

## Fort George - VSCG case study

Fort George was built by George II on a promontory jutting into the Moray Firth. When completed in 1769 it was the mightiest artillery fortification in Britain, and it has been preserved as an example of eighteenth century military engineering at its best.



Although it is still a working barracks, and welcomes over 4,000 visitors each year, it has remained virtually unaltered, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. This means that any modifications to improve safety need to be carefully balanced against the impact they will have on the presentation and conservation of the monument.

With almost a mile of boundary walls, the bastioned ramparts of the main fort and outworks have many unguarded drops over which people could fall several metres. Even though there are no known occurrences of people having fallen, the site would be classified as “urban terrain” by the risk control matrix in the VSCG guiding principles. Recognising this, a risk assessment was undertaken to review the risk control measures in place and consider whether any improvements were necessary.

The significance of the monument and the need to preserve its appearance meant that fencing the edge was not an option. Instead, it was decided to use a combination of measures which would together be effective, but which would not impact upon the monument to the same degree.

Some pictorial warning signs were already in place on the ramparts. The locations of these were altered and additional signs erected so that they are always visible to visitors approaching the unprotected edge. It was also decided to erect an additional sign in the car park as the drops are not obvious from this area and children could run on ahead before their parents were aware of the danger.

Staff are trained to warn visitors of the hazards of the site when they purchase their admission ticket. The risk assessment, however, also identified the need for supervision of visitors on the ramparts, especially at peak times, to ensure children are effectively supervised, and visitors are taking reasonable care. The opportunity

to include warning messages in future editions of the free audio guide, available in several languages, was also taken.

The grass is kept short so that the edges of the structure are more easily identified. In parts of the outworks a replica palisade fence has been installed to highlight what would have otherwise have been a blind drop.

A few very short sections where the risk is particularly high, such as either side of the Ravelin Bridge, have been fenced off. Elsewhere cannons have been placed in gun embrasures to discourage people from climbing out onto the bastion walls. In addition temporary barriers are erected during special events when large numbers of people congregate on the ramparts to view the activities on the parade ground below.

Extract from Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group's website ([vscg.co.uk](http://vscg.co.uk)) June 2005