



National Plant Monitoring Scheme

Frequently asked questions about land access and permissions

Below you can find a list of questions and responses specific to finding and requesting access from landowners, along with tips for finding out who owns the land within your survey square.

1. The plot I'd like to set up is on private land, but adjacent to a public right of way. Do I still need to request access, even if I stick to the path?

Even if you plan to stick to the path, we still ask that volunteers utilising public rights of way through private land, to access sites on this land, request permission to access to survey. This is because our volunteers are not simply using the path as a right of way, but are collecting data from and about the land adjacent.

2. I would like to access an interesting looking plot on my map, but I cannot find out who owns the land, what should I do?

It can be tricky to find out who owns areas of land. If you are keen to survey a particular plot, and would like to pursue getting landowner permission, there are a number of avenues you can try.

You can also use a combination of Google maps and OS maps online to explore the area digitally first. These can help you to find business and farm names, along with other useful information that can provide a point of contact for your enquiry.

You can also try asking around locally – the local post office can sometimes be helpful, as can the library. Perhaps even a local pub, church, village hall notice board or local business generally may all have contacts to ask. If there are limited numbers of houses near your plots you could try asking here, only if you feel comfortable doing so.

If your square falls within a National Park or AONB, then it is possible that staff at those organisations will be able to help with ownership enquiries. Similarly, if a Wildlife Trust site or RSPB reserve fall on or near your square, even if the plot you're interested in doesn't fall within the reserve, they may be able to suggest another line of investigation.

The NPMS squares map on npms.org.uk provides useful information and displays boundaries of of:

- SSSIs
- National Parks
- National Nature Reserves
- AONBs
- National Trust properties
- RSPB reserves

All of which can provide a useful starting point when investigating who owns and manages the land that falls within. Also see the [Accessing and navigating your square](#) tool suggestions on our Access resources page.

3. My square falls on MOD land. Is it still possible to access plots and survey?

If you find that your survey square overlaps MOD land, don't be immediately perturbed. Please get in touch with support@npms.org.uk. We have a helpful contact and support within the conservation team of the MOD that we can put you in touch with to discuss access needs, suitable site locations and relevant guidance and procedures required to access land.

4. My square overlaps land owned by the National Trust. Is there someone we can contact for access and support?

Yes, the National trust is extremely supportive of the NPMS and if you find that your square overlaps National trust land and you require a contact to request access permission, please get in touch with support@npms.org.uk and we can look to put you in touch with someone in your region. This may be for access permissions or contact information of tenant farmers/land managers.

5. How do I set about requesting permission, once I know who the landowner is?

If you have identified a landowner, you can download a template access permission letter from the NPMS Resources web page ([see here](#)). This is available both in English and as a bilingual Welsh/English option. This explains the scheme to landowners and requests their permission for you to access their land to survey. Simply fill in the gaps within this letter to provide your name and contact details for the person you are asking.

Our updated Access resources also include a helpful document with Frequently asked questions from landowners and our responses to these queries.

Don't forget to record information about access and permissions within the Square details page, once logged in to the NPMS website. There is a "land access/owner information" box, to capture this information. This is incredibly useful both as a reminder for yourself in subsequent years, but also for any future volunteer that may adopt this square.

6. I have taken on a square that was previously surveyed by another volunteer. Do I still need to request access permission?

If you have inherited a square that has had surveys completed previously, it is always worth checking the square details records for any useful information provided by a previous volunteer. This may also provide information about changes in access permissions.

We do ask that you still make contact and request permission to survey, as you would with a new square. Not only as you are a new volunteer asking permission to access the land, but there may also have been changes in land ownership, management or other access considerations since the last surveys were conducted.

7. A landowner has requested Insurance information in order to grant access. Can I provide this?

If a landowner you are contacting has requested further information regarding volunteers' public liability insurance or health and safety, please contact support@npms.org.uk with the request. We will be more than happy to respond to these queries and provide supporting materials.

8. I am struggling to contact a landowner and am not sure what else to try. Should I give up on this square?

If you still find yourself struggling to uncover or make contact with the landowner, please do not struggle alone. Do not hesitate to get in touch with support@npms.org.uk and we can also try to help or contact the landowners on your behalf.

If however it is proving just too difficult to uncover who owns the land and you're keen to get started, there may be other suitable plots within your square that you can find out the ownership of. If you can't gain access to any of the plots in your 1 km square, and there are no accessible options for self-selected plots either, then please let us know and we will try to find you an alternative square.

9. What do I do if I cannot find 5 suitable plots within my 1km square? (e.g. due to restricted access?)

We have recommended a combination of 3 square plots and 2 linear plots, however, ultimately the number and composition of your plots will be determined by the nature of your square and access to sites. Don't forget that the first port of call if you cannot access the plots displayed on your map is to self-select plots in other locations (see page 10 of the survey guidance booklet). If only a smaller number of plots can be done (e.g. 2 or 3) then please just survey this number of plots – don't forget that you could do more than 2 linear plots, for example, particularly if there are numerous paths or arable fields in your square, but little access to actual parcels of land. These linear plots could be streams, hedgerows, arable field margins, or even linear grassland plots on broad verges.

10. What if access restrictions have changed between years, and I can no longer access my previously surveyed plot?

We understand that sometimes access conditions may change over time, especially within a long term monitoring scheme. It may even become impossible to access previously surveyed sites. If access is prohibited due to safety factors, then in no circumstance should you jeopardise your safety e.g. if your plot is near the edge of a maritime cliff and erosion has occurred. If the access restriction is temporary, you can record the inaccessibility this year but return to the plot in subsequent years to see if recording can commence again. If there is no way you will ever be able to access your plot again then record this fact, cease recording in this plot. You can create a new plot within your square if possible.