

Management Standards for Recreational Trails



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative



THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL



AN CHOMHAIRE SPÓIRT

First edition October 2008

The National Trails Office

The National Trails Office (NTO) is a programme run by the Irish Sports Council building on the work of the former National Waymarked Way Advisory Committee (NWWAC). The programme is focused on supporting the development of a diverse and sustainable recreational trails network in Ireland. This will encourage many more people to become active in outdoor recreation and will contribute to the Council's overall mission of increasing participation among all Irish people in all forms of sport and physical activity.

The NTO seeks to act as a central resource to all individuals, agencies and organisations with an interest in recreational trails in Ireland, be they for walking, cycling, horse-riding or paddling in both urban and rural environments. The corner stone of this support is in setting and monitoring standards for Irish trails and promoting good practice for recreational trail development, maintenance and management. The main areas of work of the National Trails Office include:

- **Trail Standards and Classification**
Development of trail management standards and a trail classification and grading system.
- **National Trails Register**
Management and maintenance of a register of all accredited trails in the country.
- **Trails Inspection Programme**
Inspection of new trails and ongoing annual inspections of all accredited trails.
- **Walks Scheme**
Support for the trail maintenance scheme (Walks Scheme) introduced by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and administered by Local Area Development Companies.
- **Trail Development Advice**
Provision of advice to trail developers at a pre-planning stage in a trail project.
- **Technical Trail Advisory Service**
Provision of detailed technical advice to trail providers regarding the improvement of existing trails or the development of new trails.
- **Education and Training**
Provision of training programmes related to the planning, development and ongoing management of trails.
- **Trail Promotion and Awareness Building**
Ensuring that public awareness and use of trails is maximised.
- **Trail Research**
Research to inform and guide recreational trail development in Ireland.

National Trails Advisory Committee

The National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC) was established to facilitate cooperative working and joint initiatives among all agencies involved in funding, development and management of trails nationally. To this end, the key organizations who have a stake in the development of trails in Ireland are represented on the National Trails Advisory Committee. The National Trails Office (NTO) takes direction and advice from the National Trails Advisory Committee.

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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are poor has increased by 1 billion. The number of people who are poor in the United States has increased by 10 million.

There are many reasons why the number of people who are poor has increased. One reason is that the world's population has increased. Another reason is that the world's economy has not grown fast enough to keep up with the population growth.

There are many things that we can do to help reduce the number of people who are poor. One thing that we can do is to help the world's economy grow faster. Another thing that we can do is to help the world's population grow more slowly.

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Introduction

1.0

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1.0 Introduction

In 2007 an Irish Trails Strategy was launched by the Irish Sports Council and is supported by the key agencies involved in the development of trails in Ireland. The strategy communicates a broad vision for recreational trails in Ireland which is:

“- to create, nurture and maintain a world class recreational trail network that is sustainable, integrated, well utilised and highly regarded, that enhances the health, well being and quality of life of all Irish citizens and that attracts visitors from around the world”

‘Recreational trails’ are defined in the Irish Trails Strategy as being ‘a corridor, route or pathway, generally land or water based, primarily intended for recreational purposes, including walking, hiking, cycling, canoeing and horse-riding’. Recreational trails may be single-use or shared-use and may be located in rural or urban environments or bridge both.

The strategy identifies a need for an Irish trail standards system for use by all organisations involved with recreational trail development and management. It recognises that consistent standards and classifications across the country will lead to better quality trails and in the longer term, a more sustainable and world class trails network.

Following broad consultation and input from within the trail community in Ireland this document has been produced and sets out the minimum quality standards for the management of trails in this country. While helping to drive improvements in trail quality, these standards will also help to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of trails, where both the safety and enjoyment of all trail users is enhanced. These standards have been endorsed by the National Trails Advisory Committee (NTAC) and are intended for use by all organizations involved in trail development or management.

While this document should be consulted by organizations involved in developing a trail it does not seek to provide details on how to develop or plan a trail nor to provide details of trail construction methodology or detailed specifications for trail furniture or trail design. This area is addressed in other documents including – “NTO Trail Planning and Development Process” and “A Guide to Planning and Developing Trails in Ireland”. The NTO document “Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails” should also be consulted by trail developers. It provides details related to the siting and classification of trails according to their width, gradient and the nature of the trail surface. Furthermore, other detailed information on trail construction and trail furniture can be found in the various sources listed in Appendix 1. These documents should be consulted when planning the construction of a new trail or the upgrading of an existing trail.

