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Interim guidance for rubbing carved stones for scientific purposes

Many people make rubbings of carved stones for recording or other purposes. However, this can damage them and there should be a presumption against rubbing, apart from in exceptional circumstances. The prior written consent of Scottish Ministers, known as scheduled monument consent, is required in the case of scheduled ancient monuments. There may be circumstances on scientific grounds when producing a rubbing of a stone will inform the recording and hence interpretation of the monument in question. However, the carved stones are often very delicate and this technique can harm the sculpture. Rubbing should not be done where suitable rubbings already exist, or if to rub the stone might run the risk of causing irreversible damage to the carved surface in question. The following is therefore recommended.

1. Non-contact methods for recording are the preferred first option (i.e. techniques of recording that involve no physical contact with the surface of the stone in question). Consider carefully why a rubbing is needed as opposed to any of the other many existing recording techniques. What is it about this particular carved stone that means that these other techniques are not suitable or adequate?
 2. Find out what rubbings already exist and whether in fact these already meet your purpose (the starting point should be the National Monuments Record of Scotland - see www.rcahms.gov.uk - and local Sites and Monuments Record). It is important if rubbings are undertaken that these are not repeated unnecessarily because of the risk to the stone surface.
 3. Ensure that you have the owner/occupier's permission for a rubbing being undertaken.
 4. Find out if the carved stone is scheduled (check PASTMAP on www.pastmap.org.uk or contact Historic Scotland if you do not have access to the web). It is an offence to damage or deface a scheduled ancient monument and prior consent is needed from Historic Scotland before undertaking works, such as rubbing, on scheduled ancient monuments and properties in care.
 5. Check that the stone surface will not be harmed by the rubbing being undertaken by getting professional advice from a stone conservator. The temptation to clean the surface of the stone, other than by hand-picking of loose vegetation, should be avoided since even light brushing can damage the surface of the stone. Again, seek the advice of a professional stone conservator if further cleaning is thought to be essential. The Historic Scotland 1999 *Assessment Methodology* is a useful start to considering the condition of the stone, but cannot be used for reliable self-assessment of surface condition. If in any doubt, do not consider performing the rubbing.
 6. Ensure that the technique of rubbing follows best practice in terms of technique and performance. See for instance Kallhovd and Magnusson 2000 *Rock Carvings in the Borderlands or the Swedish RockCare project*: www.raa.se/rockcare.
 7. The number of rubbings taken should be strictly limited to what is required to achieve a full record.
 8. Ensure that your rubbings or a copy of your rubbings are lodged formally in a publicly accessible archive, such as the NMRS (see www.rcahms.gov.uk) and their production is reported in *Discovery and Excavation Scotland* for the year in question (contact Council for Scottish Archaeology).
- Full details of all organisations cited above can be found in the Contacts for Further Information section of this document.