

Planning a Site Visit

Before the Visit:

- Firstly, you will need to locate a dis-used or under-used historic building for your students to visit. If there are some local buildings that look appropriate, a quick internet search may tell you who owns the property. If you are unsure, try speaking to your local council.

Council Ownership: Ask to speak to somebody in their property department. It's a good idea to have an idea of the age and numbers of students you intend to take, some possible dates and times in addition to being flexible as to the building you visit. The council may have other properties that are more appropriate for you to visit – they often have a few buildings currently not in use. Some council teams may not have encountered similar heritage projects before and having this information, in addition to taking advice as to which properties are suitable for site visits, will enable them to better assist you. If possible, see if they would be able to send somebody knowledgeable about the building to give you a tour. The advantage of council owned buildings is that there will often be archive material (deeds, plans, photographs) you can easily tap into through their own record office.

Private Ownership: Private owners can sometimes be hard to get hold of and may not be inclined to grant you access depending on their time constraints, plans for the building and fears over safety but the only way to find out is to try! Some owners may be very willing to engage with you – see if they have any documents relating to the history of the building as they may be happy to show your students and share their knowledge of the building. Buildings in group or community ownership are often easier to gain access to...

- Health and Safety is of paramount importance so ensure you have your own risk assessment prepared before the visit. Know what questions to ask the owners in advance and consider arranging a pre-visit with the owner so that you can be sure you are satisfied with the safety aspects of your visit and its suitability for your project work.
- Once you have a visit planned, your minibus booked etc. think about what you want to achieve on your visit. We have a survey sheet available to print out which will encourage your students to look at the details of the outside and inside of the building.

Equipment to take:

- Survey sheets
- Clip boards
- Pencils
- Camera
- Tape Measures
- First Aid Kit
- High – visibility vests (if hard hats are required, these are likely to be provided by the owners)

During the Visit:

It's important that all students attending a site visit are briefed on how to conduct themselves on a site visit as it is different from any other trip they may have been involved in to publicly accessible sites. Things to remind them about:

Safety – all students should be visible by a staff member at all times. Students should be aware of potential hazards and briefed as to how to react to them. You may wish for a higher ratio of staff:students than usual, depending on the nature of the building.

Behaviour – not only does behaviour potentially impact on health and safety considerations but students must also be mindful that they are touring a building not usually accessible to the public and that a member of council staff or an owner is willingly giving their time and expertise to enable this.

Clothing – students should all have sensible shoes with their toes protected! Other clothing requirements will be dependent on the type of building being visited.

Encourage the students to make the most of their time on site as they may only have one visit! They should take lots of pictures of things that are good, bad and some general shots to put into their projects.



The HSI team may be able to arrange building site visits in your local area due to our extensive network of building owners across the North East. As arranging visits can take time, please give us as much notice as possible. We can provide administrative support, high visibility vests, hard hats and general guidance on site should you wish. Please get in touch via skills@nect.org.uk.