

Ostlänken – Communication Efforts

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The government emphasizes the importance of Trafikverket [...] working to communicate archaeological results to promote understanding of historical traces and fulfill national cultural heritage goals (Regeringsbeslut 2018).

This notice accounts for the communication efforts within the archaeological project “Ostlänken”. The new railway, *Ostlänken*, directly or indirectly affects approximately 700 archaeological sites. Against this background, Trafikverket early on identified a range of challenges, including practical, logistical, and formal decision-making processes. As noted by the Swedish National Heritage Board, *Ostlänken* challenges the contract archaeology system. To ease the workload and facilitate the work of county administrative boards’ case officers and archaeological companies, Trafikverket established an internal Archaeology Project in 2020. The project acts as a link between construction contractors’ schedules and the administrative processes of the county boards, while improving accessibility and logistics for archaeologists working in the field.

In the government’s permit decision for *Ostlänken*, public communication efforts from Trafikverket regarding archaeological findings are requested. Based on this, the *Ostlänken* Archaeology Project focuses on two main communication efforts: measures to strengthen cultural heritage and traditional public communication.

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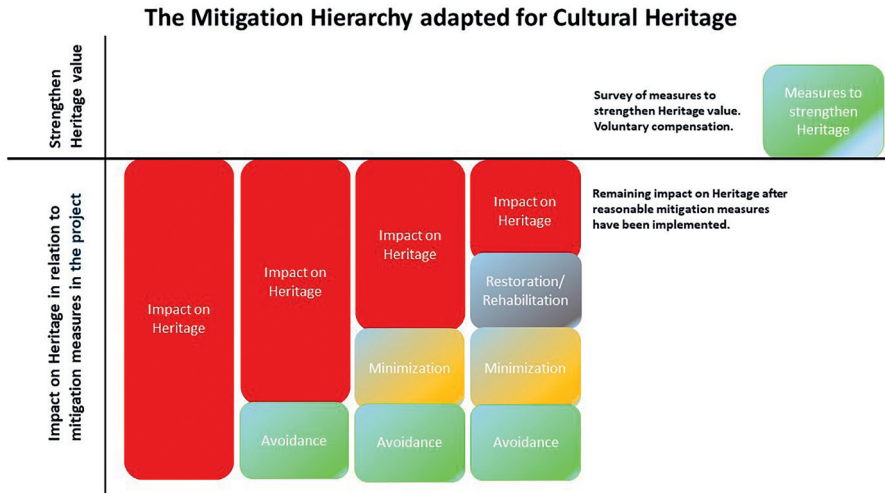


Figure 1. Damage Mitigation Hierarchy. Illustration: Trafikverket.

Measures to Strengthen Cultural Heritage

New transport projects impact cultural heritage, including ancient monuments. To counter this, Trafikverket follows the Damage Mitigation Hierarchy (Figure 1) during railway location, route alignment, design, and detailed planning. The aim is to avoid, minimize, and restore impacts on cultural heritage. Directly affected ancient monuments are managed according to the Cultural Heritage Act and contract archaeology system. Beyond legal obligations, Trafikverket voluntarily carries out measures to strengthen cultural heritage, easing the debt caused by infrastructure (Trafikverket 2019).

These measures differ from nature-sector compensations (e.g., species protection) and are not legally required except within cultural reserves or permit/environment rulings. Methods include (Toreld et al. 2023):

- Restoring and recreating (functions, connections, or values)
- Making accessible (enhancing values near affected areas)
- Making visible (information campaigns and physical actions)
- Improving or developing (creating or strengthening functions or values)

Studies indicate these measures can promote sustainable, inclusive perspectives and add value by making environments more accessible. This requires shifting from an object- or environment-focused approach to a more people-centred perspective (Holtorf & Smits 2023).



Figure 2. StoryMap, Ostlänken – Stories about Cultural Heritage. Website: Trafikverket.



StoryMap

Within Ostlänken, cultural heritage strengthening is still early, and mainly focused on creating an interactive StoryMap (Figure 2). The Map highlights cultural heritage and archaeological work directly affected by Ostlänken's land use, plus cultural heritage near its route. This is done through short texts, images, and videos. Updates occur twice yearly but will become more frequent, including presentations of ongoing excavations. By way of writing, the StoryMap holds about 130 stories/sites and has had 11,000 visitors since February 2024.

Participatory Archaeology

In central Norrköping, the old Vulkan industrial block, partly affected by Ostlänken, housed AB International Harvester, known for agricultural machinery. Near the factory, housing and a consumer cooperative store for workers were built early in the 1900s, but was demolished in the 1970s. As part of strengthening cultural heritage's position in society, a small public

participatory excavation of these remains is planned (Sabel, 2025). Since the remains date to after the year 1850, they are not regulated by the Cultural Heritage Act. Map and archive studies are also ongoing. The goal here is a popular science publication, highlighting the area and industry from the perspective of employees and families.

Traditional Public Communication

Trafikverket's other communication work for Ostlänken involves traditional communication of archaeological investigations and results through web news, lectures, exhibitions, short social media films, and more.

At the same time, public activities are held by contract archaeology firms following county administrative boards' decisions under Chapter 2 of the Cultural Heritage Act. Currently, there is no coordination among the county boards for public communication as there is for scientific research. Instead, each archaeological firm carries out its own efforts per ancient monument or investigation. Perhaps Trafikverket's StoryMap can assist the county boards in coordinating public archaeology communication in the future?

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