



By All Reasonable Means

Least restrictive access to the outdoors

A guide produced by Sensory Trust on behalf of
Natural Resources Wales and Natural England.



Photo: Sensory Trust

About the guide

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Written by:

Text by Jane Stoneham and Claire Francis, Sensory Trust; members of the Outdoor Access and Recreation Team; Natural Resources Wales; and Pippa Langford, Natural England.

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What is this document about?

This document is a framework for thinking about equality of access to outdoor sites and trails for people of all ages, circumstances and backgrounds.

It provides practical support to help land managers improve accessibility of their sites, routes and facilities, particularly for people who have limited opportunities to enjoy these places.

The guide combines the England and Wales versions of 'By All Reasonable Means' (BARM). It has been updated to align with the '[Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#)' 2023 which is a source of more detailed guidance and specifications.

Who is this document for?

This document is for organisations, owners and managers who are responsible for providing public outdoor access and recreation.

Contact for queries and feedback

Natural England: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

Natural Resources Wales: www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

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Introduction to the guide

This guide is designed to help land managers and owners improve accessibility of their sites, routes and facilities so they can be enjoyed by people of all ages, circumstances and backgrounds. It has been developed as part of the commitment of Natural England and Natural Resources Wales to ensure equality of access to the outdoors.

Accessibility is addressed in its widest sense, framed by an inclusive approach that embraces all the protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act (2010). It is based on the principle of Least Restrictive Access – an approach that complies with the Equality Act 2010. The aim is to provide a realistic, practical and effective approach to access improvements, creating better access in more places for more people.

This guide uses the [Access Chain](#), a tool that addresses access as a chain of events that starts from a person's decision to visit a site or route, through the journey, arrival and time spent there. It ends with the journey home. If any link in the chain is broken then the visit may be disappointing or never happen.

The guide recognises the wide variety of possibilities and constraints that face landowners and managers, from limited resources to the importance of balancing access with the conservation of cultural and natural heritage, as well as landscape character. In the absence of statutory standards for outdoor access improvements, it provides a framework for improving access. This encourages landowners and countryside and natural resource managers to identify those standards and techniques that are most appropriate for a particular situation.

Site and trail managers can sometimes feel they need to know all about specific visitors to be able to identify what access improvements should be made. However, what is needed most is knowledge of the range of experiences a site could offer and communicating these well. The aim is not to ensure that everyone has access to the same overall experience, but to an equal quality of experience.

Introducing the issues

Importance of the outdoors

There is widespread evidence to show the health and social benefits that come from spending time outdoors in nature. Public open spaces and paths are central features of local community life. They are where public life takes place, and where people can connect with the natural world and with each other. Some public spaces or routes are valued mainly for recreation or educational use, while many are an important part of daily life, such as a route to the local shop, school or work.



Photo: Sensory Trust

There is evidence to show that these benefits are not equally available to everyone. Disabled people, older people and families with young children are especially impacted by physical barriers to access. Psychosocial barriers such as concerns about personal safety and uncertainty about feeling welcome are widely reported. People experiencing social and economic disadvantage have significantly less access to such spaces and are particularly affected when this is linked with one of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 (see [‘The legal framework’](#) below).

Many people who are presently unable to enjoy outdoor activities and engage with nature could have access to these opportunities if human-made elements on sites and promotional materials were created and overseen in an inclusive manner. Obstacles may arise from physical issues on the site, such as stiles and difficult terrain. However, social and cultural barriers also exclude people and need equal attention and consideration. This guide is

designed to help you identify the barriers that prevent or dissuade people from visiting your sites and routes, and how to remove or avoid them, often through small changes in design, management practices and better information provision and description.

Understanding diversity

The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine 'protected characteristics' to frame its anti-discrimination legislation. Many people have more than one protected characteristic, intersectionality is an important framework that recognises how these characteristics combine and overlap.

Diversity weaves its way through families, groups of friends, couples and individuals. A protected characteristic might relate to an elderly grandparent in a family, a pregnant partner, a friend who identifies as transgender or a student with learning disabilities. The Equality Act also protects a person who is 'linked or associated with someone who has a protected characteristic'. Many people visit with families and friends, and access difficulties will impact the group, not just the individual. A Visit Britain survey showed that friends and family often react more negatively than the person who is directly impacted by an access issue.

Equality isn't about treating everyone the same, it is about respecting the differences and finding ways to make everyone feel welcome and supported. The term 'equity' is sometimes used to reinforce this point. People with different characteristics often benefit from the same access improvement and everyone can benefit from changes aimed at people with particular needs. At its root, what is most needed is a positive, open attitude and a welcoming approach combined with good communication and understanding.

Access improvements are only partly about making changes to the physical fabric of sites and routes. For some people, the barriers have more to do with a lack of confidence and experience in visiting the countryside and open spaces. Building closer relationships with community groups will help you connect with a wider diversity of people. For example, working with a local interfaith group can lead to greater understanding of how people of different faiths might be interested in visiting or volunteering, and what benefits they get from visiting your site.



Photo: Craig Grimes

This guide promotes the adoption of an inclusive approach in all planning, design and management processes. While there are instances where specific differences require targeted responses, eg providing a guide in braille for a braille reader, inclusive practices should be integrated into the design and management of all services and can benefit everyone. Consideration of diversity should be an inherent aspect of day-to-day operations rather than being perceived as a form of "special provision."

Disability and access to the outdoors

While this guide addresses the full range of characteristics protected by the Equality Act, it recognises that the greatest barriers to access are experienced by disabled people. Data shows that while disabled people visit less than non-disabled people, they show more interest in doing so (PANS)¹. It therefore retains a particular focus on improving access in relation to disability, especially mobility disabilities.

It is estimated that one person in five in the UK identifies as being disabled². The number is greater if it includes all those people who experience temporary disabilities, for example a broken limb, a heart condition, or general fatigue. The implications of any disability are often shared by a group of visitors including families, friends and carers.

¹ The People and Nature Surveys for England, Natural England and DEFRA

www.gov.uk/government/collections/people-and-nature-survey-for-england

² <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9602/CBP-9602.pdf>

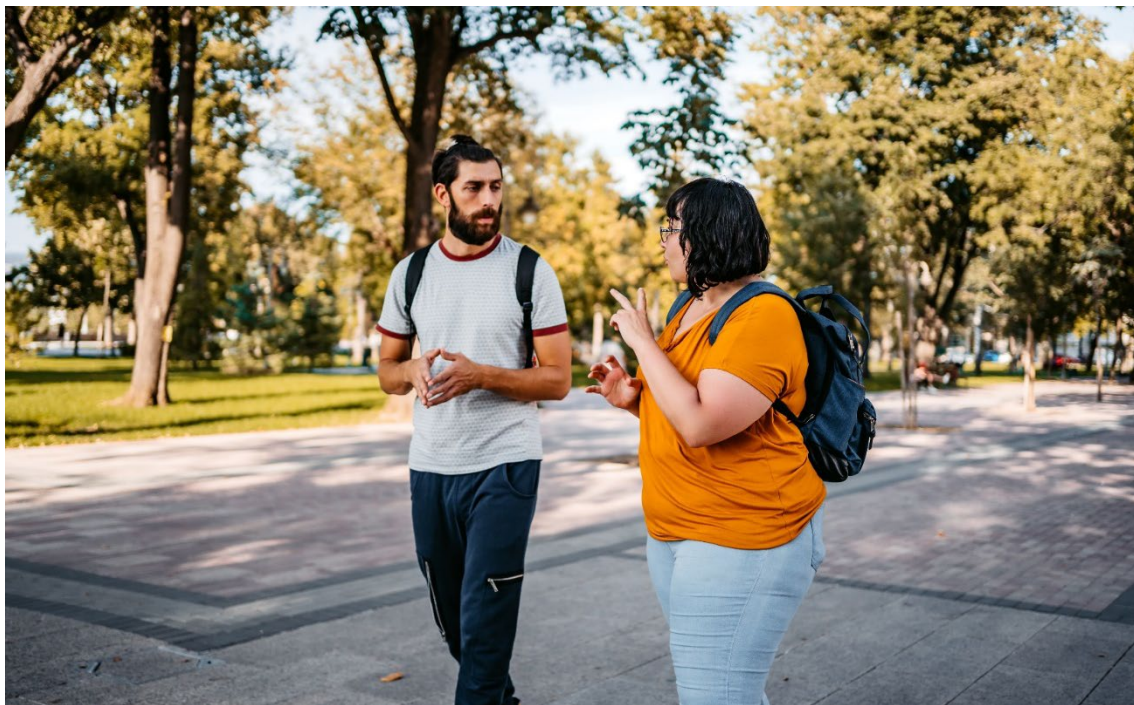


Photo: istock.com/urbazon

A diverse range of physical, sensory and neurological disabilities are experienced by people of all ages and backgrounds. Over 50% of disabled people have limited mobility and this includes people who are ambulant or semi-ambulant, as well as 5% who are wheelchair users. An increasing number of people use mobility scooters and adaptive equipment, sometimes only when visiting the outdoors.

Older people may not consider themselves disabled but can experience many of the same barriers because of a general reduction in stamina, mobility and sensory acuity. Demographic changes are resulting in a greater proportion of older people in society. Their needs must be seen within the same issues outlined in this guide.

Personal circumstances, though not always visible, play a crucial role in accessibility. There are many examples of where hidden disabilities can affect how people rely on sites and routes being accessible. For instance, an individual with a heart condition may require resting opportunities when walking uphill, while someone with dementia may need clear wayfinding information to avoid disorientation. Accessibility involves more than just well-maintained paths and facilities, however it can be quite simple interventions that make a significant difference. For example, the addition of seating in locations where visitors most need it or making sure the signage is clear and helpful.

The aim is to ensure that everybody can have an equally worthwhile and enjoyable experience, not necessarily the same experience. For example, someone with limited strength might like to cycle but would choose a level route rather than the most challenging uphill route. This may mean that you

will need to make adjustments for some people. Just as a restaurant caters for different diets with options on a menu, so a flexible event or activity will give people choice of how and when they take part.

Benefits of an inclusive approach

‘Inclusive’ is now widely understood as a term that means that an activity or a location should be usable by as many people as possible. So, for example, rather than having separate entrances for disabled people, everyone should be able to come in the same way. Information that is easy to understand is beneficial to everyone, not just people with low literacy skills or without English or Welsh as a first language.

Developing an inclusive approach is not just about the use of sites, routes and facilities. It makes services better, involves more people as visitors and supporters, gets messages shared with more people and achieves more value from the work and resources that are being invested.

Raising awareness of the importance of the countryside, open space and nature conservation is central to the work of many landowners and managers. Increasing the accessibility and appeal of information helps spread these messages to a bigger and more diverse audience.

Benefits of an inclusive approach

- Involvement of a wider diversity of people as visitors, staff and volunteers.
- Increased visitor satisfaction and engagement, and more repeat visits
- Greater employee and volunteer satisfaction.
- Delivery of legal requirements.
- Positive relationships with local communities and greater outreach.
- Effective use of resources by avoiding short-term ad-hoc measures.

