

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN 2024-30



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN 2024 – 2030



Note: This plan aims to improve Historic Environment Scotland (HES) for British Sign Language (BSL) Users. It sets out a series of actions to address the barriers faced by BSL Users and their representatives. This plan has been prepared through consultation with BSL communities. It is available in English, BSL and EasyRead versions.

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FORWARD

I am pleased to introduce Historic Environment Scotland's British Sign Language (BSL) Plan for 2024- 30 which has been developed with the aim of promoting inclusivity and accessibility for individuals who use BSL.

The plan outlines a series of measures and initiatives designed to enhance communication, understanding, and engagement with the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community. By incorporating BSL into our practices, we not only meet our legal requirements under the Equality Act but also demonstrate our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all. I would like to thank everyone who participated and supported us in creating this plan, particularly the BSL community.

The key components of the plan include:

- Ensuring that our public-facing services and information are accessible to individuals who use BSL
- Promoting the use of BSL and showcasing our commitment to accessibility through various channels
- Establishing regular consultations with the Deaf community to seek input and feedback on our services, ensuring they are aligned with their needs
- Providing employees with BSL training to facilitate better communication and understanding of the needs of BSL users

I believe that the successful delivery of this plan will make a real difference for our people, for all those who engage with heritage through the services we provide and most importantly for the BSL community. The fulfilment of this plan will also make a tangible and meaningful contribution to our reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible organisation.

Alex Patterson

Chief Executive

Historic Environment Scotland

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

British Sign Language (BSL) is a recognised language in Scotland. It is the first or preferred language of many Deaf or Deafblind people who are members of a cultural and linguistic group. The [British Sign Language \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires listed authorities like Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to publish a six-year plan and demonstrate that they promote the use and understanding of BSL in Scotland.

We have a lead role in understanding, caring for and promoting Scotland's historic environment and heritage. We are committed to making our information and services accessible and inclusive. We want to involve and engage all BSL users so that we can work together effectively to promote Deaf history and culture in Scotland and beyond.

Our BSL plan reflects the aims of the Scottish Government's [British Sign Language \(BSL\) national plan for 2023 to 2029](#) and our [Corporate Plan](#) and is informed by feedback from BSL users. It sets out our actions for the period 2024-30 and aligns delivery to our 2021-25 [Equality Outcomes](#), namely:

- Our Society: We make a real difference to people's lives
- Our Services: We deliver responsive services to meet the needs and expectations of diverse groups
- Our People: We attract, recruit, and develop a diverse Board, workforce, and volunteer base

A BSL video of our plan is available on our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.



ABOUT US

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and are a registered Scottish Charity (SC045925). We investigate, care for, and promote Scotland's historic environment.

We care for more than 300 sites of national importance across the country and look after internationally significant archives and artefacts, containing over 1 million items relating to more than 350,000 historic sites. We are at the forefront of investigating and researching the historic environment and addressing the impacts of climate change on its future. We protect our historic places through designations and consents, promote their sustainable development and provide millions of pounds each year to local communities to repair and revitalise their historic environment.

We are responsible for leading and enabling the delivery of Scotland's historic environment strategy, [Our Past Our Future](#), sets out a high-level strategic framework for the historic environment. Our Corporate Plan, [Heritage for All](#), sets out our vision that: 'Scotland's historic Scotland's historic environment is cherished, understood, shared and enjoyed with pride, by everyone.'

We work with diverse communities and groups. Some, we give financial help to if they are working on a project of national or local interest. We also have a learning and outreach team who work with communities and schools where we can support BSL learners and educators through HES learning programmes. We put on BSL deaf led tours and special events (with BSL/English interpretation) for visitors to our sites.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The [British Sign Language \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires listed public bodies like HES to consult on their BSL plan. The Act also specifies that the consultation should involve individuals who are likely to be directly affected by the plan, including BSL users and those who represent them.

Over the last few years, we have been building good relationships with communities and community-led organisations as part of our wider equalities work. Over time, we have strengthened our partnerships with several partners, including Inclusion Scotland and Deaf Action. During the development of this plan, we arranged consultations and engagement events with adults, children, and young BSL users and their representatives.

This plan has also been shaped using expertise from across a broad range of our functions including, strategy and policy, digital, communications, learning and inclusion, experience, heritage as well as our customer-facing colleagues. We conducted an internal survey and consultation with our employees' forums during this process.



