



Dry Stone Walling

There is great variation in the dimensions and style of dry stone walls in the North York Moors National Park. Many variations occur because of the type of stone locally available, the purpose of the wall and the period in which it was built. The character of individual walls can occasionally vary because of a past piecemeal approach to repairs involving different styles over a long time-period. Despite this, there are clearly recognisable construction styles, including double and single skin walls, and walls which contain elements of more than one style. The presence of features such as throughstones, and of 'wall furniture' such as sheep creeps, smoots, wall-heads, and stiles add further character to historic walls. To conserve walls as features of historic and landscape interest it is important to maintain their local character so the repair or rebuilding of walls should normally be carried out as close as possible to the original style, even where previous changes have not been faithful to this.

Although there are guidance notes below on some aspects of dry stone walling work, they may not be applicable in all situations, and applicants should note that this document does not constitute a detailed specification for the construction and repair of dry stone walls. It is recognised that the variability in both stone and dry stone walling construction styles is such that any generic specification will not always be applicable, and that the waller will need to interpret and closely replicate the original walling style. Where recourse to a specification is needed, the [standard specifications](#) available on the Dry Stone Wallers Association website can be used. There are several, including for double and single-skin walls, revetment/retaining walls etc.

Key principles that should be adopted in undertaking a walling project through the scheme are:

- Wherever possible, repaired and rebuilt walls faithfully maintain the style and character of the original.
- That rebuilt/repaired walling is completed to a high level of quality and creates a structurally stable boundary.
- It is not required that wallers should be accredited. However, it is expected that projects funded through the scheme will utilise wallers with experience and technical expertise in dry stone walling.
- Historical features surviving within walls (for example, blocked gateways/stiles/sheep creeps/wall heads/smoots etc) are retained so that the story of the wall remains readable.

Stone

There is considerable range in the type of stone occurring throughout the National Park. Where there is insufficient stone on site for the repair or rebuilding of a wall it is essential that any imported stone is of the same geological type as the existing walls in the area.

If additional stone is needed to complete walling work the source of the stone must be agreed with the Authority in writing before work starts. If it is agreed that derelict walls can be used as a source of stone the foundation stones must be left in situ as a visual record of the historic feature.

Footings

Footings are the oldest undisturbed section of a wall; some may be medieval or even older. They may be of archaeological interest. Occasionally, the bases of walls are characterised by orthostatic (or edge-set) slabs which may be of significant age. For this reason, when rebuilding an existing wall, the original footings should always be retained undisturbed if they are of good quality. However, old footings can be carefully checked and re-set or replaced if they are insecure, tilted, or if the stone has decayed.

Where new footings are required, they should be dug into the ground to a depth sufficient to provide a firm and level sub-surface, usually 15-30 cm (6"-12"). With double walls the gap between the two footings should be packed with filling stones. On sloping ground the footings can be stepped into the slope so that their surfaces are level rather than running with the slope of the ground.

Unless the style of the wall dictates otherwise, the largest stones are generally used for the footings. These should reach at least a third of the way across the wall and project 5-10 cm (2"-4") beyond the base of each face of the wall.

Coping

The top of the wall should be built to an even height and coping stones should cover the full width of the wall. They must be carefully placed so that they pack tightly together and provide weight onto every top facing stone.

Coping stones on a wall should be laid at the same angle, i.e. either flat, angled or vertical, and should not project beyond the faces of the wall.

Wallheads

Wallheads should be built of alternate courses of ties (i.e. through stones) and runners (long stones placed in line with the wall). The end coping stone must be large and heavy enough to support the rest of the coping.

All wallheads should be free standing and should not lean on trees, gate posts or other structures.

Site Clearance

The site should be maintained in a clean and tidy state, with the impacts of vehicles on the sward and any sensitive areas minimised. All surplus stone must be removed from the site on completion of the wall.

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