The legal framework

Any organisation that owns and manages outdoor spaces in England and Wales has legislative duties not to discriminate against people with protected characteristics.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is the key piece of anti-discrimination legislation in England and Wales. The Disability Discrimination Act and Race Relations Act are no longer in place in these countries and have been absorbed into the Equality Act along with over 100 individual pieces of legislation.

The Act requires the elimination of discrimination, harassment or victimisation and the advancement of equality of opportunity between different groups. There is an anticipatory duty in relation to making a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person. This places a responsibility on organisations to promote equality, encourage greater participation and eliminate discrimination against disabled people.

The Equality Act protects individuals from discrimination in relation to nine 'protected characteristics'. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (employment only), race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are referred to as 'protected characteristics'. The Act also applies to a person who is 'linked or associated with someone who has a protected characteristic'.

Protected characteristics help identify people who tend to be impacted by barriers to access but these are not distinct and separate groups of people within the community. Diversity weaves its way through families, groups of friends, couples and individuals. Many people have more than one protected characteristic and intersectionality is an important framework that recognises how these characteristics combine and overlap.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public authorities to consider how their policies and decisions impact people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. This includes the elimination of unlawful discrimination, however it also requires a proactive role in advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with protected characteristics. The duty is often addressed through the development of an Equality Impact Assessment.

Responding to these duties typically includes:

Changing the way things are done. Reviewing and altering policies and routine practices to improve accessibility.

Examples:

Reviewing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan to address the needs of people with protected characteristics, setting inclusive standards for all infrastructure.

A review of practices for installing new countryside gates reveals the need to change the design specification to take account of the increased size of self-drive mobility vehicles.

Changing physical features. Modifying sites and routes to remove or avoid barriers, and to maximise accessibility for the widest range of people.

Examples:

Adding more frequent seats and resting points to enable visits by people living with health and disability issues that impact on stamina.

Removing stiles and kissing gates and replacing them with gaps or two-way gates.

Social and economic disadvantage

Socio-economic disadvantage is not specifically identified as a protected characteristic in the Equality Act, nonetheless, it can reduce people's opportunities to explore the outdoors. It is addressed through legislation in Wales (see below).

The social and economic status of people with protected characteristics needs to be considered so that actions are designed to meet their needs.

A More Equal Wales

In Wales, there are duties that require public bodies to consider equality through their decision-making processes³:

- Socio-economic Duty. Ensuring that strategic decisions reduce inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Relevant public bodies are encouraged to be able to evidence a clear audit trail for all decisions made under the Duty.

³ More information is provided in

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-04/a-more-equal-wales-mapping-guide.pdf>

- **Public Sector Equality Duty.** Assess the likely impact of proposed policies and practices on the ability to comply with the general duty and the particular impacts on people with protected characteristics. Public bodies must publish reports of the assessments where they show a substantial impact (or likely impact) on their ability to meet the general duty. This has become known as an EIA (Equality Impact Assessment).
- **Wellbeing of Future Generations Duty.** Understand how public bodies can make the best contribution to their well-being objectives in their governance, policy and through the decisions that they make. There is no specific requirement to carry out well-being impact assessments, but public bodies can choose to do so⁴.

The Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

Local highway authorities are required to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) and in developing the Plan, the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 must be taken into consideration.

Local Access Forums (LAFs) were established under the CRoW Act. LAFs advise local authorities and others on how to improve public access to land in their area for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment. This guide can help inform LAF advice about making public access as inclusive as possible. More information at:

[Local Access Forums: participate in decisions on public access - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-access-forums-participate-in-decisions-on-public-access)

Natural Resources Wales, Local Access Forums (note that the regulations governing LAFs in Wales are different to England and updates to regulations are due soon in Wales).

<https://naturalresources.wales/days-out/recreation-and-access-policy-advice-and-guidance/networks-and-partnerships/local-access-forums/?lang=en>

Highways Act 1980

When planning improvements and new structures, highway authorities must consider the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and aim to make them as accessible as possible. For example, replacing stiles with gaps or gates as much as possible and normally to the latest version of BS 5709 Gaps, Gates and Stiles. An authority may also enter into agreements with landowners to

⁴ The Well-Being Goals, the Act, and the statutory guidance are available on the [Future Generations Commissioner for Wales's website](#). NRW well-being objectives are available on [the NRW website](#).

improve stiles, gates or other structures either informally or under Highways Act 1980 section 147ZA.

Historic landscape legislation

It is important to note that the Equality Act 2010 does not override conditions associated with planning, listed building legislation, scheduled monuments and inclusion in the Cadw Registered Historic Parks and Gardens <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/historic-assets/registered-historic-parks-gardens> Access improvements will require approval in relation to these designations.

Health and safety and risk assessments

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (2006) places a legal duty to identify and manage risks associated with any works. This applies to employers, employees and anyone involved in works, such as contractors and volunteers.

Risk assessments are used to identify risks and to assess how they can be reduced or eliminated. They should include consideration of safeguarding in relation to activities where the safety of participants must be ensured. It is essential that the systems you use are inclusive and give adequate thought to a diversity of people. More information at the Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk

Framework for action

This guide is based on the principle of Least Restrictive Access (LRA) which aims to ensure that all work aspires to the most inclusive standards possible.

It uses the [Access Chain](#), a tool that addresses access survey and improvement through the steps of a visit.

This guide aligns with the [Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#) which provides the most widely adopted advisory standards and detailed technical guidance.

Least Restrictive Access

The principle of Least Restrictive Access (LRA) requires that all work, whether planned work or ad hoc maintenance, meets the most inclusive access standards for that piece of work. It is an approach that improves the accessibility of sites, routes and facilities over time.

LRA is about all accessibility issues. It will not be possible to make all countryside accessible to everyone, nonetheless, LRA principles require those organisations providing access to the outdoors to maximise accessibility for as many people as possible at every opportunity.

LRA can be achieved by identifying the least restrictive option for a specific feature, such as a gate or a piece of interpretation, or by considering how to meet people's needs differently such as by re-routing the path, or rethinking interpretation. As emphasised in BS5709:2018 Gaps Gates and Stiles this is not just about selecting the type of structure, but also how to make and install the chosen structure in the least obstructive way.

Where it is possible that the most inclusive access standards cannot be achieved – for example, because of insufficient funds, lack of consent by a landowner or topography, landscape and conservation requirements – there should always be a clearly reasoned and documented justification for the decision to use a lower standard, this can be in the form of an Equality Impact Assessment.

Key point: Least Restrictive Access is the principle at the centre of the [Access Chain](#).

Examples of least restrictive access in practice

Gaps are best, gates are better than stiles. A gap is less restrictive than a gate, which is less restrictive than a stile. So, when a stile needs repair, the first option that must be considered is its removal to leave a gap. If this is not possible, it should be replaced by a gate.

New and replacement stiles should not be installed by any public body but some private landowners may replace a stile with a new stile, whilst ensuring it is one that is compliant with BS5709. A significant number of stiles have been replaced by gates across England and Wales. The British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles (BS:5709:2018) is an important reference.

A leaflet printed in 12-point text is less restrictive than one in 8-point, and interpretation panels where the messages are conveyed by both clear text and images is less restrictive than ones that rely on text only.

A café menu with a choice of food options to meet dietary needs and comprehensive information on ingredients is less restrictive than one with only limited choice, or with poor information.

Access standards for countryside and open spaces

In the absence of statutory standards that apply to access improvements to countryside and open spaces, this guide uses the advisory standards and principles in the '[Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#)'. These are widely acknowledged as representing current best practice.

The standards relate to paths and routes and are defined primarily in terms of physical access, predominantly in relation to people with mobility disabilities.

Building Standards

The statutory standards that relate to the inclusive design of buildings and their approaches are:

- Part M of the Building Regulations
- British Standard 8300-1:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment – external environment. Code of Practice. British Standards Institute.

These are important for the design of facilities like cafes and visitor centres.

British Standard BS 5709:2018 Gaps, gates and stiles

The key principle of the British Standard is that any human-made impediments on a public right of way must consider what will be the Least

Restrictive Access. So, whenever possible it recommends that a gap should be introduced into the fence line before a gate and only in very exceptional circumstances should a stile be used. It is important to note that this guide does not recommend the use of stiles in any circumstance.

Design and Access Statements

Since 2009 there has been a legal requirement for a Design and Access Statement as part of most planning applications. This explains how the development will maximise accessibility within the context of the design, the site and the surrounding area.

Recording decisions is important and often overlooked. It is important to know why approaches were taken, how decisions were made, who was consulted and what guidance was used. This working record is also useful for new staff, and to support decisions should these be challenged at a later date.

The Access Chain

The Access Chain⁵ is a tool that addresses accessibility from a visitor's perspective. It shows that a successful visit requires a chain of events, leading from a person's decision to visit a site or route, through the journey, arrival, and visit around the site or route and its facilities, and the journey home. If any link in the chain is broken, then the visit may either end unsatisfactorily or may never happen.

Access improvement plans should consider all the links that make up the Access Chain, as piecemeal access improvements may have limited impact. Engagement with individuals, community groups, communities of interest and organisations with expertise is recommended to ensure that decisions affecting all stages of the Chain are informed by a rich mix of experiences and perspectives.

⁵ Sensory Trust (2005) www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/access-chain-an-inclusive-design-tool

Visitor experience

Decision to visit

Journey and arrival

On-site experience

Return home

Examples of things to consider

Information about access and accessible facilities
Accessible formats and choice of languages available
Promotion and publicity present a welcoming and inclusive image for all visitors
Good publicity with targeted distribution

Public/community transport
Accessible car parking/drop off
Welcoming entrance with orientation information
Free entry for carers/supporters
Inclusive facilities eg toilets, changing facilities, cafes

Routes and signposting for all abilities
Inclusive events planning
Accessible information and interpretation
Inclusive facilities eg toilets, changing facilities, cafes
Inclusive visitor experiences available to a diverse audience

Public/community transport
Accessible car parking/pick up
Feedback and involvement encouraged
Activity packs for groups - accessible formats and choice of languages available

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Combining access with quality of experience

Access improvements should consider the quality of visitor experience created. For example, creating a wheelchair accessible route that leads away from a site's popular highlights will make the route possible, but not necessarily inviting. Encouraging a greater ethnic mix is unlikely to succeed if the interpretation is solely focused on stories that fail to embrace a wider cultural perspective.

The following ingredients are key to a successful inclusive visit:

Inviting and engaging

To ensure inclusive access to the diverse array of experiences available, it is crucial to base this on a good understanding of a site's characteristics and the various ways in which individuals interact with it. It helps to do the following:

- Work with community groups, perhaps by facilitating some of their events and activities, inviting people to contribute to the development of plans.
- Consider experiences that engage the different senses, providing highlights for people with sensory disabilities and enriching the experience for people in general.
- Think more widely about the stories of a place and how different ones might relate to people with different backgrounds and experiences.
- Provide opportunities for people to enjoy a site as part of a group, as well as individual and family use. This can help welcome people who are unfamiliar with exploring the outdoors and who need the reassurance of visiting as part of a wider social group.
- Provide diverse volunteering opportunities that suit different capabilities, talents, and availability.

