creative england

Filming in England

Filming Guide For Locations

JANUARY 2023



Headstone Tunnel, Derbyshire
@ Helen Hotson / shutterstock

FOREWORD

JANUARY 2023

Please note that this Filming Guide was created pre-Covid-19. Whilst restrictions have eased we reccommend referring to our Filming Guidance Centre which can be found here.

If you have any queries relating to filming please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

What to expect?

Feature films and large-scale TV dramas often have long lead-in times, sometimes up to a year ahead. Production companies may scout in an area several months prior to deciding where to shoot. They could be shooting in several areas of the country and the shoots are intensive and demanding for all involved.

It's good to be realistic and aware of the likely disruption of a shoot. TV drama series usually have an approximate 6-8 week preparation time before filming and are more likely to remain in one region than to film around the country, depending on budget. They will generally employ predominantly local crew and facilities. TV dramas can be just as intensive as feature films but can be more demanding, as the preparation time is shorter and the budgets lower.



Above: Oxford @ Pajor Pawel / shutterstock

The Initial Enquiry

This may come direct or via Creative England, who work with productions from the outset. If the enquiry comes direct and you would like some support you are welcome to approach Creative England and their regional Production Liaison Managers who will be able to assist.

Often the production's initial enquiries are fact-finding missions to see if the region as a whole has the kinds of locations they are looking for. It is at this stage that Creative England may contact local Filming in England Partnership representatives (a Local Authority, Film Office or partner organisation) for location suggestions from the area.

Productions are usually working to tight deadlines and will often need information very quickly. It is important to remember that productions will usually be looking in more than one area, so the quicker a location can respond, the more likely it is that they will secure the production.

It is always important to check how urgent the enquiry is, but try to respond within 24 hours.

In larger organisations, it is well worth identifying an individual to deal with filming enquiries. They will need to be readily available to deal with an enquiry quickly and efficiently. They should be able to make decisions or have immediate access to the person that can approve the decision.


(c) Visit England
- Gold Hill, Shaftesbury


Sandbanks, Dorset
@ Helen Hotson / shutterstock


Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne
@ SW Photo / shutterstock

What Happens Next?

It is important to keep in mind that most initial requests for location suggestions are simply preliminary enquiries and will not necessarily result in filming taking place. Time is always of the essence so a good internal network in your organisation to help deal with requests will speed up your response time and could clinch you the deal.

You should expect the location scout to visit the location to gather further pictures. This will be an opportunity to find out some more information regarding the producton from them. They will likely be visiting numerous locations that match a brief so it's also a chance to really sell what your location can offer.

At this point you should ensure that you have understood exactly the requirements of the production company in terms of the use of buildings and land as well as any alterations to the property, use of furniture or props and use of services such as water and electricity.

Ensure that you are happy with the content and context of the script and its use of your property and that the decision-makers within your organisation are happy with the compatibility of the production with your organisation's values.

Ensure that the production company has Public Liability Insurance to a value that you are happy with. £5m is the industry standard, although some heritage venues require £10m of coverage. You should always ask for a copy of the production company's Public Liability Insurance before agreeing use of a property. Discuss this with Creative England if you are unsure.

If a location or area is managed by the local authority or ancillary organisation it is important that they are involved in discussions from an early stage so that there can be no misunderstanding or problems during the actual shoot. You should make any costs relating to the location clear to the production as early as possible.

If a production wants to use a location that will affect residents or businesses it is important that the production consults with those affected. It is likely that they will consult, along with Creative England, with some or all of the following:

- **Filming In England partners**
- **Local Authority officers from other relevant departments**
- **Film Offices**
- **Resident associations/local business forums**
- **Councillors and ward representatives**
- **Parish council leaders**
- **Emergency services**

If you are asked to help with the negotiations by Creative England or the production company it is important to take into account everyone the shoot may affect. A full picture of the implications of the filming should be gained but negotiations should always remain positive and alternatives should be offered if problems arise. Whilst being as accommodating as possible you should always remain clear and strong about what is, and is not, possible.

Remember that you and your property will still be around after the production company has gone, so it is important to ensure that the filming does not have any negative impact on your reputation within the local community

Scouts & Recces

Prior to committing, the production company will want to visit a location on several occasions. The initial visit is likely to only involve the Location Manager and Production Designer, and sometimes a member of Creative England's Production Liaison team. If they decide that the location fits their brief they will need to return with the Director and the Producers.