The standards for the management of trails described in this document may in some cases exceed standards currently achieved by existing trail developments. However, the setting of new standards will provide a benchmark for improvement for the entire trail development community to work towards, leading to a better quality product for all trail users.

It is intended that trails nationally should be brought up the standards outlined in this document over a period of time and that the standards will be the basis of a trail accreditation system which will be administered by the National Trails Office of the Irish Sports Council.

This document will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and revised periodically as appropriate.

1.1 Trail Sustainability

Sustainability is using a resource today without impacting negatively on the ability to use this resource in the future.

Trails play a key role in the provision and management of outdoor recreation in Ireland and can bring many benefits at community, regional and national levels if they are sustainable.

Recreational trails must be robust, durable and fit for purpose, may be located in rural or urban environments and are usually waymarked.

A sustainable trail supports responsible outdoor recreation, has a positive impact on the environment, heritage and communities and addresses landowner and user needs and concerns.

A sustainable trail is one which is developed to a standard and maintained at this standard on an ongoing basis. The use of the guidelines in this document will assist in ensuring that some of the key elements of sustainability are addressed in the planning and development of trails.

1.0

Overview of the Standards

2.0

2.0 Overview of the Standards 10

2.0 Overview of the Standards

Trail management standards have been developed around a number of key areas which impact on the quality of the trail user's experience and the sustainability of the trail.

These areas are:

- Information
- Route
- Waymarking
- Trail Surface
- Vegetation
- Litter
- Furniture
- Insurance
- Trail Management
- Services

While the standards for each category of trail (walking, cycling, horse riding and water based) may be similar, requirements for each category are documented separately in this document.

The standards are intended to be the basis of a trail accreditation system which will be administered by the National Trails Office of the Irish Sports Council.

Walking Trails

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3.0

3.0 Walking Trails

The following standards apply to waymarked walking trails and will be the criteria for accreditation.

Plate 3.1: Typical Walking Trails



3.1. Trail Information

1. Information board

Basic information about trails must be available on an information board at the trail head and on longer trails, at popular access points along the trail. Information should include:

- a. A map showing a clearly defined route with a start and finish point and a 'you are here' pointer.
- b. Information on the trail grading (difficulty rating) including a definition of the grades.
- c. The length of the trail from the start to finish, the total ascent in meters and the estimated time to complete the trail for the average user.
- d. Details of waymarking used on the trail.

- e. Where a trail traverses open/ exposed terrain a warning about the risks involved should there be a change of weather.
- f. A contact email for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.
- g. Contact details for the nearest emergency services.
- h. Information on whether dogs are permitted on the trail.
- i. The “Leave No Trace” principles (see Appendix 2).

Plate 3.2: Typical Information Board



Plate 3.3: Details of Walks



The NDA publication ‘Building For Everyone’ (section 4.2.3.), provides guidance on best practice for signage which is as accessible as possible and an example of an information map which could be used at a multi-access trail¹. Other reference documents on accessible signage are listed in Appendix 1.

Note: In the case of multi-access trails, it is important that detailed information for potential users is available such that it can be accessed in advance of arrival at the trail so that the user can make an informed decision about the suitability of the trail. This should include information on any specific accessibility features at the trail (e.g. tapping rails for people with vision impairment). Information should be made available in accessible formats, such as a website compliant with Irish National Disability Authority (NDA) IT Accessibility Guidelines (ref. <http://accessit.nda.ie>) and/or large print, audio, Braille etc. (ref. ‘Access to Information for All’ from the Citizens Information Board).

2. Trail map

A paper copy of a map showing the entire route of the trail (where greater than 2km in length) must be available to the public. The map must show:

- sufficient detail such that it can be used for route finding on the trail;
- the start and finish of the trail;
- all junctions or other points where users could divert from the route must be clearly represented; and
- any access points to the trail as well as the start and finish must be shown.

The map may be available in hard copy or as a printable download from the internet.

¹ The term “multi-access” in this context refers to trails which are accessible to less able users including wheel chair users, the blind or partially sighted and elderly users.