Comfortable

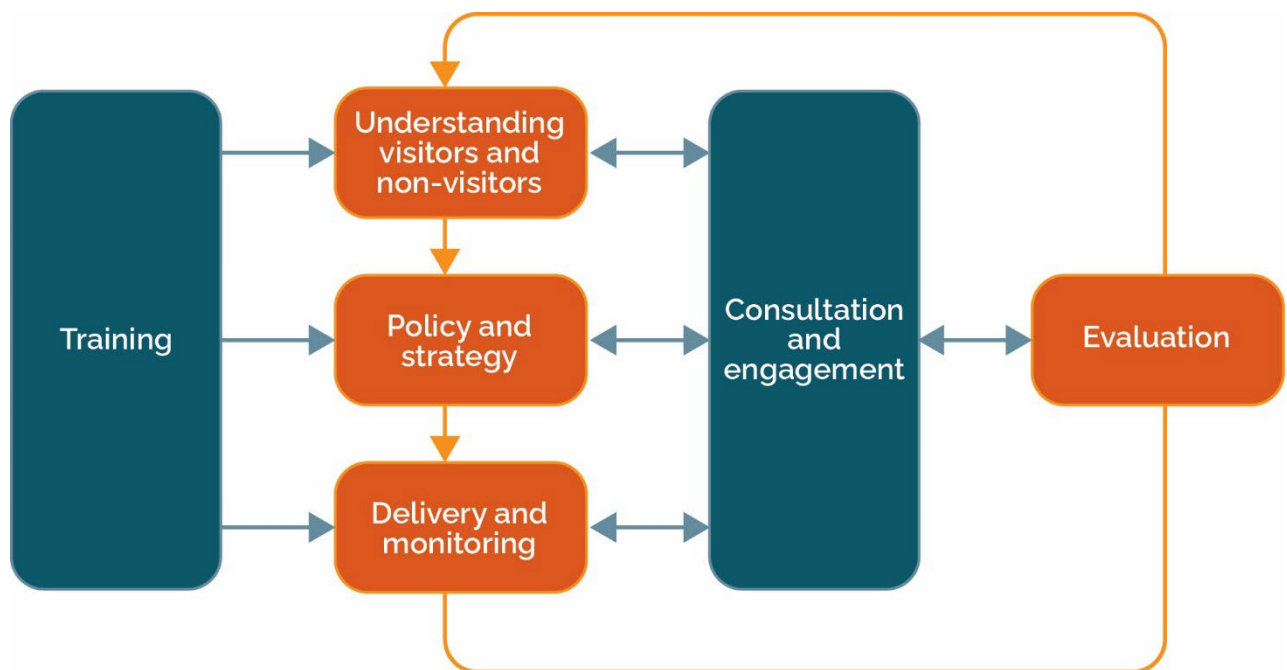
While some of your visitors may be adrenaline-seeking fans of extreme activities who are keen to explore wild countryside, the majority will want an easier time of it. Minimising slopes and steps, providing barrier-free routes to highlights and offering a choice of route distances will help widen a site's appeal.

Providing shelter from the elements, enough seating and resting spots to enable people to explore your site, along with accessible toilets and changing facilities will all support an enjoyable experience. A Changing Places facility provides toilet and changing space for families and groups with older children or adults with profound and multiple disabilities (see <https://www.changing-places.org/>).

Sociable

Many visitors will want to share their visit with friends and relatives so it's important to plan for groups of different sizes when planning facilities like picnic facilities, seating and shelter. Being open to a wide range of social events will help engage a greater diversity of groups.

Putting the framework into practice



Source: Natural England

Training

Raising awareness and understanding amongst staff and volunteers is essential to develop inclusive policies and sustain access improvements. All staff need to understand inclusive access so relevant diversity and equality training is therefore essential and should be regularly refreshed.

Contractors that are employed should be required to demonstrate an understanding of inclusion.

Training courses are likely to include sessions about:

- Implications of Equality Act 2010, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Public Rights of Way legislation.
- How to engage local people and community groups.
- Diversity, nature connection and visitor experience.
- Access standards and surveys.
- Access plans and the planning process.
- Inclusive information and interpretation provision including social media.
- Practical delivery.
- Inclusive design.
- Communication methods eg British Sign Language, Widgit, Makaton and plain language.
- Evaluation.

Some of the most effective training is gained by working and consulting with people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Induction training for staff and volunteers

Induction training should demonstrate organisational commitment to equality and inclusion and how an inclusive approach is delivered. Training should inspire people, set a level of expectation and show how to make the issue integral to their work.

Diversity training

Diversity training should relate to the visitor experience so it helps teams recognise the diversity of abilities of visitors and practical ways they can meet people's needs to ensure everyone can have a great visit.

Visitors, non-visitors and patterns of use

It is important to review how a site, route or path network is currently used. This includes establishing the location and nature of surrounding communities (eg residential areas, schools, sheltered housing, shops and catering) to understand likely patterns of use and where the development of accessible path networks would have most impact.

It is equally important to consider who is not visiting a site or path and the reasons why. This relies on identifying non-participants and under-represented people, and understanding the different reasons why people may not be visiting. You will find guidance on engagement and survey techniques in the [Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#)⁶.

The motivations for using the outdoors and people's preferences are diverse. Some people enjoy the experience of a gentle stroll, with or without a dog, others enjoy exploration. Some are drawn to engage with an attraction or destination. Public rights of way and active travel routes may also be routes to work, school, the bus stop or the local pub.

⁶ OAG 3.3 Understanding the needs of your community.

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/outdoor-accessibility-guidance>

Aspects to include in a review	Description	Techniques
Local communities	Groups that could get involved as volunteers, focus groups or become future visitors, such as retirement communities, schools, day centres, healthcare centres.	Obtain information from local authority community team. Consult to find out how people would like to use the site or area.
Existing users	Who is currently using the site, route or network, why are they visiting and what do they use it for? How well do these people reflect the local community in terms of age, disability and background?	Plot these communities on a map and make contact. Consult to find out how people would like to use the site or area.
Patterns of use	When and how is the place used? Are there current users or types of use that are difficult to integrate, eg dog walking with bike and horse riding?	On-site survey on different days, times of day and seasons. Note that dog walkers may visit very early before work, and very late, after work and after dark. Consult with local people, including all types of use. Use national data (see Appendix 4 for lists of national datasets and tools) about visits to the natural environment to understand likely use. Use Strava Metro to understand routes and possible levels of use.

Non-users	Who is not currently using the site, route or network and why?	Questionnaire survey distributed locally (and more widely for sites and routes that attract tourists). Consult with local people. Use national and local data about disabilities, ethnicity and socio-economic conditions to understand likely local conditions and barriers.
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Inclusive access policy and strategy

An access policy outlines an organisation's commitment to improving access, and a strategy shows how these intentions will be achieved. It is important that both reflect the needs and aspirations of local people and visitors and involve a diversity of people as development partners.

Ideally, Local Authorities would develop an Access Policy which is then reflected in other policy documents. An alternative approach is to include relevant policies within the RoWIPs, park, greenspace and countryside management plans and active travel plans. However, other local authority policy areas should include references to inclusive outdoors such as policies for equal opportunities, public health, planning, highways, public transport, tourism, leisure and recreation.

Voluntary organisations also need to consider their obligations for inclusive access to their holdings and in any publicly funded work under the Equality Act 2010 and this can be embedded within policies about both conservation and access.

Landowners who are keen to improve access on their private land may find it worthwhile to review local authority and government policies, especially if it may lead to the possibility of additional funding, and then develop their own policy and strategy.

Policy development

Access Policies are important as they provide the context for effective working practices. They may be developed for the whole organisation, or for individual sites and routes. It is important that all staff understand that they play an important part in forming and applying these and staff should be

engaged in their drafting and regular review. Policies should address issues relevant to those responsible for implementation and those who are to be beneficiaries. They should cover the following three components:

Why: The key reasons for improving access.

What: A clear statement of what a policy hopes to achieve. Key issues to address:

- Ensure people have choice over where, when and how they will be able to enjoy the outdoors.
- Aim for integrated services wherever possible, enhanced by specific support.

How: An indication of key areas where actions will be pursued. These may include:

- What resources will be available to achieve the aims of the policy?
- Commitment to consult with current users and non-users of countryside sites, routes and facilities.
- Commitment to training staff and, where appropriate, people from partner organisations, Local Access Forums and associated groups such as Friends.
- Commitment to monitor and evaluate implementation of policy and make adjustments where necessary.

A local authority's draft Access Policy should be distributed to a representative range of organisations and individuals. [Appendix 6](#) has suggestions for national contacts, but local ones should also be included. People should be kept informed about what has resulted from their feedback and this should include explanation of why some suggestions could not be implemented. Subsequent consultation will be valuable to keep policies up to date with changes in local concerns and interests.

Access strategy or plan

An access strategy should take account of how much time, staff resource and money is available to implement the policy. The first strategy for implementing the new policy is likely to be published at the same time as the policy and therefore consultation can be concurrent.

Strategies are likely to cover a 3 or 5 year period, whereas policy is likely to be relevant for a longer timescale. The content of a strategy will depend on where an organisation is in the process of implementing policy. A first strategy for implementing policy will have objectives broadly similar to those outlined below:

- To prioritise paths and places for survey.
- To survey prioritised sites, routes and associated facilities and services.

- To identify and prioritise improvements to routes.
- To identify and prioritise improvements to sites, routes and associated facilities and services.
- To identify audiences, prioritise, produce and distribute information.
- To undertake improvements to sites, routes, facilities and services.
- To improve accessibility of non-prioritised routes when opportunities arise, such as during ongoing maintenance.
- To monitor and evaluate the impacts of actions.

Funding staff or volunteers to implement actions outlined in the strategy should be established at the outset. However, a further objective could be to seek further funds and volunteers to implement more improvements.

Review of policies and strategy

It is recommended that action plans contained in the strategy are reviewed annually, and strategies and policies every three or five years in light of monitoring and evaluating success. For Highways Authorities, RoWIPs are likely to be a useful mechanism which should set strategic priorities across an authority area and may be useful in looking at which sites to prioritise. RoWIP assessments should help inform priorities for survey too. More generally, Local Access Forums can play a valuable role in reviewing information.

Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment (EqIA) reviews the impact of a policy or service on different groups of people. An EqIA should be included as part of the development and review of policies and practices.

Health Impact Assessments in Wales

Health Impact Assessments (HIA) have been developed by Public Health Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. A HIA identifies potential positive and negative health impacts from a proposed development, policy or land use. It provides suggestions for how to minimise negative impacts, and to maximise opportunities for health gains.

NRW are implementing HIA on strategies, projects, programmes, etc, and soon other public sector bodies are expected to have a requirement to do so, as set out in the Public Health Wales Bill

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=522>

Delivery and monitoring

Setting priorities

This guide has emphasised that access is a chain of events, and that access works should be seen as part of that chain to be most effective. It is important when planning action to look at the order in which access improvements are made. For instance, it makes sense to improve the access from the bus stop to the site before improving the bus service.