They will then generally return a few more times; first with the Director of Photography and then the main technical crew prior to the actual shoot: this is the 'technical recce' where all the decisions about how the filming will take place will be made.

You should attend the recces to provide specialist knowledge and ensure that what is planned will be possible. Invite your operational colleagues, technical teams to the meeting to ensure that all parties are happy with the requirements of the production and that all issues are dealt with in advance of their arrival.



Smugglers Tunnel, Teignmouth, Devon
@ Joe Daniel Price Photography

Project Confidentiality

Project confidentiality is paramount and should be respected at all times. Most production companies will not want details of their project commonly known at the early stages so it is important to ensure that anyone dealing with filming requests respects the production company's confidentiality wishes. Failure to adhere to these requests could, in extreme circumstances, mean that your property loses the production entirely. It is quite common at this stage to ask when you will be able to promote the filming and capitalise on all your hard work.



Brograve Windmill, Norfolk Broads
@ Helen Hotson / shutterstock

Parking

It is likely that a production will need to park key production vehicles as near to the location as possible. It is usual for them to require parking dispensation, often at short notice, to put this in place. If you have outdoor space suitable for parking, offer this as part of the contract.



Peak District National Park
@ Phil Tinkler / shutterstock

Contracts

Your negotiations will form the basis of a location agreement with the production company. Some companies, such as the BBC, will use a standard agreement for filming at your property; others will be happy to draw up an agreement from scratch between the two parties. There is no hard and fast rule about agreements, but you should always ensure that you are happy with its contents. You should request an amendment to anything that you are unhappy with.

There are a number of key points to bear in mind when negotiating agreements:

It is recommended to take legal advice on agreements.

- **Ensure that the fee is indicated in the agreement.**
- **Outline the specific dates and times of filming and consider including penalty clauses for overruns.**
- **Include a clause for use of the property for reshoots - where scenes are added or changed after principal photography.**
- **Ensure you understand the subject and content of the production.**
- **Ensure that the agreement guarantees the re-instatement of the property to its original condition and the repair of any damage.**
- **Consider providing an inventory of your property.**
- **Ensure that it outlines any press or PR opportunities that you would like to exploit.**
- **Include any conservation issues that need to be abided by, e.g. the use of lights.**

UNIT BASE

Major productions will need to source a unit base each day near their key location to park the majority of their vehicles. This can be anything from 20 to 200 trucks and cars as well as dining buses, cast caravans and catering vans. It is a good idea to have some suggestions in your area of accessible car parks, fields or wasteland for this purpose.



Arundel Castle, West Sussex
©VisitBritain / Chris Gorman



Longport, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire
@ RMC42 / shutterstock

Preparation

Once the technical recce has been completed, the Location Manager will come to you with questions and requests from the various Heads of Departments of the production. Such requests can range from the production wanting to paint a wall to asking if they can run a generator cable from the road through the property. Your contract will detail everything agreed and will state the **shoot days** as well as the **prep** and **strike** days that the production needs. The length of prep all depends on how much they wish to change the location but if the production are only shooting a day at your location then you can normally expect them to prep for just one day, which is usually the day before. Most likely you'll be visited by members of the production's Art and Lighting departments who will undertake the neccessary works, they will also advise you to move anything of value at the location into a safe place. The production will have taken pictures of the state of the location before any modifications, but it would be wise for you to also do the same. Once the preparation is complete then you can prepare for the shoot day(s).

The Shoot Day(s)

Once the production has scheduled their shoot, the Location Manager will have made you aware of the call and wrap times for each shoot day at your location. The Location Manager will be the first to arrive to make sure all areas are accessible before the production arrive. Once it reaches the call time various departments and their departmental vehicles will arrive and park-up, unloading any equipment they need for the shoot. This is often a good chance to take a step back and leave the production to it, it can appear overwhelming with the amount of people that turn up, but these are professionals who are used to treating each location they visit with the upmost respect - so don't worry!

Though most productions are planned thoroughly, you must always be prepared for last minute schedule changes. In a lot of cases these changes are unavoidable and are often caused by bad weather, actor availability, script changes or re-writes or a last minute idea by the Director or Producer! Changes to the schedule may affect parking requirements, vehicle registrations or issues on exterior shoots.
If any of the activity causes any issues for local residents, this should be reported to the location manager as soon as possible so it can be resolved. The location manager is the key conduit between the production and everyone else in the local environment and will seek to resolve any concerns swiftly. If any issues are not quickly resolved, you should inform Creative England.