3.2 The Route

1. There must be unrestricted and permitted access to and from the trail at the start and finish and at any defined access points along the trail. The exception to this is when the trail is closed to the public for health and safety reasons, or works on the trail or adjacent lands.
2. All sections of the trail must have permitted access from the relevant landowner(s).
3. If a route passes through or is adjacent to a designated site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest, documented authorization from the appropriate authority and evidence of appropriate action to minimize any negative impact as deemed necessary, must be on record. (It is acceptable that this may not be available for older routes established in the past).
4. All sections of the route must be unobstructed and passable e.g. at no point should a permanent man made or natural barrier obstruct a trail without providing a stile, gate or bridge etc. as appropriate to allow the obstruction to be passed.
5. Walking trails should avoid roads entirely where possible (with the exception Urban Trails where footpaths must be used at all times except where crossing a road junction). It is a requirement that no walking trail should include more than 20% of its length on asphalt roads. Where an asphalt road is used on a route, only lightly trafficked local roads or more minor roads are acceptable for use – no National or Regional roads are acceptable.
6. If a route runs from a traffic free section onto a public road, a sign on the trail in advance of the point where the route joins the public road must be provided to warn users of the potential hazard ahead. Likewise a sign must be provided on the public road to warn motorists that walkers may be encountered.
7. The route must not traverse areas which endanger the walker, including unprotected crag or cliff tops, tidal beaches, military ranges, or areas which contain any temporary hazard.
8. Where an electric fence is on or adjacent to the route a sign must be used to warn users. If it is necessary to cross or open such a fence at any point, protective tubing should be attached to the fence to prevent users coming in contact with it.
9. Any specific hazards along a trail should be highlighted by an advance warning sign (e.g. steep drop, possibility of working machinery crossing the trail etc.)

3.3 Waymarking

1. The access route to the trailhead must be signposted from the nearest public road.
2. Where there are junctions on a trail route or there is a risk of the user diverting from the trail, waymarking must be provided.
3. On sections of trail greater than 1km in length where there are no junctions, reassurance markers must be provided approximately every 500m and at least every 1km.
4. Trail waymarking can be achieved by the use of various types of waymarks including marker posts, sign posts (finger posts), arrow plates or discs, stone markers or painted flashes or arrows on rocks. Examples of some of these markers are shown in Plates 3.4 to 3.7 below. The same design of marker and marking standard must be used consistently throughout an entire route.
5. If there are multiple trails in the same area, markers must be coloured or numbered differently for each trail such that each route can be clearly followed.

- Waymarks on the National Waymarked Way Network must be the yellow “walking man” symbol and arrow. The use of the yellow “walking man” is not acceptable on other routes. However, the “walking man” symbol may be used in a different colour on other routes.

Plate 3.4: Yellow “walking man” used for National Waymarked Way Routes



Plate 3.5: National Loop Walk Waymark



Plate 3.6: Sign post or finger post waymark



Plate 3.7: Coillte Forest Walk Waymark



- All markers and signs must be clearly visible to an approaching walker and free from overgrown vegetation; on a trail intended for travel in both directions the waymarker must be clearly visible from both directions. If designed as a trail for one way use only, this must be stated on the Information Board, maps of the route and on any other sources of information about the route.
- All waymarks and signs must be securely erected or attached, correctly aligned and clean.
- Any temporary diversions on the trail must be clearly waymarked.

3.0

3.4 Trail Surface

1. Specifically the trail surface must comply with the guidelines set down in the document titled "Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails" which should be read in conjunction with this document.
2. In general, the trail surface must be durable, robust and fit for purpose.
3. The surface of a trail should be free from severe erosion and drainage problems. Under normal conditions it should not be water logged, have extended sections which are boggy or have deep mud along the route.

Plate 3.8: Trails with a robust and durable surface



3.5 Vegetation and Litter

1. At all times the route must be unobstructed by vegetation, under foot, from the sides and overhead. Note: hedge cutting is prohibited between 1st March and 31st August.
2. The route must be monitored for and kept free from litter, broken glass and fly-tipped waste.