Access improvements should be planned as packages of work, looking at the possibilities that improvements present and ensuring that low priority items are not forgotten. It is important to identify the cost and benefits of all improvements.

An example of setting priorities

From existing staff knowledge, it is evident that a car park in the woods with good views, an accessible picnic area and accessible toilets is already an attraction. Publicity and information should promote this. Road signage should make it easier to find.

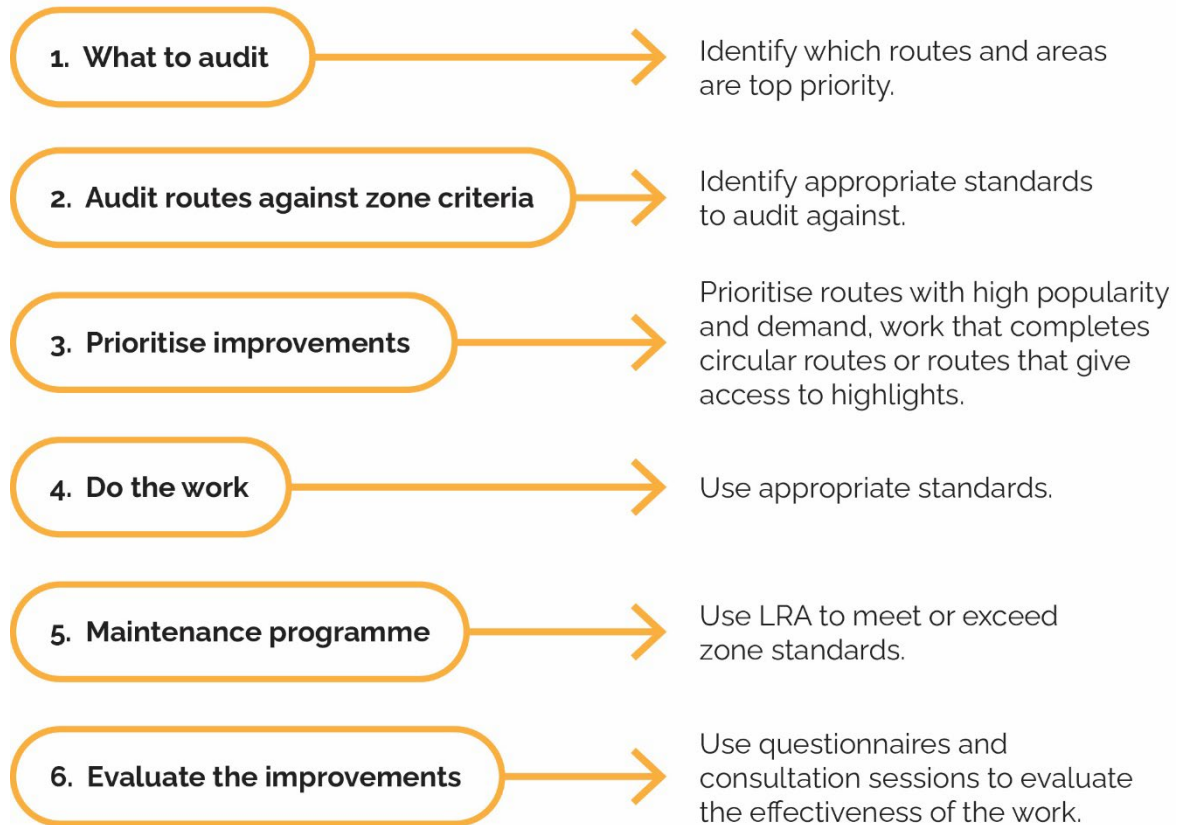
If a circular route from this car park through the woods is developed, then new information must be produced to promote this. It may be that the number of accessible car parking spaces should be increased to cater for the expected increase in visitors. The location of the accessible parking bays may have to be changed to be closer to the start of the route. Local transport companies should be contacted with a view to improving services to this part of the site. This circular route gives access to interesting wildlife. Accessible interpretation should be planned that enhances the experience for visitors.

Engage with your local community to understand their priorities for improvements, whether these are routes that have the highest current use, routes that could be used as active travel routes, routes that meet recreational needs or routes that can be improved at low cost. Where there are safety issues these should be a priority for action.

There may be local circumstances that help set priorities, such as partnership funding for paths or facilities, or plans to provide accessible public transport to new locations. Those consulted earlier in the process should be consulted again, ensuring that an organisation can be confident its decisions are meeting the needs of local people.

Once priorities have been agreed, improvements should be listed in order of priority, taking account of how improvements affect the total experience.

Planning access improvements



Source: Sensory Trust

Surveying sites and routes

Surveying is critical since the data collected will be used in two ways: to identify work required to bring paths, features and facilities up to standard; and for providing detailed information to users.

When prioritising the removal or avoidance of barriers, it is important to keep a focus on visitor experience. The overall aim is to offer different visitors an equally satisfying experience. This means that an area or route that appears to lend itself to being easier access because of its lack of barriers may not be the priority in terms of what experiences most people want to enjoy.

Consulting with people is key and needs to include both existing users and non-users.

Survey information should be analysed to identify what changes are required for each feature (structure, surface, signage etc) to improve accessibility to the identified standard of inclusivity. It is also used to estimate budgets for each individual action and all actions on a route as a whole.

For guidance on surveying sites, routes and facilities see the '[Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#)'.

Undertaking the work

Having established the priorities for improvements to sites, routes and facilities that have a budget awarded, work can be included in annual action plans. All projects will then be carried out in the same way an organisation arranges its regular programme of works and activities.

If works are contracted out, it is important that contractors are aware of access issues and that they receive the necessary training. It may be appropriate to insert a contract clause to cover this. It would be important at this stage for contractors to liaise with community groups, such as an access group, to ensure that all intended works meet the requirements of different visitors. Local community groups may volunteer to help out with work, and including volunteer groups in this way can help build a sense of ownership and subsequently increased use of the improved site.

It is important to join up the different pieces of access work as it is often the transitions between different areas that create some of the greatest barriers. Transitions between areas under different management should receive particular focus, for example the transition between a car park owned by a local authority and a nature reserve owned and managed by a Wildlife Trust.

With any new work, it is important to ensure that:

- It meets the relevant recommended standards and takes into account the Equality Act 2010.
- It matches available budget and skills.
- It uses the best materials and construction techniques in relation to local sourcing, environmental sustainability, construction skills and maintenance implications.

Planned improvements should be prioritised and costed, enabling them to be phased over a period of years. An example of an action plan is shown in [Appendix 3](#).

Maintenance

Maintenance of routes, facilities and information should use the principle of LRA. Where routes or sections of routes need to be maintained, the highest standard should be applied (see [Appendix 1](#)). LRA maintenance should be used to gradually improve information, facilities and paths that are in less developed settings by maintaining them to a higher standard. Most building work should meet or exceed the standards provided in Part M of the Building Regulations. Part M Approved Document and BS8300-1:2018 contains useful design guidance.

Use the principle of LRA to meet accessible standards for each route that requires maintenance. Used in this way, LRA is a tool to gradually improve the quality of routes over time. Improved routes may become more popular and this will be highlighted in future evaluations.

Community engagement

Seeking the views of people with an interest in a particular site or route, both local people and those who live further away, helps ensure that plans and actions target the real needs and wishes of people who visit. It is important to involve a range of people that represent different needs within the local community, some of whom may not yet visit and who may not respond to traditional forms of community engagement.

Involving potential visitors can help build a sense of ownership and belonging at an early stage, helping to encourage people to make full use of the facilities when they are in place. An access consultation may also be an opportunity to discuss other objectives such as nature conservation and landscape character.

Community engagement will help identify access barriers and generate ideas for improvements and can help build support from the community.

Engagement must include the widest range of people, including those whose needs or desires may conflict with another group's needs. It must also be regular, from the earliest stages of planning, to the implementation of physical works and subsequent evaluation and review.

Effective consultation relies on:

- Making the consultation accessible.
- Setting clear parameters, including why the consultation is taking place and what is expected as a result.
- Identifying examples of improvements and the benefits they would have.
- Identifying areas that have special heritage value and that have limited options for removal or adaptation of physical features.
- The level of resources available to support new ideas and improvements.
- Realistic estimates of the cost of capital and/or revenue works.

Visitors and potential visitors should be consulted on what they do or would like to do on a site, and to discover the site's highlights. Inviting people with different characteristics to assess the site's interest with you will be a cost-effective means of doing this. This will result in a more complete picture of the site which will show how best to make its features accessible. It may also help prioritise actions.

Good ideas for access improvements also often come from staff and volunteers who have regular contact with visitors. They will have a good understanding of:

- The range of people who currently use the site.
- Which paths are already well used and by who.
- The topography of the area.
- The current condition of the path and associated routes.
- Landscape and environmental conservation constraints.
- The current land use.
- Local associated facilities.

It is important that consultation is planned and that contact is maintained with people afterwards so they know their input was valued. One of the most common criticisms from people who have given time to share their views is that they never heard what happened as a result of their contribution.

How to find people

Potential sources of contacts are listed in [Appendix 6](#). In addition to the owners, managers and users of the countryside, professional input is valuable to lend specialist insights on design and management possibilities, to explain the heritage value of an area and to interpret the implications of different

suggestions. Professionals consulted may include historians, highway authority officers, engineers, inclusion experts, conservation professionals and landscape architects.

Engagement should include building relationships with other landowners, transport companies, highway departments and other agencies to facilitate access improvements along the length of the [Access Chain](#).

Monitoring

Monitoring is important for identifying what has worked well and what could be done better. The findings will be important for informing future improvement work. It should include the following:

The condition of the route/infrastructure/surface/signposting etc (is it maintained at an accessible standard or has it fallen out of repair?).

The use of a specific route or area, either through people counters with remote telemetry or other data such as that from mobile phones or apps like Strava Metro. Note that people counters provide largely robust data, whereas the use of data from mobile phones and Strava has built-in biases.

Techniques for eliciting people's experiences of improved routes and facilities include:

- 'Walk and talk' sessions with a local access or community group.
- Interviews and questionnaires.
- Use of websites to obtain feedback.
- Qualitative methods using structured focus groups and analysis of people's experiences, perceptions and feelings.
- Visitor data that shows changes in volume and diversity.

Evaluation

Evaluation measures the effectiveness of something against specific objectives. It can therefore be applied to the effectiveness of:

- Improvements to specific sites, routes and facilities, or to the overall improvements to physical access within an area.
- Improvements to facilities.
- Newly produced information.
- Staff and organisation's awareness of access issues.

It is important to use the evaluation results to develop the ongoing improvement programme. They can help show where further improvements are required, and the best ways of achieving them.

It is valuable to share the evaluation of the effectiveness of the work (cost benefit analysis) in community engagement and consultation sessions.

Action Planning

This section follows the steps of the [Access Chain](#) to highlight the key barriers to access and how to address them. It includes indicators of good practice which can be used as a reference point for site reviews, and to guide new development work.

