Path Audit & Assessment

Scope

This guide covers the information needed to plan a new path or prepare for the maintenance and operation of an existing path.

Including

- **Access Audits,**
- **Access Assessment**
- **Access Statements.**

Terms & Abbreviations

BHS	**British Horse Society – provide guidance for equestrian routes**
CROW	**Countryside and Rights of Way Act**
DDA	**Disability Discrimination Act**
DRC	**Disabilities Rights Commission**
H&S	**Health & Safety**
HSE	**Health & Safety Executive**
LA	**Local Authority (town councils etc.)**
LAG	**Local Access Group**

The National Cycle Network – Guidelines and Practical Details - this guidance provides design and planning for cycle use but rarely takes the needs of other user groups especially those of disabled and older people into consideration.

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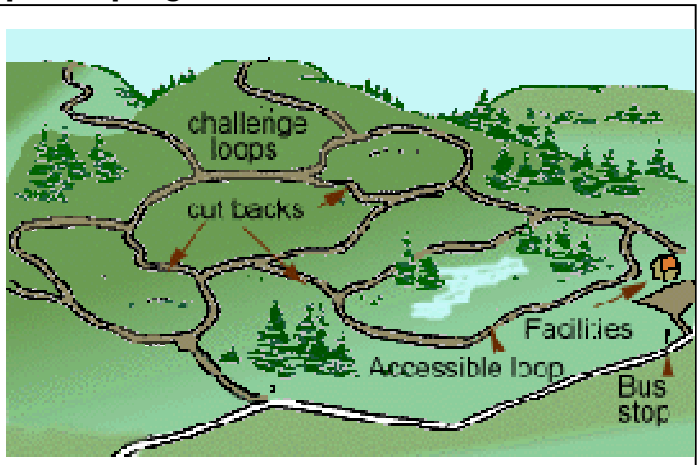
Introduction

An Inclusive Access Plan achieves five main objectives:

Note: national parks are noted in this guide as they represent one of the most common locations in UK for path and track routes.

1. **To identify and apply criteria for inclusive design for facilities and services in representative local and regional paths and parkland,**
2. **To undertake an accessibility audit of existing Path Route and Parkland facilities and services,**
3. **To consult with organisations in the County and Region that represent older and people with disabilities, stakeholders and other interested groups,**
4. **To raise the quality of visitor experience while protecting the environment.**
5. **To establish priorities for accessible service delivery throughout the local and regional parks and the related national path system.**

The objective is to improve facilities that are outdated or inadequate, and to develop public programs and communications for the greatest possible number of visitors. Integration of all visitors into regional park and related pathway experiences is only possible through a holistic approach to service delivery.



Planning inclusive access for local and regional parks and pathway networks, and changing attitudes, facilities and services, requires an on-going and permanent commitment to all visitors. Inclusive access begins as a preparedness to serve those who have encountered barriers to experiencing regional pathways and parks. Well planned and implemented it will as a proactive means of serving all visitors today and into the future.

Research has shown a definite picture of the national path network

- **Many paths are unsuited to the growing number of mobility vehicles and other people with disabilities who are becoming more active and integrated into everyday society,**

- The population is ageing and there are more frail people wishing to visit the country,
- Most paths are unsigned and there is little information about where people can go,
- Path networks are fragmented,
- Roads have become busy and less safe to use,
- There are limited or non-existent opportunities for cycling or horse-riding off road in most counties,
- There is a severe shortage of paths and tracks which can be used by the public with confidence,
- Of those seeking to walk in the countryside only 8% wish to walk in upland areas while 92% are seeking access to lowland areas.

Publications for consultation and advertising should be attractive and readable and may be supported by websites, leaflets, displays, talks and meetings or drop-in surgeries. It is important to let people know what is going on and doing so in a way which all can understand and to involve people of all abilities from the project's inception. In most counties in UK there are Local Access Forums (LAF) who should be able to assist path planners and offer co-ordination with other projects and existing networks.

Legal Position

DDA

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 strengthens the disabled person's right to equal access. The Act requires all providers of goods, facilities and services to improve access by making 'reasonable adjustments' help disabled people. It came fully into effect 4th October 2004.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 further extends the responsibility of Public Bodies to take proactive action from the earliest stage of planning and consultation to make their services and infrastructure as inclusive as possible. These duties are now also applicable to private clubs.

Some applicable examples from the DDA Code of Practice

> The design of a new visitors' centre in a Welsh country park adopts in full the guidance provided in the Approved Document M. Once the centre is open to the public the manager receives a number of complaints from people with mobility and visual impairments who find that stiles and gates along the centre's nature trail are extremely difficult to negotiate. There is no guidance on the design of these

physical features in the Approved Document M. Consequently they would not be exempt from a possible requirement for alteration under Part 3 of the DDA.