3.6 Trail Furniture

1. Trail furniture on a walking trail may include:
 - Information Boards
 - Seating
 - Markers
 - Signage
 - Stiles
 - Gates
 - Bridges
 - Bog Bridges
 - Boardwalks
 - Steps

2. Trail furniture must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained such that it is fit for purpose, robust, reliable and safe.
3. The walking surface on stiles, board walks, bridges or steps must have a suitable 'non-slip' finish.

Plate 3.9: A typical stile



Plate 3.10: A typical kissing gate



Plate 3.11: A typical boardwalk



Plate 3.12: A typical foot bridge



3.7 Insurance

The owners and occupiers of private property crossed by the route of a trail must be indemnified against negligence claims by a user for accident, damage or injury sustained while using the trail.

3.8 Trail Management

There should be in place :

1. An organization or body, with responsibility for the management of all sections of a trail.
2. A *Trail Management and Maintenance Programme* must be documented for the trail. This should be a 2 year rolling programme and must include as a minimum plans under the following headings:

a. Trail inspection

Plans for routine inspections on the trail to be carried out at least twice annually. Inspections will check for safety and maintenance issues and where a site of environmental, archeological or architectural interest is on the route, it should be examined for damage potentially caused by trail users.

The plan must detail who will carry out inspections and when.

b. Trail maintenance

What essential maintenance will be carried out annually – who will do the work and when

c. Trail upgrades

What upgrade work will be carried out (if any) – who will do the work and when

d. Marketing and promotion

Where and how will information be provided to potential users

e. Funding arrangements

How will funding for the work documented in a. to d. above be secured and applied.

3. A contact email or phone number for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.

3.9 Services

1. Suitable off-road car parking space must be available at the trail head. The amount of car parking space available should be appropriate for the typical level of trail usage. Ideally bike racks suitable for securely locking bicycles should also be provided.
2. Trail providers should maintain a list of accommodation and appropriate services which are available close to the route, and this should be made available to the public.

Cycling Trails

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4.0

4.0 Cycling Trails

Cycling Trails can broadly be categorised as follows:

- Off-Road Trails
- Road Based Trails

The following standards apply to waymarked cycling trails and will be the criteria for accreditation of trails.

Plate 4.1: Typical Off-Road Cycling Trails



Plate 4.2: Typical Road Cycling Trail



4.1 Trail Information

1. Information board

Basic information about trails must be available on an information board at the trail head and on longer trails, at popular access points along the trail. Information should include:

- a. A map showing a clearly defined route with a start and finish point and a 'you are here' pointer.
- b. Information on the trail grading (difficulty rating) including a definition of the grades.

- c. The length of the trail from the start to finish, the total ascent in meters and the estimated time to complete the trail for the average user.
- d. Details of waymarking used on the trail.
- e. Where a trail traverses open/ exposed terrain a warning about the risks involved should there be a change of weather.
- f. Notification of a requirement for all users to wear a helmet on trails graded Moderate and upwards.
- g. A contact email for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.
- h. Contact details for the nearest emergency services.
- i. The "Leave No Trace" principles (see Appendix 2).

2. Trail map

A paper copy of a map showing the entire route of the trail (where greater than 2km in length) must be available to the public. The map must show:

- sufficient detail such that it can be used for route finding on the trail;
- the start and finish of the trail;
- all junctions or other points where users could divert from the route must be clearly represented; and
- any access points to the trail as well as the start and finish must be shown.

The map may be available in hard copy or as a printable download from the internet.

4.2 The Route

1. There must be unrestricted and permitted access to and from the trail at the start and finish and at any defined access points along the trail. The exception to this is when the trail is closed to the public for health and safety reasons, or works on the trail or adjacent lands.
2. All sections of the trail must have permitted access from the relevant landowner(s).
3. If a route passes through or is adjacent to a designated site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest, documented authorization from the appropriate authority and evidence of appropriate action to minimize any negative impact as deemed necessary, must be on record. (It is acceptable that this may not be available for older routes established in the past).
4. All sections of the route must be unobstructed and passable in a manner consistent with the trail classification and grading, (see Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails document) e.g. at no point should a permanent man made or natural barrier obstruct a trail such that it is impassable.
5. Off-road trails should avoid public roads entirely where possible. However, on trails linking sections (e.g. joining two forest areas) local roads may be used where required. Where a trail is graded for family use, roads should be avoided entirely. Where a public road is used on a route, only lightly trafficked local roads or more minor roads are acceptable for use – no National or Regional roads are acceptable.
6. No mountain bike specific cycling trail should include more than 15% of its length on asphalt roads.