It is important that the principles of LRA are applied to all the links in the [Access Chain](#). An action plan should consider each link, from the decision to visit, through journey and arrival and on-site experience, to the return home.

1. Decision to visit

A decision to visit is the first step in the [Access Chain](#) and relies on information being available that meets an individual's needs. Lack of accessible off-site information is one of the most significant barriers limiting use of the outdoors by disabled people who often need to plan more carefully to make sure a visit will be enjoyable. It also relates to visitors who lack confidence, visitors who are new to the area, tourists, families with young children and older people, all of whom need reassurance of a site's welcome and accessibility.

A decision to visit may be made solely by an individual, or in conjunction with a supporter, enabler or carer. The information should be inclusive to take all these people into consideration.

Indicators of good practice	
Information welcomes all visitors	Websites, leaflets and social media show a wide range of visitors, stories and activities. Information is designed according to the principles of inclusive design and plain language (including plain English/Cymraeg Clir). Community groups have been involved in the development of new information. Information is shared widely with community groups and networks and invites people to get involved in addressing accessibility. Information is checked regularly to ensure it is kept up to date. Videos are captioned for the benefit of people who are Deaf and hard of hearing, and pictures have Alt Text.

Information is accessible	Digital content is designed in line with accessibility standards and user-tested with people with different sensory and intellectual disabilities. Off-site information is in different formats to allow a wider audience to access it. Eg, printed information is available in large print, audio and braille for people who are blind and partially sighted. Symbols and pictures support people with communication and learning disabilities and help convey messages to visitors without English or Welsh as their first language. Off-site information is in languages that reflect local community and tourism needs.
There is information about site accessibility	People can find out general information about the site before they visit; such as opening times, facilities, nearby public transport, and provision of play areas. Off-site information provides information on the accessibility of site facilities for example: accessible routes on site, activities, accessible parking, toilets, Changing Places, shelters, picnic sites, cafes, forthcoming events, opening times of facilities and travel options. Policies are clear about free or discounted entry for carers and personal assistants, and any concessions.
Information is easy to find	Community venues (including libraries), groups and networks are actively sharing information with new audiences. Social media platforms are used to promote the site and connect people to more detailed information.
There is virtual access to experiences that are too challenging to get to	People can gain a virtual experience (eg of a remote cave, or a steep hill fort) through video, webcam, audio, images, Extended Reality (XR) etc.

There is a policy for developing inclusive information	An information policy is regularly reviewed to ensure that all new information complies with the highest standards of inclusive design.
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Developing off-site information

Information about the highlights a site offers, and how different people can enjoy it, is important for everyone, but especially for people who aren't confident about whether a place will welcome them or be appropriate for their needs and interests.

What information to provide: Detailed, objective off-site information about sites, routes, facilities, barriers, access points and so on will allow someone to make a decision on whether to visit or how to shape their visit accordingly. It can be tempting to wait until access improvements have been made before producing publicity and information. It is important to note that although a site might not be completely accessible, information should be produced as soon as possible that highlights where a site is accessible and to what standard. Consider producing information in a format, such as a web page or word processing document, that can be easily updated as access improvements are made. [See Sensory Trust website for information about access guides.](#)

Only provide time-limited information if you can be sure to update it.

Visual information (film or photographic) showing the physical attributes of a path and published on a website enables the visitor to make an informed decision as to whether that path is suitable for them.

Formats: This information should be provided in formats that are accessible, such as large print and audio. Making information available on the internet as clear images and downloadable plain text files allows users to customize the presentation to their particular requirements. This can reduce the need to store and distribute numbers of large print or braille guides, although it will not replace them. Websites should be designed to conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) set by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI).

Test it first: Different people require different types of information in order to enjoy their visit, and any information, in any media, should be developed in partnership with representatives of the intended audience. It is useful to carry out user testing before it is completed. Research by BT Countryside for All also showed that disabled people are more likely to trust access information that has been vetted by other disabled people, so invite a local representative

group of disabled people to check the information before uploading it publicly or going to print.

Share it widely: People need to find information easily. For example, if leaflets are shared in venues that aren't themselves accessible, this will reduce the number of people who can use them. Equally, only providing information in the usual places – Tourist Information Centres and other tourism venues for example – won't help reach people who do not visit tourist venues. This can be remedied by distributing through local community venues, post offices, churches, pubs, supermarkets and online media such as Nextdoor, local e-newsletters, local Facebook groups, Instagram and YouTube.

Keep it current: Confidence is important for many people visiting the wider countryside. For this reason, information must be as detailed and up-to-date as possible so that it can be trusted. Information should include potential issues related to seasonal changes or weather, such as flooding.

Enable people to make their own decisions: Try to avoid information that doesn't allow someone to make a decision. For example, a sign that says a route is 'not suitable for wheelchairs' fails to consider the range of wheelchair users and new off-road mobility scooters and how some may enjoy the challenge while others may not. Information that tells people about the essential details (eg gradient and distance) will allow people to decide for themselves.

2. Journey and arrival

A key factor when choosing to visit a destination is how easy it is to get there and home again. Lack of accessible public transport can be a major barrier to people without a car. Equally, lack of accessible car parking can prevent visits by people with limited mobility, wheelchair users and older people. The most accessible sites, routes and facilities are usually those that offer a range of different options for travelling to the site.

Indicators of good practice	
It is possible to reach the route or site by public transport	Explore scope to work with local transport providers to improve services, including community transport schemes. Transport options are available on site (as well as in off-site information). Wheelchair accessible bus and taxi services are available. Reduced price and alternative route options have been agreed with local transport providers.
Walking and cycling are supported	There are good routes for walking, cycling and, where relevant horse riding, to site. Accessible cycling opportunities are available, including bike parking for tandems and side by sides. Accessible showers, lockers and cycle storage provided on site.
Accessible car parking and drop-off are clearly identified	Accessible parking is clearly signed from approach roads and located close to destinations (eg entrances, café). At least 5% of spaces are designed and designated for disabled people. Electric car charging points are accessible to wheelchair users and have sufficient space for trailers so that scooters can be safely offloaded. Drop-offs for public and private transport are accessible, near the entrance, and on the same side of the road to avoid having to cross traffic.

Entrances are welcoming and clearly signed	Arrival points have good visitor information, such as an accessible map and wayfinding details. Wayfinding is consistent across the site. Facilities like cafes, visitor centres and toilets are accessible and easy to find. Entrances are shared and not separate for wheelchair users, for example.
Choice of visitor experiences are clearly highlighted	Visitor information is available to show people what experiences are on offer so they can choose what best suits them.
Portable equipment is available	Equipment such as wheelchairs, portable seats, puncture-repair kits and audio materials are available for loan.
Remote and challenging experiences are reflected in the visitor centre, learning centre or cafe	People can link to more remote and challenging experiences, eg video footage, audio material, webcam of bird nest. Materials are available to explore through touch – eg a touch table with interesting objects and materials.
Staff and volunteers provide good support	Staff and volunteers are trained in diversity awareness. Access Volunteers are available to provide support.

Improving transport and arrival

Improve public transport: Lack of accessible, reliable and affordable public transport is a significant barrier for many disabled people, especially in rural areas.

Public transport is likely to be the responsibility of the local authority or a private company, but there may be opportunities to explore options to liaise on issues like timetables, routes and even the type of transport provided. The Equality Act 2010 presents duties for providers of public transport, many of whom have introduced accessible buses and taxis. Where public transport is in place, timetables should be accessible.

It is also important to consult with local people to find out what kinds of access improvement would be most beneficial and these should be included

in RoWIPs Local Transport Plans and Cycling and Walking Strategies as this would help resolve barriers associated with transport.

People living on low incomes may not be able to afford to run a car or to pay for public transport. It is important to explore options for community transport, perhaps in collaboration with a local volunteer organisation or linked with community activities. This could include working with community groups to organise dedicated community transport schemes with set dates for events, guided talks/walks, bringing communities together and creating a support network.

Improve access for cars: Many disabled people rely on cars to visit the countryside, and some will not be able to venture far from their cars once they get there. People with multisensory disabilities, for example, often rely on support from someone to drive them, or taxis. Such visits rely on the provision of accessible car parking and drop-off sufficiently near to attractive destination points.

Encourage walking, cycling and equestrians: There is greater emphasis on the benefits to health of walking, cycling and horse riding. Active travel routes, accessible routes and associated features (eg seating, accessible bicycles, reliable information) are important if these opportunities are to be open to the widest range of people. They can be a good focus for community activities (eg setting up walking, cycling and riding groups).

3a. On-site experience: facilities

Facilities are an essential consideration for some people when planning a day out. When planning new or adapted facilities, like toilets, changing spaces, cafes or ticket sales, take into account existing or planned access improvements to sites and routes. Situate facilities where they will be of most benefit and may increase the use of accessible routes.

Often there are accessible toilets, changing spaces and refreshments available in nearby pubs, cafés or town centres and these should be included in the publicity and information about the site or route.

Contractors or external agencies providing services and facilities, such as refreshments, must be aware of the access standards they are expected to meet. This applies to the quality of customer service as well.

Indicators of good practice	
Toilets cater for all visitors	There are accessible toilets near entrances, car parks and starting points. Toilets are highlighted in access information and include details of accessibility. Where it is not possible to provide toilets on site, information is provided about the nearest alternative options and their opening times and restrictions.
Changing Places toilets	Changing Places toilets meet the Changing Places standard: www.changing-places.org/install-toilet/design
Facilities such as visitor centres, cafes, ticket sales and bird hides are accessible	Facilities are designed to include people using mobility aids, such as sticks, dogs, wheelchairs and outdoor all-terrain mobility scooters. Opening times are convenient for different people. Accessibility is promoted in visitor information. Staff have undertaken diversity awareness training.
Facilities such as bird hides and seating areas maximise a sense of personal safety	Seating includes locations that are more open, with good sightlines, and where people can feel more secure.

	Open-backed hides and screens enable people to watch wildlife without being in an enclosed bird hide. Bird hides are visible from a main route and have more than one entrance/exit.
Good provision of seating and shelter	There are frequent opportunities for visitors to rest along routes. Seating is prioritised alongside more challenging gradients and surfaces and shorter routes near entrances. Shelter is available, particularly in places where visitors are likely to need to linger (eg pickup points and play areas).

Improving facilities

Note that new designs of personal mobility vehicles and side-by-side buggies and bikes have larger turning circles and require larger manoeuvring spaces, and they must be accommodated in any new design work.

Refer to the Outdoor Accessibility Guidance⁷ for more detailed information on infrastructure.

Toilets: The choice of most appropriate facilities needs to relate to the specific site, the profile of visitors and what is possible within budgets and physical space.

Aim to provide wheelchair accessible toilet and baby change facilities and, if space allows, provide these separately. Increasingly, venues are widening the scope of accessibility to include people with hidden disabilities (such as bowel conditions and weak bladder syndrome).

Gender-neutral or all-gender toilets and baby change facilities can be used by anyone, but they are especially important for people who identify as transgender and non-binary who may feel unsafe or unable to use gendered facilities. Most accessible facilities are gender-neutral.