There is very poor signage to assist people with visual impairments within the visitors' centre with the result that some people become disorientated and are unable to locate the toilets or cafeteria. The service provider would be expected to consider what reasonable steps might be taken to remedy the situation, including the provision of clearer signage.

An historic country house is open to the public. To enable visitors with mobility impairments to visit the house, the owners are considering installing a ramped entrance. In the circumstances, installing a ramp is likely to be a reasonable adjustment for the service provider to have to make.

However, the service provider in this case needs statutory consent to do so because the house is a listed building. The service provider consults the local planning authority and learns that consent is likely to be given in a few weeks. In the meantime, as a temporary measure only, the service provider arranges for disabled visitors to use an inconvenient but accessible entrance at the side of the house. Although not ideal, this is likely to be an acceptable solution for a limited period while statutory consent is being obtained.

An outdoor centre provides adventure weekends involving strenuous physical effort and some personal risk. On safety grounds, it has a policy of requiring its customers to undergo a medical examination before they are admitted to the course. This tends to screen out customers who are disabled as a result of high blood pressure or heart conditions. This is likely to be justified. However, the centre might make adjustments to its policy by admitting the disabled customers to any parts of the course which do not create a safety risk.

Opinion

The following is not a legal opinion but an indication of likely consequences.

It is unclear the extent of how the DDA applies to countryside access, and this will probably have to be clarified through the courts over the next few years.

It is likely that the Act does not apply to the 'right of access', but that it may apply as soon as a service is provided to help people enjoy that right. This might mean, for example, provision of

information, or provision of a gate or bridge, where considered 'reasonable'.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 states that local authorities, must have 'regard' to the needs of people with mobility problems. e.g. when authorising the erection of stiles, gates or other works on footpaths or bridle-ways they should ensue that provisions are as inclusive as is reasonable and applicable.

The objective under the CROW Act is to remove impassable barriers, while leaving the natural features that give the countryside its character. An inclusive approach, together with providing the right information, will help ensure that every person has the opportunity to experience the natural environment and the experiences it has to offer.

The key to this requirement is reasonableness, is it reasonable to spend X amount for the benefit of Y number of people or my organisation has £10,000 to spend would it be reasonable to spend 50% of that money on one bridge while the lack of cash makes it impossible to make the connecting path accessible.

So that the question which need answering are

- **Who are the intended users?**
- **What can be done within reason to improve accessibility?**
- **What are the land features the path will cross? (steep slope, marsh, thin soil making excavation expensive)**
- **What are the maintenance costs and arrangements over what period?**
- **What are the resources available? (financial, workforce, etc.) when considering resources designers need to consider that a small voluntary group would not be expected to invest as much as a large government or commercial organisation. Having said that, a voluntary organisation may have the ability to tap into grants and other finance which will permit more complex and expensive projects to be constructed. This ability must be included in any planning.**

We have provided the Country Path and related Guides are a series of documents intended to provide Best Practice solutions for the development and operation of paths and related support features and infrastructure. The series does not constitute a directive or legal guidance. The series is intended to provide the information needed by developers and managers to ensure that their visitors and users enjoy the greatest level of inclusiveness while retaining the experience and challenges expected from a visit to the country.

Purpose of the Audit

The first step in setting up a path network on your property is to evaluate the paths and tracks that you already have.

- **Do they fit in with the natural features of the tract?**
- **Are there special features or areas that you wish to show off?**

These features can include cliff areas or overlooks, pond sites, wildlife openings, waterfalls, unusual trees or land features, old house or mill sites, abandoned mines or just stands of trees that you enjoy visiting. A good path network should give access to all scenic features.

Path networks should be designed to show off the good features of your location, but in an unobtrusive way. Woodland openings, such as feeding sites or meadows, are excellent places for observing wildlife. It is best if paths skirt such openings, using natural cover to help "hide" the visitor from any wildlife. An observation blind of simple wood panel or woven wood slats provides good wildlife observation.

Adults and children alike don't want to just get close to nature; they want to get into nature. They want to get beyond car parks and picnic areas, to explore forest and seashore.

However, any outing requires detailed planning for someone who cannot walk (or see or hear). Essential questions must be answered in advance for example.