SECTION 2

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND – BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL) PLAN

The Scottish Government's national BSL Plan aims to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit. HES is committed to play its part in this by making a real difference to people's lives. Our work at aligns with the specific Scottish Government national plan goals listed below:

- **BSL Accessibility**
- **Access to Employment**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Celebrating BSL Culture**

BSL ACCESSIBILITY

We support the Scottish National Plan long term goal: 'To remove accessibility as a barrier for BSL users in all aspects of life, recognising the importance of having accessible information in the right format at the right time, utilising technology and increasing people's awareness of communication tools.'

We will:

Ensure there are adequate resources to meet the actions within this Plan over 2024 – 2030.

- Directorates will allocate annual resources from 2024 to ensure that the actions outlined in this plan are achieved by 2030
- Improve our understanding of the different education, work and life experiences from different BSL users across Scotland

Expand our knowledge of the Deaf community across Scotland to improve our services:

- Improve our understanding of BSL use across Scotland
- Monitor the take up of our BSL services by the Deaf community
- Improve our understanding of the different education, work, and life experiences from different BSL users across Scotland

Improve the accessibility of our website information, our corporate documents, public information, events, and onsite property interpretation:

- Explore adding BSL translators to our web/digital estate
- Promote contact SCOTLAND – BSL through our website and corporate branding
- Use our website and social media to promote important information and raise awareness using BSL video
- Provide BSL interpretation at HES corporate events to enable the involvement of BSL users and the Deaf community
- Market our BSL events to the Deaf community
- Identify and develop pre-visit information for key sites in BSL
- Identify and test methods of providing BSL interpretation at the Properties in Care
- Produce summaries of documents in BSL

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We support the long-term goal as set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: 'BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives'.

We will:

Contribute to wider efforts to address social isolation in the Deaf community.

- Better understanding the potential for the historic environment to deliver health and well-being benefits
- Understand the importance of Deaf identity on individual wellbeing
- Recognise and celebrate intersectional Deaf identity for diverse groups e.g., young, and old; women and men; different ethnicities and multiple disabilities e.g. Deafblind community
- Promote the positive social impact of the historic environment to offer spaces for education, recreation, reflection, inspiration, and entertainment to BSL users, Deaf communities, and organisations

CELEBRATING BSL CULTURE

We support the long-term goal as set out in the BSL National Plan, which is: ‘BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, and equal opportunities to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and deaf culture with the people of Scotland.

We will:

Work with others in culture, heritage, and arts to recognise the Deaf heritage and culture in our records as well as provide opportunities for BSL users to participate in and enjoy the cultural life of Scotland.

- Deaf heritage projects will involve the Deaf community in a variety of ways
- Promote participation and access to Scotland’s heritage for BSL users through our use of BSL Tours, innovative technologies and other creative ways
- Promote and communicate climate change issues in the historic environment with the Deaf community
- Through our research programmes, commit in prioritising the exploration and sharing of ‘unheard stories’ within which Deaf heritage will be a core component
- Provide a greater range of experiences for BSL users visiting our properties, through an increased variety of tour guides, sites, and digital accessibility
- Explore different access routes to heritage information through our online archives trove.scot
- Include information important to the Deaf community in Scotland on trove.scot
- Encourage our services (e.g., archives, and collections) to provide information in appropriate formats for BSL users



SECTION 3

IMPLEMENTATION

Who did we speak to when developing our BSL Plan?

- Give visibility of the plan through our website and other social media channels
- Continue to engage with Deaf or Deafblind communities and their representatives to ensure that this Plan is making a difference in their lives
- Incorporate the BSL plan into our Equality Outcomes and Corporate Plan
- Produce a progress report in 2026/27 to review the progress of our actions
- Continue to engage with our colleagues through internal channels to raise awareness which will lead to improvements in accessibility, and inclusion
- Continue to provide training and awareness to our colleagues, volunteers, and board

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT OUR PLAN

We encourage people to give us feedback during the life of this Plan from its launch in April 2024. Anyone can get in touch and tell us how we are doing by:

Email: Please put BSL Plan in the subject title and send your email to – equality@hes.scot

Facebook: Send videos of your comments to us via our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/HistoricEnvScotland>

Post: BSL Plan, Historic Environment Scotland, Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh. EH9 1SH.

Telephone: BSL users can contact us using [contactScotland-BSL](https://contactscotland-BSL.org) on the number: 0131 510 4555. BSL Video Relay Service: <http://contactscotland-BSL.org>





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We are the lead public body established to investigate, care for and promote Scotland's historic environment.

We want to make sure Scotland's heritage is cherished, understood, shared and enjoyed with pride by everyone.

We are committed to ensuring this publication is accessible by everyone. If you need it supplied in a different format or language, get in touch.



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