In all toilets, aim to provide good colour contrast between fittings and backgrounds for the benefit of people who are blind and partially sighted. Easy-to-use locks, taps and driers are valued by people with arthritic hands

⁷ Outdoor Accessibility Guidance, Sensory Trust and Paths for All (2023)
www.pathsforall.org.uk/outdoor-accessibility-guidance

and people who find new techniques confusing, for example people living with dementia.

In larger or popular sites, it is important to consider installing Changing Places facilities in addition to accessible toilets⁸.

Cafes, bird hides, classrooms etc: Buildings, where planning and building regulations apply, should be designed to comply with Part M and BS8300 standards. These standards can help guide other structures too, such as bird hides, where entrances, door widths, manoeuvring space and viewing heights will all be important details requiring attention. Do note that these standards may not take account of larger mobility scooters. The Outdoor Accessibility Guidance provides more guidance on these spatial requirements⁹.

It is important to consider wider barriers to access, such as people's sense of personal safety. Bird hides, for example, are often located in more secluded areas but their sense of security can be increased by thoughtful design – ensuring good sight lines and having an open back, for example.

Seating: Seating is essential for visitors with limited stamina and who need to rest regularly. Seats can help reduce the impact of slopes and distances. They also enable people to enjoy a place at their own speed, to linger and to socialise. Seats with arm rests and backs provide important support for older visitors, and people with limited upper body strength. A range of seat and perch sizes cater for a diversity of visitors. Covered seats and seating areas should be provided at the edge of play areas so that parents and carers can be near their children. Seats arranged in a semi-circle, or facing inwards, support group use.

Events and activities

Indicators of good practice	
Diverse range of activities and events	Activity plans take account of diverse interests. Community activities are supported, eg the local blind and partially sighted walking group now uses the site as a venue, a local autism group meets regularly on site.

⁸ Changing Places: practical guide www.changing-places.org/

⁹ [Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#), Sensory Trust and Paths for All (2023)

Scheduling of activities and events	Activity plans take account of diverse commitments and traditions. Celebratory events include cultural events of interest to diverse local communities. Timing of events does not exclude communities with regular commitments.
Event spaces cater for all visitors	There are accessible toilets nearby, car parks or drop-off and plenty of seating. There is step-free access to event/activity spaces, including performance spaces. There are quiet spaces available.
Diverse range of food and drink on offer	Food offer takes account of most common food intolerances (eg gluten) as well as dietary options such as meat-free. Specific diets and intolerances can be catered for by arrangement.
Alternative languages are available	Interpreters and signers are used for specific or large-scale events.

Improving events and activities

Reviewing your current events and activity programmes and coming up with a policy for fundamental aspects (eg portable seating, temporary signage, toilets) will identify aspects that need improving (eg a stage that only has stepped access so wouldn't be usable by anyone with a mobility issue). Third party organisers should be required to demonstrate consideration of accessibility and inclusion in their application to use the site.

Diversity of interests: Making the events programme more inclusive includes widening the range of activities and interests on offer. If a site only offers opportunities to engage in physically active pursuits, like cycling, it will have limited appeal for people who cannot balance. A good way forward is to work with community groups to find out what activities they enjoy or would like to enjoy, which may be able to take place on your site and collaborate with groups and organisations to use your site as a base for the activities they can run.

Providing options: Ensure that activities can be completed without the need to overcome potential access barriers. For example, ensuring that a scavenger

hunt activity for children can be completed within a reasonable distance of facilities, bearing in mind that grandparents might be visiting with grandchildren.

Appeal to the senses: When planning activities such as family trails, try to include sensory opportunities such as texture rubbing and colour matching rather than relying just on text-based questions and answers.

Relaxed sessions: Quieter sessions may be of interest for people who find general events and activities overwhelming, eg people with Autism. Key ingredients include reduced number of attendees, planning sessions at quieter, less busy times of day, avoidance of strong and sudden changes in sound, lighting and other sensory stimuli and providing 'time out' space.

Sport and recreational pursuits: There are increasing examples where outdoor pursuits can be shared with people with mobility issues. For example, adapted bicycles and boats that extend access to wheelchair users. Companion cycling, running and other physical activities open up access for visually impaired visitors.

3b. On-site experience: getting around

The ease with which visitors can get around is dependent mostly on the physical nature of a site or route. Gradients, narrow path widths, distance and uneven surfaces can all present barriers to visitors, particularly people with limited mobility or stamina, but also families with young children.



Photo: Sensory Trust

Improvements to the surface and other infrastructure on a site or route will be one of the main ways of opening up access to the widest range of people. It is therefore given greater focus in this guide, and the following pages provide guidance on planning, reviewing and implementing physical site improvements.

Identifying and promoting attractive accessible routes will benefit a wide range of visitors, for example, families with young children and pushchairs, people with health conditions that reduce physical strength and stamina, older visitors and people who aren't used to walking in the countryside. Accessibility is relevant to all people at one or more life stage including disabled visitors.

Indicators of good practice	
Features and destinations are connected with accessible routes	Accessible routes ensure people can move comfortably between key facilities such as car parks, toilets, cafes, bird hides and play areas.
There is regular review of accessibility and positive responses to issues raised	Disabled visitors are involved in regular access reviews. There is a clear process for reporting and responding to accessibility issues.

Regular and high quality maintenance	There is regular repair to surfaces, cutting back overhanging vegetation, removing obstacles. All maintenance staff are trained in diversity awareness and managing sites for barrier-free access.
Choice of routes in terms of distance, challenge and visitor experience	Short return routes are included as easier options for visitors with limited mobility or stamina. Longer routes accommodate people using off-road mobility scooters and other equipment. Paths are networked so that visitors can adapt their route as they go in response to how they feel on the day.
Good wayfinding	There is good information at key decision points so people can find their way around.
Seating	Regular seating provides resting points, particularly to reduce impact of gradients and distances.

Improving paths and routes

A route can be a single path or a network of paths, bridleways and roads. It will need to have a defined start point, such as a car park or village green. It will also have a clear destination, for example a picnic area, viewing point or another town or village, or it may be circular and end at the same place as the start. Consideration of the whole route must ensure that improvements result in a complete and usable route.

When reviewing paths and routes, the aim is to identify how to facilitate access to as much of the network as possible by as many people as possible, and to prioritise actions. The first step is to identify which setting is most appropriate to the path or route that is to be surveyed.

In line with the Least Restrictive Access approach, it is necessary to decide which set of standards are most appropriate to the route, always bearing in mind who the actual and potential users are, or might be, and what they need.

This is covered in more detail in the section on ‘Implementation’.

3c. On-site experience: information and interpretation

Well-designed information will help visitors find their way around, make informed choices and engage with the place they are in. Accessible information ensures that information is available to all visitors.

Visitors want to be able to access information throughout their visit. From where to go and what to see, health and safety issues on site, what facilities are available and forthcoming events, to the location of the nearest train station or bus stop.

They expect this information to be in a format that is accessible to them and relevant to the location. Visitor expectations may vary depending on the type of setting and landscape. On more rural, sometimes unstaffed, sites some concentration of information provision can be expected at entrances. Within a site or on a route, little information may be provided but waymarked routes should be clear and easy to follow for the first time visitor. Visitors may expect to be able to carry information via leaflet, audio guide or mobile phone text. They may value having a photo on their mobile of the site map and the option to access information through QR codes.

Indicators of good practice	
Key information is accessible to all visitors	Information is designed to principles of inclusive design and plain language. Information uses appropriate terminology and promotes diversity through the range of people portrayed and the issues highlighted, eg gender-neutral toilets, Changing Places facility, visitor guides in languages that reflect the visitor profile. Symbols and pictures accompany text. Inclusive design considerations are therefore important. For example, providing accessible information, avoiding reliance on acoustic information (eg fire alarms) and creating good visual and tactile cues in wayfinding and interpretation. Hearing loops are installed in visitor centres, and portable ones are used by guides and educators.

Alternative formats are available	Information is available in alternative formats to text such as braille, large print, audio and Widgit symbols. Interpretation is available in other formats beyond text, including tactile.
There is pre-visit access information	An access guide contains key details about the accessibility of sites and routes. See Sensory Trust website for information about access guides.
Information is well positioned	On-site information, such as display boards, are at a height and angle where they can be accessed by children, wheelchair users and people of short stature. Maps on information boards are orientated against the ground in the position where they are located, with North indicated in the relevant direction. Maps on information boards remain legible on a mobile phone photograph. Leaflets and other portable information are in accessible locations, eg counters reachable by wheelchair users. Leaflets contain a map with indications of distances, gradients, position of seats and any obstacles or hazards. Symbols, names of features and other information should be mirrored in the site's signage. A clearly designed leaflet with good information could reduce the need for signage.
Good wayfinding	There is consistent information at key decision points so people can find their way around.
Guided tours are accessible	Guides are trained in diversity awareness. There is good awareness of the visitor profile and which languages are most commonly used. Tour routes are accessible and include access to toilets and seating. Hearing loops are available and there are multi-lingual options, eg British Sign Language. Accompanying materials are available in formats such as large print, braille and Easy Read.

Developing on-site information

Create an accessible information policy: This is a commitment to accessible design and to ensuring that visitors with different needs have access to information that meets those needs. It needs to be accompanied by design guidelines that can be shared with internal and external designers, and included in brand guidelines, website design briefs etc. An important principle is to aim for all information to be as accessible as possible, by using larger fonts and clear layouts for example, and to supplement with alternative formats, such as large print and Widgit symbols.

Wayfinding: Getting lost or being out late is a concern for many people when visiting the countryside. Signage should indicate direction, length and destination of a path. Waymarking can help people feel secure on a trail and should be present at every junction where a decision has to be made on which path to take. Clearly defined paths reduce but do not eliminate the need for waymarkers. Check out your site on online maps and apps, and update information provided. Get someone who doesn't know the site to test your signage and any online guides!

Carry out regular maintenance checks: Check that signs, waymarking and interpretation remain clear from plant growth, obstacles and obstructions, visual clutter and deterioration. Check that information is current, eg that website links still work.

Use more non-textual signs and interpretation: Use symbols, pictograms, sketches and photographs to help reduce reliance on text. Aim to interpret through wider techniques, eg tactile exploration of objects, sound recordings and immersive experiences including interactive sculptures and play.

Work with local communities: It is important to work with community groups to tailor your information to your community. For example, this might highlight particular languages that most closely reflect your local cultural diversity, or provision for older people.

Create a mini access guide: It is important to have something that people can pick up on arrival that doesn't rely on staff providing information. This isn't just to provide information, it should also indicate to visitors that they are welcome and their needs have been considered. This would cover key access information like toilets, cafes, information points, wheelchairs etc.

Braille and large print: Braille and large print hard copies can be made available for loan. It is helpful to make braille materials available to be sent out before a visit and this can be done through free request through the Articles for the Blind scheme (Royal Mail).