- **Will public transport take wheelchairs?**
- **Are there stairs at the destination point?**
- **Are doorways and gates wide enough?**
- **Are toilets available?**
- **Is a potable water supply available?**
- **Is rest and shelter available once they leave their transport?**
- **Is there suitable signage and guidance?**

Accessibility is a major factor for those with children older and disabled people in the choice of outdoor destinations, and even with planning, some places are simply off limits. In many hill and mountain areas it will be far too costly to make every path accessible and the length of any ramps would make it unlikely that they would be used.

This is not to say no facilities can be provided, for example many people with low or no vision only require safety protection in hazardous areas, good signage, guidance, properly constructed steps and ramps. Similar provisions make the route usable by people with low hearing. Portions of path networks can be made

fully accessible allowing people to gain some feeling for the experience even if it would be unreasonable to make a steep hillside route accessible.

> **Note**: people with hearing impairments use many of the same tactile and colour aids as people with low vision. People with low hearing often walk while looking at a companion's face to read lips or concentrate hearing. Tactile and colour clues are therefore used to warn of hazards or to guide their route.

The greatest trend in recreation for older and people with disabilities is in the area of independent travel. Walking frames were first designed as an inexpensive way to assist people with limited walking ability. Today people who have no walking ability whatsoever can travel independently by scooter and powered wheelchair. In addition to scooters, there are electric wheelchairs, tricycles, all terrain and sports wheelchairs and hand cycles. These are all forms of transportation that enable people with disabilities to go where they want to go, when they want to go.

Often, it is not getting to a location which is the problem, it is the poorly designed infrastructure once they arrive.

Managers and designers need to look at who can or could use the route, what changes can be reasonably made and what resources are available or obtainable. The point of inclusive access is not to eliminate risk for path visitors with disabilities and older people, but rather to equalise risk ("risk management with dignity"). And remember it is not just those with an impairment who can loose out, a child cannot visit a forest if the parent with disabilities cannot. Older parent cannot experience the location in company with their children and grandchildren if the area is unsuitable.

Some of the important criteria which have been identified for making a park and it's path network inclusive are: (not shown in order of importance)

- Access to points of interest and activity
- Availability of sanitary facilities and refreshment
- Availability of transport (public and private)
- Development of an inclusive designed picnic area
- Opportunities to sit and rest along pathway routes
- Placement of park benches at accessible view points
- Public information identifying accessible park and path experiences
- Smooth, even path surfaces (not applicable to some routes designed for challenge experiences)
- Use of gradient and ramps as well as stairs, together with appropriate hand and guardrails

- Use of signage and provision of symbols to indicate path difficulty
- Fire lanes and fire fighting access routes and water sources.

The path audit will enable you to gather together all the relevant available information. A systematic approach to this part of the process ensures that the work is based on the best possible information. Much the same type of audit should be made for any other development projects.

- Identify where good inclusive access practice already exists
- Highlight where present provision of accessibility meets visitor needs or should be improved
- Identify ways of improving access to facilities and services in parks and pathways
- Identify those sections which are provided for challenge experiences and those in need of protection from influxes of visitors.

Changing attitudes of staff to make the experience and location more inclusive is low cost and brings high benefits. One of the greatest barriers excluded groups meet is that of poor understanding and response from staff. This may not be an audit matter but speaking to visitors and discovering their feelings can pin point where improvement should be made.

Changing facilities is a long-term investment in providing a welcoming environment in regional parks and path networks. The access audit provides the information needed for upgrades, updates and future access initiatives.

Once accessible facilities have been provided to regional park and path network visitors, accessible services can be developed.

Audit and Assessment

Based on this audit you can also work out where you need to collect more data and develop improvement strategies and plans.

Access Audits should always be closely associated to Risk Assessments and this interrelationship recorded.

It may be helpful to divide the audit process into four key areas:

- Location,
- Demand,
- Policy and
- Resources.

Location Audit

This audit is used to discover the existing situation and may include data from available sources such as data bases and maps.

Including (in no special order of priority)

- **Be sure to flag locations for gradient dips or level changes.**
- **Benches—These are good path locations and also provide a good point for location of junctions, switchbacks, and landings**
- **Cliffs, mine workings, quarries, open cast and other similar hazards**
- **Cross ravines at an angle rather than going straight down and up the ravine banks.**
- **Facilities and sites suitable for all abilities, picnic areas, fishing points, view points, hides,**
- **Fords and foot bridges**
- **Hill paths and paths to the coast**
- **Land entailment or protected status information**
- **Land usage – cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, arable, moor land. It may be necessary to close parts of routes at certain times, e.g. lambing/calving season.**
- **Long distance routes, bridle paths and cycle networks**
- **Look at the surrounding landscape and soil to see what is stable. A handy rule of thumb is to create a somewhat gentler slope than you think necessary. Although you will initially expose more raw soil, the chances of it remaining stable and revegetating are greater than if you leave a back-slope so steep that it keeps sloughing.**
- **Look for "natural platforms" for switchbacks. This saves on construction and better fits the land.**
- **Main visitor attractions existing and planned**
- **Old industrial areas with contaminated land and unexpected holes and obstructions scattered about from poor site clearance.**
- **Ongoing access projects and council/agency initiatives which relate to access**
- **Paths and rights of way used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders**
- **Permissive routes which exist but may need improvement work. The owner may or may not be willing or able to contribute to path upkeep.**

