Checklist

This list is to help you consider what you have on your site and might help you answer questions about accessibility for a prospective visitor. This is not an access audit. Distances can be approximate, measured out with paces.

Public transport

- Does public transport pass close to the site?
- How far (in metres) is it from the bus stop/train station?
- What is the bus route number?
- Is there seating or a shelter at the bus stop?
- Is the route on a pavement?
- Is the route up or down hill?
- Are there any obstacles for someone walking with sticks or a frame?
- Are there rest opportunities along the way?
- What type of route is it? E.g. along a busy road, through a park etc.

Parking

- What is the parking situation? Is it roadside or a car park?
- Does the postcode get you directly to the parking or are further directions required?
- What sort of surface does it have?
- Does it have designated parking clearly marked?
- Is the best access route visible or signed from the designated parking space/s?
- Are there any kerbs, steep slopes or steps?

Toilets

- Is there an accessible toilet?
- Does it have any additional facilities (change table, hoist etc.)
- When is it open?
- Does the route from the car park to the toilet involve any steep slopes, steps or ramps?

Seating

- Is there any seating in the burial ground?
- Can you describe them? Do they have backs? Do they have arm rests?
- Does the route from the car park to the closest seat involve any steep slopes, steps or ramps?

How far in metres is it from the designated parking in the car park (if any) to the first opportunity to sit?

What are the distances in metres from the first seat to subsequent seating?

Pathways

Is there a route accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs?

What is the length of this route in metres?

What is the surface of the path?

Are the surfaces slippery when wet?

Do the paths get covered in leaves?

Do the paths get icy?

Is it well lit?

Are there handrails at any point?

If there isn't an accessible route can you describe the easiest route?

What is the length of this route in metres?

What is the surface of the path?

Are the surfaces slippery when wet?

Do the paths get covered in leaves?

Do the paths get icy?

Is it well lit?

Are there handrails at any point?

Is it sloping/steep?

How many steps are there?

Are the front edges of any steps a different colour, texture or material to the rest of the steps?

Are there rest opportunities?

Are there areas of the burial ground that cannot be accessed without negotiating steps or a steep path?

Information

If you have a notice or information board does the route to it from the car park involve any steep slopes, steps or ramps?

Can the information be read from a seated position?

Is there a seat from which the information can be read/viewed?

Do you have information in different formats? (Recordings, large print, pictorial guides) if so where can a visitor find them?

Is the information posted on site able to be found elsewhere e.g. a web site?