Print-on-demand information: This is a flexible option that uses a print-on-demand approach. Location depends on where staff/facilities can be made available, most likely in a visitor centre but perhaps a community centre would collaborate. Providing information in a range of formats would also have the benefit of making visitors feel more welcome, with their needs having been considered. This could include large print, Easy English/Cymraeg Clir and Widgit versions of interpretation, trails and educational materials. Content can be easily updated and it avoids the need for investment in, and storage of, hard copies.

Audio materials: Availability of audio can, to some extent, mitigate the need for other materials (an obvious exception is information for hearing impaired visitors). This offers significant scope for enhancing visitor information and it is important to ensure that apps and other audio materials address accessibility issues. Consider if audio directions on maps and apps are accurate on your site and update if necessary.

Communicators: People such as guides and rangers are great sources of information, these people should reflect the full diversity of visitors.

Diversity and equality training can help staff and volunteers offer the best service and advice to visitors.

Names

Names influence how easily a visitor can find their way around. Names tend to be more memorable if people can pronounce them, and can associate them with how something is used (eg café) or the feel of a place (eg Hidden Cave). Other names have to be learnt, and this is easier if they are short and straightforward. For visitors with intellectual challenges, such as dyslexia or memory loss, it's simply adding an extra layer of complexity.

- Avoid overly wordy or complex names (long names will also be harder to use on maps and visitor information) and try to use names that can be easily conveyed through images or symbols and not just text.
- Keep it consistent – use the same names across all visitor communications, from website to printed materials and signage.
- Minimise changes to names that have become well established.
- Try to ensure names have an association with function or sense of place to help people relate to and remember them.

4. Return home

A positive final experience when leaving a destination is important for all visitors. It is particularly important in relation to positive word of mouth – research has shown that many visitors who are impacted by barriers to access use word of mouth recommendations (and increasingly online reviews) to help them decide where and when to visit.

Exit routes need careful thought, making sure that all visitors can find their way out easily. Issues like access to toilets, timing of public transport, comfortable spaces and shelter where visitors can be picked up by taxi or car, and information that people can take away with them are all important to consider.

Indicators of good practice	
Exits are clearly signed and easy to use	Exit points are clearly marked on maps and visitor information, and well signed on site. Facilities like cafes, visitor centres and toilets are accessible and easy to find. Exits are shared by different visitors (ie not separate for wheelchair users). Exits can be used when site staff have left.
Exits are within easy reach of parking and public transport	Accessible parking is located close to exit points. Public transport and pick-up points are within easy reach of exits.
Good provision of seating and shelter	Seating and shelter are provided at pick-up points and other places where visitors are likely to wait.
Invitation to return	Exits thank people for visiting and invite them to give feedback on their visit and return soon

Appendix 1: standards

Access standards relate principally to physical barriers to access and their impact on people with limited mobility, including wheelchair users, however it is important to remember that full access for all disabled and non-disabled visitors relies on all links in the [Access Chain](#), such as information and transport, as outlined earlier in this guidance.

Access Standards

The original 'Countryside for All' (now the [Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#)) guide was one of the most significant efforts to create a national system of standards for physical access in the countryside (Fieldfare Trust, 1997 and 2005). The standards were subsequently revised in the By All Reasonable Means guidance to reflect a wider range of outdoor settings, including less managed areas.

Updating the 'Countryside for All' in 2023, and BARM guides in 2024, has been an opportunity to revise and align the standards. The aim is to maintain them as a consistent reference in both guides.

The standards reflect the most widely agreed technical standards. This includes the technical details provided in the 'Outdoor Accessibility Guidance' as well as wider standards.

Statutory regulations and standards should be used where they apply.

Applying standards

The choice of access standards will depend on the type of outdoor setting, how it is used and statutory limits such as nature conservation status. Standards are intended as minimum recommendations and the aim should be to exceed them where possible.

This follows the principle of Least Restrictive Access. For example, a wilder, lightly managed site or route that may have to apply lower standards for aspects like gradients and surfaces, may still be able to achieve higher standards for specific elements such as gates.

Access standards should also respond to patterns of access and trends in the development of mobility equipment. The development of mobility scooters and adaptive equipment with longer battery life and greater stability is enabling some disabled people to explore longer distances and more challenging terrain, as long as there are no barriers such as narrow gateways, steps or stiles.

Path and route management standards for different settings

These access standards are from the [Outdoor Accessibility Guidance](#) (OAG), which is also a source of more detailed specifications and recommendations.

	A Intensively managed	B Moderately managed	C Lightly managed
Barriers¹	No stiles, steps or physical barriers restricting access. No gates narrower than 1100mm.	No stiles, steps or physical barriers restricting access. No gates narrower than 1100mm.	No stiles, steps or physical barriers restricting access. No gates narrower than 1100mm.
Surface²	Firm and even in all weathers, clear of loose stones and debris.	Firm, with a few loose stones and debris.	Path not firm in all weathers, loose materials, occasional tree roots, potholes and stretches of rutting.
Width³	Meets recommended widths in OAG section A.3. No passing places needed.	At least 1200mm wide with passing places at least every 50m.	At least 1000mm with passing places at least every 150m.
Width restrictions⁴	Narrower sections are limited to 1200mm wide.	Narrower sections are limited to 900mm wide.	Narrower sections are limited to 850mm wide.
Resting points⁵	At least every 100m.	At least every 300m.	Not formalised. Resting points make the most of existing features.

Gradient⁶	Maximum 1:20 (5%) with level areas for gradients over 1:60 (1.7%).	Maximum 1:12 (8%) and any gradients steeper than 1:20 (5%) detailed as ramps.	Maximum 1:10 (10%) over very short distances (600mm).
Crossfall or camber⁷	1:50	1:50	1:35
Surface breaks⁸	Maximum 5mm gap measured across the line of the path.	Maximum 5mm gap measured across the line of the path.	Maximum 12mm gap measured across the line of the path.
Height clearance⁹	Meets recommended heights in OAG section A.3.	Meets recommended heights in OAG section A.3.	Does not meet recommended heights in OAG section A.3 but there are no solid structures limiting headroom.
Distance¹⁰	Route includes shorter loops or easy return options.	Route includes shorter loops or easy return options.	Route is lengthy with no shorter loops or easy return options.
Clarity¹¹	Route is clearly defined by its surface.	Route is clearly defined.	Route may be undefined, but it is still clear enough to follow.

Notes

1 Barriers: Barriers such as stiles, steps, narrow widths, rough surfaces and large stones and roots can cause significant restrictions for many people, especially disabled people, people with low stamina, older people, cyclists and horse riders. These will prevent a path from reaching any of the standards and will always be a priority for improvement, either to remove or avoid. Gates are often a barrier, from being too narrow or difficult to open and close. Any gate design must follow British Standard BS 5709:2018: Gaps, gates and stiles.

2 Surface: A category A route surface will be non-slip, well-drained and even. Access is limited by loose material and debris on the surface, trip hazards

such as tree roots, potholes and other irregularities in the surface. The categories reflect the extent to which the surface quality is likely to impact accessibility.

3 Width: Width impacts on who can use a route, whether they can walk or wheel together and how easily people can pass each other. Widths here refer to the usable section (which is often the hard-surfaced section) which can be reduced by encroaching vegetation or side erosion of the surface. Passing places ensure that people have room to pass each other on widths that don't meet category A dimensions.

4 Width restrictions: Some restrictions are created by permanent features such as gates, trees and walls. These may be a reason for seeking alternative routes or plans.

5 Resting points: Seats and perches are important to all visitors and essential for people who cannot walk long distances without resting. Wheelchair users also need places where they can stop and rest. Landings are the level areas that provide resting points along a sustained gradient. The frequency of resting points is not intended to be exact but used as a general guide.

6 Gradient: Gradients impact many visitors, especially people with mobility disabilities and people who tire easily. Downslopes can sometimes be more hazardous for people than upslopes, especially if there is loose material on the surface.

7 Crossfall: Crossfalls are challenging for people with mobility disabilities. They can reduce the usable area of a path to the central strip and significant crossfalls can be hazardous if they lead to areas of open water or steep-sided drops along the side of a path.

8 Surface breaks: Gaps in the path surface from drainage channels and other structures can present a complete barrier to wheelchair users and can trap walking aids.

9 Height clearance: Overhanging vegetation can be uncomfortable, or hazardous, for blind and partially sighted people. A priority should be to remove any thorny and spiny vegetation at eye level. Horse riders will need 3.7m height of clear passage.

10 Distance: The length of a route can have a significant impact on people with limited stamina, especially when combined with gradient and lack of resting points. Introducing shorter loops and easy options for people to return the same way are important elements of improving accessibility. It should be noted that electric off-road mobility scooters can cover upwards of 10 miles on a single charge.

11 Clarity: This relates to how clear the route is so that people can follow it easily. This is helped by edging, which can also be an important navigation aid for blind and partially sighted people.

Appendix 2: Auditing paths and routes

It is preferable to audit all selected paths and routes and record information relating to the terrain, surface, structures and signage in line with a Least Restrictive Access approach – as this provides a complete dataset of their condition.

Where resources for surveying are more limited, paths can be surveyed against the standards that have been agreed upon for the setting. The amount of recording is reduced as the surveyor only records where a path does not meet the agreed standard, by how much and where this occurs. For example, for a path in a less developed setting, a surveyor will only record where the path is narrower than 900mm rather than 1000mm and so on. This may be quicker and therefore less costly than surveying paths to record a full dataset of their condition.

The disadvantage of this approach is that the survey will not establish where the path is better than the standard, and by how much. It is therefore important that surveyors also make general notes if the path appears to be considerably better than the standards assigned to it. Once the survey is complete, such a path may be identified as having greater accessibility potential and may require a further survey against these new standards.

Surveying is not easy; there is a lot to think about and many decisions to make, such as where a path surface changes sufficiently to need to record a change. Surveying is also time-consuming with an average distance of about 6km to 8km being surveyed in a day.

As the quality of the data is important, it is essential that well trained people carry out the survey. They must be fully aware of why the survey is being undertaken, of the standards they are surveying against, and the importance of ensuring consistency by surveying in the same way all the time. There is an element of subjectivity with surveying, such as making the decision as to where the stones on a path change from 'occasional' to 'some'. To obtain data that is as consistent as possible, it is recommended that this task be undertaken by relatively few members of staff or volunteers in consultation with a representative group of disabled people who concentrate on surveying over a period of time.

Combinations of path criteria

When certain path criteria occur together their joint effect can make the path more difficult to use than when they are found alone. For example, the combination of a step or tree root on a gradient on a corner, where all are

within the standards for the relevant setting, may lead someone who can normally use a path in this setting (when path criteria do not combine) to find the path too difficult to negotiate. Good practice should only allow a single path criterion to be at the limit of the standard and require remedial action otherwise.

Given the large number of likely combinations, it is impossible to provide information on the effect of them in reducing accessibility to a path. However, when analysing data from the survey, the potential impact of path criteria where they occur together should be considered. Before deciding the improvement works required to bring a path up to a standard, it is advised that disabled people, or professionals representing them, are consulted on site so that the impacts of combined criteria, and ways to reduce them, can be established.

Survey techniques

There are two main techniques for surveying paths: using a mobile device with a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or undertaking a paper survey.