- Possible additional and/or linking access routes such as farm tracks, forestry and estate roads
- Promoted routes such as ‘safe routes to school’ and ‘walking bus’.
- Quiet roads and pavements which link paths into a network.
- Regional and country parks
- Ridges—these provide good path locations, generally easy to work and provide good vantage points for viewing.
- Road bridges and rail crossings
- Rock outcrops—Cross above or below these. If you have to go through them, see if the rock can be ripped or broken because this will be less costly than blasting.
- Route suitability for people of varying abilities, and possible alternative routes to provide improved access
- Routes and facilities which are being planned by others in the locality and connected routes with the neighbouring counties or development areas etc.
- Saddles—Look for these as points to cross ridges
- Single lane roads which link parts of the path an may need additional passing and rest places
- Sites for water-based recreation and how to get to them
- The more difficult the terrain, the more critical it is to flag the centre-line location.
- Tidal range, flood and land slip potentials
- Walkers welcome’ and other promoted paths
- Wet meadows and sink holes – need to be known and avoided.
- Where vegetation is generally dense, patches of sparse vegetation are a good indication of shallow bedrock.

The audit will also need to include information about

- Ancient monuments and other protected locations
- Archaeological sites
- Contaminated land
- Fragile areas
- Nature reserves – a local ecological audit should be taken for any path likely to have a major impact on wildlife and plantings.
- Nesting and breading areas and seasons, it may be necessary to close off a path in certain areas during certain months.

- **Protected species, tree, plant, fish and animal**

Other hazards should be considered including industrial outfalls and emissions, fly tipping, derelict structures.

Other facilities such as toilets, shops, shelters, leisure and sport areas, accessibility for rescue services, bus routes, railway stations, car parks.

Streams—avoid crossing streams, if practical. If unavoidable, look for the best places to cross, considering the following:

- **Always cross at right angles.**
- **Cross at points where the stream is narrow.**
- **Minimise the number of crossings.**
- **Leave a buffer zone of undisturbed ground between the path and streambed, where the road runs parallel to the stream.**

And Remember – the path may be used in good and bad weather, storm, fog and at night.

Once the overall data have been complied additional more detailed information should be collected.

- **Areas where there may be conflict between different users**
- **Crossfalls on path and rest areas to be eliminated**
- **Erosion and land slip problem areas**
- **Ground conditions where paths are to be built.**
- **Location of services and utilities (gas, electricity, telephone lines, etc.).**
- **Location of water courses and any other drainage issues. Hydraulic pressures and infrastructure (streams, rivers, lakes, bog, drainage, culverts, swales etc.)**
- **Maintenance and safety needs, including path, embankment, bridge, cutting.**
- **Physical or personal safety issues.**
- **Problem areas in terms of maintenance, vandalism, etc.**
- **Sensitive areas for nature conservation, and historic sites**
- **Surface of existing routes including steps and ramps**
- **the quality and needs of the signs and other structures (shelters, gates, picnic areas)**

Land owner/managers are a good source of information about ground conditions, water levels and boundaries failing them talking

to older local residents to help build a picture of long term weather and land variations.

An initial walk through the area with the land owner or manager will give a first impression of a site and will identify what may or may not be possible. The initial visit should be followed up by a detailed site investigation.

This part of the audit will help identify

- Appropriate transport links, signage and parking to support the paths
- Key types of problems or critical gaps in networks.
- major variations in the availability and suitability of paths and networks
- The pattern of provision for each type of user, does the network provide a continuos route between an identifiable start and finish point. Where possible design circular routes so that path users return to their public transport stop or the path head car park.

Detailed Audit

It is best to view existing paths and new path routes in bad weather or after heavy rain to gain an idea of the conditions which must be countered. Springs, freshets, pooling and damming of water will be seen along with erosion and sink holes or where there is insufficient drainage by inspecting at this time.

Number or name your paths to provide a consistent record where a number of people or groups may be involved in the surveys.