Strike

Once the production has wrapped at your location, it will be returned to its original state, and any modifications will be reinstated as per agreement in contract. The production will allocate time in the schedule for this, depending on the scale of the job. Members of the art department will be the ones to oversee this strike period, so they'll still have all the pictures from before prep began in order to return the location to its original state. You can also use your own references to double check everything is in order. You will be joined by the Location Manager once the strike is complete, and they will ask you to sign a location release form, which means you are happy the location has been returned to its original state and upon signature relinquishes the right to challenge the production legally in regards to its use of your location. If you have noticed any damage or anything unusual with the location, then before signing the release, it would be a good opportunity to raise this with the production. They are legally required to reinstate the property as per agreement in contract. Once you are happy, then there's nothing more to do other than relax. Try keep in touch with the production company or studio behind the production for any publicity that you would potentially like to get on the back of it. Bear in mind members of crew, like the location manager, are freelance so once their contract has finished they are no longer anything to do with the production so any contact needs to be made with the production company or studio.

Filming in Public Buildings

For buildings open to the public, there will often be disruption for visitors during filming. This should be communicated as positively as possible at all times. Relevant websites should be updated confirming when galleries, exhibits or public spaces are not available due to filming. Pre-booked groups and schools should be informed in advance. Notices should be posted on reception desks and at points of entry confirming the same information in advance and on the days of filming. All Front of House staff should be fully briefed as to what is happening and the key times when there will be any disruption.

If the production company is happy to publicise this information, most visitors will appreciate knowing exactly what is being filmed, when and where they will be able to see it and if there are any celebrities involved.

Additional staff may be required to help manage visitor movements. Often the production company will be happy for visitors to be in the area whilst the shoot is prepared but will need the area to be cleared for the actual take. This kind of visitor management will be the responsibility of the property's management in partnership with the production's Security Staff or Locations Team. Close communication is required with the production company at all times.

If the production company wants to film the public, this should only be done with obvious warning to members of the public. Parental permission should be gained for children.



Royal Pavillion, Brighton
@ Cedric Weber / shutterstock



Media City, Salford Quays
@ Gordon Bell / shutterstock

Filming in Heritage Properties

Filming at historic locations often requires cooperation and communication from both sides. One side is trying to get the footage while the other is trying to protect its unique setting. With planning and preparation, and a certain degree of compromise, this can usually be achieved. Filming can be disruptive, but need not be detrimental if the right precautions are taken.

Lights can be hot, people can trape in with muddy feet, cameras are too heavy for historic floors & crew drop coffee, hammer nails and leave Blu Tack all over the place... the list is endless.

Despite this, hours of filming are completed every week in historic properties without any damage because the right planning and protection has been put in place.

The secret of success is pre-planning to identify sensitive areas and concerns, supervision on the day and briefing. Representatives from the property should be involved in early meetings and identify all conservation issues. They should be available during the set up period to offer constructive advice to the technical crew and be available to move any objects throughout the filming. If needed, either the Property Manager or the production's Location Manager should give an initial briefing to all the crew about what is and is not allowed. This should cover very basic details such as the consumption of food and beverage, what objects can or cannot be handled, what artefacts can be filmed and any other sensitivities. In delicate areas, close supervision may be advisable. This, once again, should be done in a constructive but assertive fashion.

The Benefits of Filming

Filming on location generates significant spend in the local economy. Depending on its size and budget, a production can spend up to £42,000 per day on everything from local caterers, security and taxi firms, to hotels and restaurants.

Film tourism is now a recognised phenomenon, estimated to be worth £1.9 billion to the UK's economy. According to industry sources, film and TV productions inspire an estimated 40% of tourists in selecting their destinations, and iconic locations used as film locations can receive on average an increase of 30% in bookings.

Seeing your town, city or location on screen is therefore a great marketing opportunity which may encourage film and television viewers to visit your area.

Data Sources: British Film Institute, Oxford Economics, Visit Britain, Halifax Travel Insurance



Oxford City Skyline
@ Pajor Pawel / shutterstock



Lake District, Cumbria
@ Stewart Smith Photography / shutterstock

About Creative England

Creative England are funded by the BFI to offer bespoke, comprehensive production support to feature film and high-end TV looking to film in the English regions, ensuring communities across the nation enjoy the profile, job opportunities and economic benefits that the sector generates.

Creative England operates at a national level with an experienced regionally based team on hand to help you at every stage of production. We promote England's finest locations, studios, crew and facilities, and our vast network across the Country enables professional on-the-ground support and a film friendly welcome.

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