Time of year to survey

There are advantages and disadvantages to surveying either during winter or summer, but it is appreciated that where many paths need surveying, restricting this activity to either time of year will be difficult.

If surveys are undertaken at a time of year when paths are not in their worst condition, it is important that this fact is considered when analysing the data and when providing information based on this data.

Appendix 3: Example of an action plan

This example of an action plan shows how priority areas of focus can be identified and matched with corresponding actions. Timescales and costs are useful additions. The example can be used as a basis to build action plans for other sites and routes.

Work area	Action
Pre-visit information	
Provide information about accessibility to ensure that people can make informed decisions about visiting.	Develop an online access guide to share with a full range of visitors. Provide photographic and video information to show key accessibility details.
Parking and drop-off	
Ensure that car parks, drop-off and public transport points are clearly identified. Provide clearly designated parking bays for disabled visitors.	Improve signage to parking and drop-off. Renovate existing markings and signs so bays can be clearly seen. Add seating and shelters to drop-off points. Refer to building regulations and standards.
Toilets	
Prioritise the provision of accessible toilet facilities.	Renovate existing facilities. Refer to building regulations and standards.
Visitor centre	
Improve access to facilities (toilets, seating etc), signage, visitor information, services (shop, café etc) and physical fabric, for all visitors.	Survey with building surveyor or manager and prepare an improvement plan. Arrange community feedback sessions with community groups and individuals.

Routes and wider access	
Identify and promote routes that provide greatest access, and best quality visitor experience. Establish priorities for repair and improvement of existing routes.	Carry out a survey to establish which paths are currently accessible and what other physical barriers to access exist. Set priorities for improvements.
Play	
Improve access to play facilities and broaden the range of play opportunities.	Carry out access surveys to evaluate all play structures, areas and surfaces. Ensure paths to and in play areas are as accessible as possible and that some play equipment has accessible features.
On-site visitor information	
Improve accessibility of visitor information, including more information about site accessibility and alternative formats of information.	Consult with community groups to identify priorities for information in different languages.
Improve site signage and wayfinding.	Survey existing signs and wayfinding and identify priorities for improvement.
Interpretation	
Ensure interpretation relates to different ages, abilities and cultural perspectives. Increase opportunities for multi-sensory engagement.	Involve a variety of community groups in reviewing interpretation and informing priorities for development. Use this as an opportunity to invite stories and other material to feed the interpretation.
Staff and volunteer awareness	
Ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills and experience to support all visitors. Create an ongoing system for existing staff to share these skills with new staff and volunteers.	Work with groups and organisations to run equality and diversity awareness training. Arrange training in sighted guiding to support visitors with sight loss. Review recruitment and employment policies.

Events	
Review guided walk and event programmes to ensure activities cover different interests, abilities and cultural perspectives	Review accessibility of facilities and timetabling. Work with community groups to create new walks and events to encourage people that wouldn't normally participate.
Building relationships	
Strengthen and widen links with individuals, groups and organisations.	Identify groups and schools that don't normally participate and organise community events to invite new audiences to engage with the site.

Appendix 4: National data sets

Access to the outdoors and inclusive design

People and Nature Surveys for England (PANS).

PANS gathers evidence and trend data about people's access, understanding and enjoyment of nature, and how it contributes to wellbeing.

www.gov.uk/government/collections/people-and-nature-survey-for-england

Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)

The MENE survey provided trend data for how people experience the natural environment in England. Reports are available up to 2019 when the survey ended.

www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results

Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool (ORVal: Version 2.0)

ORVal is a free online tool that enables users to examine the recreational value of a green space and test how the number of visits and the value of these visits might change if the land cover was changed, or if new green spaces were created.

<https://leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval/>

Appendix 5: Guidance

Access to the outdoors and inclusive design

Outdoor Accessibility Guidance: supporting inclusive outdoor access in the UK (2023) Paths for All and Sensory Trust

Guidance to help countryside managers maximise opportunities for disabled people to access the countryside. The associated access standards serve as a benchmark, and detailed technical guidance covers Least Restrictive Access, path networks, access surveys and surveys. This is the new version of the Countryside for All guide.

www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/outdoor-accessibility-guidance

Plain English Campaign

Guidance on producing clearer, easy-to-understand writing.

www.plainenglish.co.uk/

Easy Access to Historic Landscapes (2015) Historic England

Guidance on improving access in heritage settings, and while it responds to the Equality Act 2010 it focuses on disabled visitors. Its companion publication 'Easy Access to Historic Buildings' provides valuable information for buildings.

www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-historic-landscapes/

Inclusive mobility: A guide to best practice on access to pedestrians and transport infrastructure Department for Transport, 2002

Guidance provides valuable information about inclusive design guidelines and specifications, focused on the built environment.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-mobility-making-transport-accessible-for-passengers-and-pedestrians

Sensory Trust Access Guidance

Guidance on all aspects of inclusive design and accessible practices, from paths and routes, to seating, play and interpretation.

www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance

Access Chain: an inclusive design tool, Sensory Trust

A tool that you can use to look at access from the perspective of the visitor. You can use it to review access improvements, plan events and frame visitor information.

www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/guidance/access-chain-an-inclusive-design-tool

The Sign Design Guide, a guide to inclusive signage. Peter Barker and June Fraser, Sign Design Society and RNIB.

Essential guidance for the development of clear signage and wayfinding.

<https://signdesignsociety.co.uk/?s=sign+design+guide>

Barriers on the National Cycle Network

www.sustrans.org.uk/about-us/paths-for-everyone/barriers-on-the-national-cycle-network

A Guide to Inclusive Cycling, 4th Edition 2020, Wheels for Wellbeing.

<https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/updated-guide-to-inclusive-cycling/>

Local Transport Note 1/20, Cycle Infrastructure Design, 2020, Department for Transport.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120

Access Control Guidance Note, 2023, Transport for London

<https://content.tfl.gov.uk/access-control-guidance-note-june-2023-acc.pdf>

Legislation and policy documents

Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2013/7/contents/enacted

Active Travel Act guidance, Welsh Government, 2021

gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/active-travel-act-guidance.pdf

Building Regulations 2016. Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings: Volume 1 Dwellings (2015 edition incorporating 2016 amendments).

www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved_documents/80/part_m_-_access_to_and_use_of_buildings

BS 8300-1:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment – external environment. Code of Practice. British Standards Institute.

shop.bsigroup.com/products/design-of-an-accessible-and-inclusive-built-environment-external-environment-code-of-practice/standard

BS 5709:2018. Gaps, gates and stiles. British Standards Institute.

<https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/gaps-gates-and-stiles-specification>

A simplified version called ‘Understanding the British Standard for Gaps, gates and stiles’ can be found at: centrewire.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Pittecroft-Trust-BS5709-2018-explained.pdf

CRoW, the National Archives.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents

Statutory legislation and HMSO documents.

www.legislation.gov.uk

Equality Act 2010 Code of Practice: Services, Public Functions and Associations Statutory Code of Practice. London: Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

Understanding the DEFRA Guidance on Public Path Structures – an overview by the Pittecroft Trust.

<https://pittecroft.org/understanding.pdf>

National Planning Policy Framework. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012.

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015: the essentials, Welsh Government.

www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials

Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Welsh Government.

www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents/enacted

Sustainable management of natural resources, Natural Resources Wales.

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-work/how-we-work-natural>

Appendix 6: Contacts

These national and regional organisations promote and support equality and diversity across the range of protected characteristics. They are valuable sources of guidance, examples of good practice and networks. These can also provide useful connections if you are planning community consultation and may be able signpost local groups and organisations.

General equality and diversity

Changing Places <http://www.changing-places.org/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

Department for Works and Pensions

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

Diverse Cymru [Diverse Cymru](#)

Widgit www.widgit.com/

Age equality

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk

Street Games www.streetgames.org

Disability equality, including dementia and mental health

Disability Rights UK www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Disabled Ramblers www.disabledramblers.co.uk

Euan's Guide www.euansguide.com/

Experience Community www.experiencecommunity.co.uk/

Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities

Mencap www.mencap.org.uk

Mind www.mind.org.uk

National Autistic Society www.autism.org.uk

Paths for All www.pathsforall.org.uk/

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (formerly Action on Hearing Loss)

www.rnid.org.uk/

Sense www.sense.org.uk

Sensory Trust www.sensorytrust.org.uk/

Wheels for Wellbeing <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/>

Gender equality

Gender Identity Research and Education Society www.gires.org.uk

LGBT Foundation www.lgbt.foundation/

Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk

Unique Transgender www.uniquetg.org.uk

Wipe Out Transphobia www.wipeouttransphobia.org/

Women's Environmental Network <https://www.wen.org.uk/>

Equality in religion and belief

Network of Buddhist Organisations www.nbo.org.uk

Hindu Council UK www.hinducounciluk.org/

Roman Catholic Archdiocese www.rcadc.org

Evangelical Alliance www.eauk.org

Baháí Community www.bahai.org.uk

Muslim Council of Britain www.mcb.org.uk

Racial equality

Black Environment Network (BEN) www.ben-network.org.uk

Displaced People in Action (DPIA) www.dpia.org.uk

Race Equality Foundation www.raceequalityfoundation.org.uk

Race Equality First www.raceequalityfirst.org/

Outdoor access advice and guidance

Accessible Countryside for Everyone www.accessiblecountryside.org.uk

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk

Black Environment Network <https://ben-network.org.uk/>

Centre for Accessible Environments www.cae.org.uk

Centrewire (specialist gates) www.centrewire.com/

Mind www.mind.org.uk

National Register of Access Consultants www.nrac.org.uk
Nature Scot <https://www.nature.scot/>
Open Spaces Society www.oss.org.uk
Walking Scotland (Paths for All) www.walkingscotland.org.uk/
Play England www.playengland.org.uk
Ramblers www.ramblers.org.uk
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) www.rnib.org.uk
Royal National Institute for Deaf People (formerly Action on Hearing Loss)
www.rnid.org.uk/
Scope www.scope.org.uk
Sensory Trust www.sensorytrust.org.uk
Thrive www.thrive.org.uk
Tourism for All www.tourismforall.org.uk
Visit Britain www.visitbritain.com
Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group www.visitorsafety.group/
Web Accessibility Initiative www.w3.org/wai

Acknowledgments

The 'By All Reasonable Means' guides have been developed by the Sensory Trust in collaboration with, and on behalf of, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.

The original 'By All Reasonable Means' guide was published in 2005 by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales). It was designed within the context of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005.

An updated guide for Wales was issued by Natural Resources Wales in 2017, and for England by Natural England in 2020, to align with the broader remit of the Equality Act 2010. This publication was based on consultation with individuals and organisations who have an interest in improving and increasing access to the outdoors. There has been additional consultation in relation to the wider remit of the Equality Act 2010.

This 2025 update of 'By All Reasonable Means' brings the England and Wales guides together. It supports a wider collection of policies and codes of practice being developed by both Natural Resources Wales and Natural England to demonstrate their positive commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within all areas of their work.

We continue to welcome further comments and feedback on implementing the guidance for future revisions.