Agree a standard set of symbols and referents for your surveyors before you start.

Use a survey sheet to record what is found during the audit. This provides a method of identifying and conveying the information to all concerned. The sections covered by an audit record will not always cover the same distance, for example a 500 metre long straight stretch over good ground may be next to a 10 metre section where problems have been identified or are recurrent.

Where path routes are very long marking the sections on an Ordinance Survey map helps keep sections in perspective and helps people become oriented.

Use graph paper to help sketch cross sections and other details. Reference them to the audit sheet.

When measuring for most purposes a standard pace step will be sufficient. Where more accurate measurement is needed a distance

wheel should be used. Tape measures should be used only where very detailed information is necessary, e.g. water depths, culvert diameters and swale widths.

For measuring inclines a clinometer is suitable for general purpose gradient measurements and route assessment. When it comes to constructing steps, ramps and rest platforms an accurate level survey should be made using and engineer's level. Similarly an engineer's level will probably be needed to assess water flows in the area and where drainage ditches etc. should be located.

Photographs are useful as they help describe a place to others who have not visited that section. They are also useful at later stages for publicity purposes. Note: for before and after pictures stand in the same place and face the same direction, sloppy alignment leads viewers to believe the pictures are falsified.

Large trees often have natural benches on their uphill side. It's better to locate your path there than on the downhill side where you'll sever root systems and generally undermine the tree. Your specifications will tell you how close you can build to the tree.

Habitats need to be identified so that path construction does not disrupt wildlife breading and feeding habitats or endanger protected plant species. Involving and ecologist etc. is strongly recommended. Mark the location of any protected area on your map. Where and individual tree is subject to a 'Tree Order' this needs making.

Get an experienced person to identify locally available materials for land fill purposes. This can help reduce the amount and distance material is moved and helps protect the nature of the location. During a new path survey identify locations for storage of materials and for disposal of waste, these locations should not damage habitat, be intrusive or be where loos materials is likely to be washed into water courses.

Ground condition and strength should be assessed during the initial stage using your heal and seeing how deep an indent is made gives a general picture. (The test should be made on bare earth by removing vegetation.)

Small trial pits should be dug at intervals along the route to get a picture of the underlying material and it likely support strength.

Where excavations, cuts, embankments, bridges, water and marsh crossings are to be made expert soil engineering advice should be sought.

Look for signs of high flood marks (line of debris and dead wood at a set height but little or no debris below,) and ask local land owners and residents. If the route is susceptible to flood you may wish to re-route your path.

Demand Audit

This should look at how the route is used, it's potential for other uses and estimated usage when completed.

Present Usage

Who uses the route at the time of the survey or at other times in the year? This should examine all users including equestrian and motor vehicles which you may wish to exclude; provisions for their exclusion will need to be planned.

In country parks and similar managed locations it is likely that there are records of usage going back over a number of years.

Other routes will need a survey over a number of days and throughout the year, plus interviews or postal questionnaires with local groups, residents or owners.

Potential Usage

This can be estimated from published figures in changes in demographic data. Heritage, tourist and similar organisations regularly publish estimates.

Users

The first stage in this is to decide what users the path will cater for, e.g.:

- **Pedestrians (walkers, ramblers, hikers, joggers, cross-country runners),**
- **People with disabilities (walking, mobility vehicles, special cycles),**
- **Cyclists (racing, touring, mountain,, tricycles, quad-cycles)**
- **Equestrian (hackers, trekkers)**

The needs of one group may not be equivalent to or desirable by others.

The needs of these groups should be tackled by consultation with representative groups, clubs and organisations.

The DDA requires that reasonable effort is made to ensure that disabled people have the same access to facilities as others. However, when planning the path the target users need to be considered, i.e. a path intended for use by ramblers or cross-country runners is intended to challenge users, making the that path suitable for people with low mobility or wheelchair riders would defeat the object of the path. The same principle applies to other types of use. This is why it is important that an Access Statement is prepared which lays out the reasoning behind the path and its final design criteria. It is suggested that an Access Specialist is consulted in preparing this Statement approaching individual disabled people

or disability groups is likely to get responses based on the needs of one type of disability. Most towns/counties have Local Access Group who can provide help in this area.

As well as the mode of use, consideration should be given to what people expect of the path. If a path is likely to be a popular commuter route or route to school, then a sealed surface will be appropriate to encourage all weather use. A path used for access around a country park may benefit from an unbound surface in keeping with the local context.

