



## The work we do

The Environment Agency volunteer programme was established in 2003 to assist with the practical management of Iceland's national parks and nature protection areas. The programme includes a wide range of practical conservation work, though the main focus is on the construction and maintenance of hiking trails. The programme involves over 220 volunteers each summer and more than 560 weeks of practical work is completed. Our volunteer teams play an extremely important role in the practical management of the country's protected areas.



### Trail work

A large part of our programme is focused on the construction and maintenance of hiking trails. As tourism in Iceland grows, the pressure on the country's fragile ecology is increasing. For 30 years international volunteers have been involved in trail repair work in Iceland's national parks. The construction and maintenance of good-quality hiking paths in these areas helps to reduce the impact of visitors and improve safety.

Much of the construction work is carried out using stones and gravel. The majority of the work is centred on moving and positioning the rocks, although trail construction also includes ground clearance work and a great deal of digging! We rely upon iron bars for rock moving, as well as mattocks and shovels for ground work although, where possible, machines are used to make our work easier.



### Heritage management

During the last few years, our teams have been involved in several heritage projects in Skaftafell. This work has included repairing old turf and stone farm buildings as well as rebuilding a sheep fold and dry stone walls.

Traditional materials are used for this work including stone, turf and drift wood. Instruction and guidance is provided by local specialists.



### Wilderness management

Our work in the country's wilderness areas is steadily growing and includes trail marking with sticks, GPS mapping, trail maintenance, sign construction and the removal of invasive plant species (lupin, *Lupinus nootkatensis*) from protected wilderness areas.

Other tasks include raking and removing tracks caused by off-road driving in the highlands. Volunteer teams often stay in wilderness camps in these amazing areas during the projects.