An overriding rule in path design is to include all legitimate users unless there is a very good reason to exclude. This applies especially to people with disabilities whose rights are safeguarded in the DDA. Always avoid putting barriers in the way. For example, use a gate rather than a stile. Don't install a motorcycle barrier to exclude one motorbike, when you will create a barrier to many more legitimate users. See our guide 'Country Gates and Barriers'.

- **It should be remembered that the term 'disabled people' applies to a large number of people with a very wide range of abilities and needs, and not only to wheel-chair riders. Today the increasing use of mobility vehicles by older and disabled people means that the needs of these vehicles must be considered.**

Pedestrians are likely to be the main users of a path network. Users may extend from very young children to older people, parents with pushchairs and toddlers, people with visual and hearing impairment including novices and experienced walkers engaged in short strolls or longer walks. Mixing cycles and pedestrians is a hazard for people with visual, hearing and mobility impairments. Older and very young children are also paced at increased risk. Other than on low usage routes shared paths should be avoided.

Teenagers, joggers and similar groups are another common group of users of paths in and near urban areas. Where space is available constructing alternate challenging routes to suit these users should be considered.

Ecology

The ecology of the area is another major constraint. The carrying capacity of the land, the impact of increased number of users can affect the choice of the type of surface and route of the path.

The needs of breading and feeding fish, birds and animals must be considered. Running a path through a breading or feeding area may cause a decline in the numbers of the animal the path user uses the route to see.

Plants and trees can also be affected by insensitive path routing. Insensitive routing may not only damage the plants, it can also cause increased erosion and hydraulic damage to the area.

Farm animals must also be considered when paths pass through or near grazing and breeding animals. The impact of numbers of people can affect the health and wellbeing of the animals and can also place users at risk when mothers protect their young. It is essential that owners/mangers of land the path passes through or alongside are brought into the planning process.

It should be considered essential to include an ecological survey of the route together with other users such as Fishing Clubs.

Collect Existing Bio-data and Land Information -

Vegetation

- List of endangered, threatened, and sensitive species
- List of dominant species present, (i.e., grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees)
- Map of dominant plant associations, narrative description of site vegetation, particularly density and distribution
- Identification of trees and vegetation that may not be removed

Wildlife

- List of threatened or endangered species present and map of their migration patterns, critical habitat, and outstanding habitat
- List of species present, particularly if there are moose, bear, or other animals that may pose a danger to users or that may require special accommodations in site design
- Assess the affect of any introduced species i.e. fish for a fishing lake.
- Certain wildlife species also need to be managed. Rabbits and badgers for example may burrow damaging banks and footings. Uncontrolled excavation can lead to highly increased maintenance and repair costs.

Wetlands

- Map of wetland outline, showing seasonal fluctuation of the water level and a narrative description of the plant associations within the wetland.

Water facilities

- Site topography covering an area large enough to include all potential marina development sites, with contours

- Underwater contours with the elevation referenced to upland elevation
- General slope and landform characteristics required for good marina development

Weather and Climate Data

- Wind (direction, intensity, seasonality, and daily fluctuations)
- Precipitation (seasonality, amount, duration, and intensity)
- Temperature (seasonal averages and daily fluctuations)
- Air quality

Drainage

- Map drainage and run off routes and assess where changes or additions need to be made. Asses the affect on existing drain systems and wetlands.
- Check local regulations and surrounding and down stream land owners

Local Geology and Soils Data

- Depth to bedrock, groundwater, and frost line for siting underground utility lines, buried tanks, and foundations
- Soil survey and map of soil texture for determining susceptibility of soils to erosion and suitability of soils for building foundations, roads, paths, and leach fields
- Areas of existing erosion, which should be avoided
- Areas of high soil moisture, which should be avoided
- Areas of existing land movement

Site Aesthetics Information

- Favourable views to incorporate
- Loud or objectionable sounds that need to be physically blocked, if possible
- Major site features of interest to be developed into the design as focal points
- Objectionable views to be screened, if possible
- Views of the project from offsite. This would be important if there were a need to locate the development where it would not be seen from certain vantage points offsite

Contamination

- Map all areas where there is land contamination and plot protective measures.
- Locate and assess how to control any water contamination arising from the site or farm and industrial locations which border the site.

Hazards

- Map all hazards along your route, cliffs, falling rocks, slides, quarries, disused mine entrances, disused structures (possibility of alternate use).

Policy

There is a need to address wider issues including economic development, tourism, transport, land management, health and social inclusion.

This section of the audit should include statutory and non-statutory policies at national, regional and local level. It should identify the relevant policies and regulations and correlate them with the 'purpose and intent' of the proposed path.

This will also help identify potential sources of additional funds or assistance available.

The policy should be written by the steering group before commencing any work. This policy statement sets out who and to what extent the project will serve.

Access Statement

The following is a summary of what is involved in preparing an Access Statement, the actual content and detail will depend on what is involved, the size and complexity of the work.

An Access Statement takes the policy to the next stage and provides both a statement of what is intended and what is to be achieved in practice. The statement should be a living document which grows and develops through the stages of the project reflecting intent, guidance and feedback from each project stage.

The basic statement needed during the initial planning stage should provide all workers with guidance in how the access policy should be implemented by designers and assessors.

At the development stage the access statement should clearly identify:

- The philosophy and approach to inclusive design
- The key issues of the particular scheme

- The sources of advice and guidance used
- How the principles of inclusive design have been implemented into the scheme
- How inclusion will be maintained and managed

1. This statement should be closely related to the 'Environmental Impact Statement'. It should include an assessment on how the project will interact with the transport (public and private). For example a large project may attract large numbers of tourists/visitors a single lane road may cause congestion or there may only be one bus in the morning and late evening. It is essential that these factors are addressed and where necessary include agreements with other organisations and local authorities. A great project is no will be unsuccessful if people find it difficult to find or travel to, and remember less than half the population have access to private vehicles.
2. During the detail planning, building control stage the access statement should provide particular design details referenced to applicable standards and guidance. Where necessary design drawings could be included, i.e. door handles, escape stairs, signage examples.
3. During the construction period the contractor and the development management should amend the Access Statement to reflect changes and modification found necessary during construction. Care must be exercised to ensure that the changes do not degrade accessibility to the project.
   a) Develop guidance for the operation, maintenance and evacuation of the project. These should include more detailed and subjective Risk Assessments based on potential users of the project and its buildings.
   b) The Operations Management should produce an 'Access Policy Statement' (similar to those required by Health and Safety Regulations) as a statement of the organisation's commitment to Accessibility and as a basic standard for employee and user guidance.
   c) Review of the project area and it's building's operations, maintenance and evacuation Access Statement should be carried out on a regular basis (at least annually).
   d) Specific Risk Assessments and procedures may be required for individual people with disabilities, additions of new equipment or chemicals, etc. at intermediate points during the year.
   e) The design of documents and other methods of communication used by the organisation also need to be considered before the building becomes operational.

The basic design of the documents used by employees, visitors and clients, i.e. advertising, sales receipts, letter heads, employee documents, and possible need to provide them in alternate formats and languages (English in UK and Welsh in Wales are legal requirements. Consideration to providing alternate languages to cater for overseas visitors and new immigrants should be assessed, i.e. the potential numbers and how this relates to costs).

f) Design of Internet, Intranet, Computer and Advertising/Client Help screens, should be assessed.

g) Provision of hearing loops (or infra-red systems where privacy must be a factor), telephones with assistive features, vibratory alarms for staff in noisy work places, and for staff, visitors, residents where sleeping accommodation or shielded rooms are in use.

h) Training for staff in interacting with people with disabilities, telephone/textphone usage, evacuation, must be documented.

The Access Statement(s) and supporting documents should form a section of the Operation Manual along with the Fire and Health & Safety Assessments and documentation.

It is as important to management that failure to comply with accessibility regulation and guidance is identified, recorded and explained. Where the failure is based on reasonable grounds e.g. excessive cost, safety, low usage, intent to provide challenges to more able bodied users, these should be explained and validated. Spurious and generalised blanket reasons are unlikely to be found acceptable should there be a court challenge.

Resources

It is better to start with paths where much can be achieved at low cost rather than tackling an expensive project that opens up relatively little space. For example, there may be paths that simply need signs and waymarking. Conversely there may be a short route that requires a bridge and surfacing.

Paths that have high ongoing maintenance costs may be difficult to up keep. Prioritise those routes that will have few ongoing maintenance requirements.

All resources are finite. Whether planning a new path or managing and existing route allocation of resources (financial, material and human) allocation of what is available or can be obtained to provide the greatest benefit should be the target.

It is better to spend some money obtaining professional advice on the long term viability of the route. It may be possible to construct

a path cheaply using local materials, however, if the selected materials and route are unsuitable longer term maintenance costs may swamp the path managers and the path will become dangerous and unusable.

Resource availability, target users and route maintenance may require a new path to be constructed using paved surfaces. The available resources may therefore dictate a shorter route than originally planned, additional distance can always be added as new resources become available. A path fallen into disrepair may cost more than the original construction to rectify and refurbish.

The main types of current and potential resources you need to look at in the resource audit include:

- Businesses and training agencies
- Grants – current and potential – (for example Countryside Commission, lottery, European Union, local enterprise company, NHS, Tourist Board)
- Local Access Forum.
- Local authority access staff including access officers and park rangers
- Local authority capital and revenue funding
- Local voluntary and community groups and individuals
- Other relevant local authority staff, including planners, transport officers, legal staff, maintenance teams
- Partner organisation resources – staff and funding

You need to be aware of where your resources must be allocated and when they need to be available for example

- Demolition and contamination containment or disposal
- Insurance
- Land purchase
- Management & planning
- Overheads – office space, meeting rooms, paperwork, postage, storage, power and lighting, etc.
- Professional consultancy needs – soil analysis, bridge design, specifications, risk assessments
- Publicity and recruitment
- Tools and materials
- Training needs – supervisory, employee and volunteer
- Transport and machinery

Workforce

Contractors

For some types of work there may be no option but to hire specialist contractors e.g. For creating new paths, repairing difficult sections, constructing bridges, contaminated soils, blasting, etc.

It is worth finding out about any contractors that have carried out work on paths before and whether the work was satisfactory.

If engaging contractors always agree a time schedule and the work/quality control standards which will apply. These should be recorded in the form of a contract; word of mouth provides no insurance against bad or shoddy workmanship.

Landowners

Rather than paying an outside contractor there may be jobs that the landowner or their employees could carry out for the same price or for less than a contractor. In this way the landowner may view the path more positively. Some landowners may even be prepared to carry out part or all the work for nothing.

Whichever method you use for carrying out the work it is important that the landowner/ manger is involved and knows who will be working on their land.

Volunteers

Even though you might need heavy-duty construction when it comes to bridges, volunteers are your best bet for help with paths. Chances are there are numerous people in your community who would be more than willing to help lend a hand either preparing the area or in constructing a path they will use.

An enthusiastic group of volunteers can achieve a tremendous amount of work. This group work creates a sense of ownership and care for the path which may extend to the volunteers continuing with a maintenance role. Some tasks can be carried out without any special training, such as basic vegetation clearance or digging shallow ditches.

Other tasks such as laying out, drainage, simple construction, herbicidal spraying, tree felling etc. require specialist experience and you may wish to invest in training for volunteers.

Remember Health & Safety regulation applies to volunteers as well as employees. Make sure your insurance cover is adequate for and applies to volunteer workers.

Finance

The following are examples of potential sources of funding

Source	Details
Aggregates Levy	Is on a similar basis to the Landfill levy *Both available from Directory of Social Change. http://www.dsc.org.uk/acatalog/Fundraising.html*
Awards for All	Is a small grant lottery programme that is funded by all five lottery bodies. Grants of between £500 - £5000 are available for small community groups. For more information: http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/
Coalfield Regeneration Trust	Only for ex-coalfield areas. For more information: http://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk
Community Fund	Change themes each year and is currently merging with the New Opportunities Fund (2004). You do not have to be a registered charity to apply. For more information: http://www.community-fund.org.uk/
Heritage Lottery Fund	Supports access to the "natural" heritage and has a programme called Your Heritage that gives up to £50k that is particularly suitable for local community groups. For more information: http://www.hlf.org.uk/ *Environmental Funding*
Landfill Tax Levy	Landfill operators must pay a tax for every tonne of rubbish dumped. However, 90% of this tax can be reclaimed if the landfill operator supports an environmental project such as the provision of paths. The project must be within a 10 mile radius of a landfill site and the money can only be given to an approved environmental body. Your group may be able to register as an environmental body or alternatively you could get a registered environmental body to apply for funds on your behalf. ENTRUST is the body that administers the landfill tax. It supports environmental bodies and has a good web site. For more information http://www.ltcs.org.uk/

Source	Details
Local Authority	Local Authorities often have discretionary funding available for community projects. Your local councillor may be able to investigate this for you.
Local companies	Local companies such as sawmills may be willing to contribute material at no cost. Others may help with designing the leaflet. Larger companies may be willing to sponsor a route.
Local Enterprise Companies	May be willing to provide up to 50% funding. Emphasise the economic benefits that may accrue to the community. They will be particularly interested in how you will promote the paths. They may also be able to advise you of other appropriate funding sources.
Lottery Fund	An application has to be about active participation in sport (paths provided for walking, cycling and horse riding have been funded) - for public good, wide community benefit and preferably attracting new people.
National companies	Most big national companies have budgets for sponsorship or public relations. Some also have specific schemes that you can apply to.

Other sources such as Tourist Agency/Boards, Countryside Commissions and similar often have information about available funding on their websites.