7. If a route runs from a traffic free section onto a public road, a sign on the trail in advance of the point where the route joins the public road must be provided to warn users of the potential hazard ahead. Likewise a sign must be provided on the public road to warn motorists that cyclists may be encountered. In locations where the trail and/or road are heavily used, appropriate designs must be implemented to slow both the motorized traffic and the cyclists at the crossing point.
8. The route must not traverse areas which endanger the cyclist including unprotected crag or cliff tops, military ranges or areas which contain any temporary hazard.
9. Any specific hazards along a trail should be highlighted by an advance warning sign (e.g. steep drop, possibility of working machinery crossing the trail etc.)

4.3 Waymarking

1. The access route to the trailhead must be signposted from the nearest public road.
2. Where there are junctions on a trail route or there is a risk of the user diverting from the trail, waymarking must be provided.
3. On sections of trail greater than 1km in length where there are no junctions, reassurance markers must be provided approximately every 500m and at least every 1km. Where a section of the route is entirely on a purpose built mountain bike trail with no junctions, reassurance markers will not be required.
4. Trail waymarking can be achieved by the use of various types of waymarks including marker posts, sign posts (finger posts), arrow plates or discs, stone markers or painted flashes or arrows on rocks. Examples of some of these markers are shown in Plate 4.3. The same design of marker and marking standard must be used consistently throughout an entire route.
5. If there are multiple trails in the same area, markers must be coloured or numbered differently for each trail such that each route can be clearly followed.
6. All markers and signs must be clearly visible to an approaching cyclist and free from overgrown vegetation; on a trail intended for travel in both directions the waymarker must be clearly visible from both directions. If designed as a trail for one way use only, this must be stated on the Information Board, maps of the route and on any other sources of information about the route.
7. All waymarks and signs must be securely erected or attached, correctly aligned and clean.
8. Any temporary diversions on the trail must be clearly marked in advance and at the point of the diversion.

Plate 4.3: Typical Cycle Route Signage



4.4 Trail Surface

1. Specifically the trail surface must comply with the guidelines set down in the document titled "Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails" which should be read in conjunction with this document.
2. In general, the trail surface must be durable, robust and fit for purpose.
3. The surface of a trail should be free from severe erosion and drainage problems. Under normal conditions it should not be water logged, have extended sections which are boggy or have deep mud along the route.

Plate 4.4: Robust and durable trail surface



4.5 Vegetation and Litter

1. At all times the route must be unobstructed by vegetation, on the surface, from the sides and overhead. Note: hedge cutting is prohibited between 1st March and 31st August.
2. The route must be monitored for and kept free from litter, broken glass and fly-tipped waste.

4.0

4.6 Trail Furniture

1. Trail furniture on a cycling trail may include:
 - Information Boards
 - Bike Racks
 - Seating
 - Gates
 - Bridges
 - Boardwalks
2. Trail furniture must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained such that it is fit for purpose, robust, reliable and safe.
3. The cycling surface on board walks or bridges must have a suitable 'non-slip' finish.

Plate 4.5: Typical Board Walk on off-road trail



4.7 Insurance

The owners and occupiers of private property crossed by the route of a trail must be indemnified against negligence claims by a user for accident, damage or injury sustained while using the trail.

4.8 Trail Management

There should be in place :

1. An organization or body, with responsibility for the management of all sections of a trail.
2. A **Trail Management and Maintenance Programme** must be documented for the trail. This should be a 2 year rolling programme and must include as a minimum plans under the following headings:

a. Trail inspection

Plans for routine inspections on the trail to be carried out at least twice annually. Inspections will check for safety and maintenance issues and where a site of environmental, archeological or architectural interest is on the route, it should be examined for damage potentially caused by trail users.

The plan must detail who will carry out inspections and when.

b. Trail maintenance

What essential maintenance will be carried out annually – who will do the work and when

c. Trail upgrades

What upgrade work will be carried out (if any) – who will do the work and when

d. Marketing and promotion

Where and how will information be provided to potential users

e. Funding arrangements

How will funding for the work documented in a. to d. above be secured and applied.

3. A contact email or phone number for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.

4.9 Services

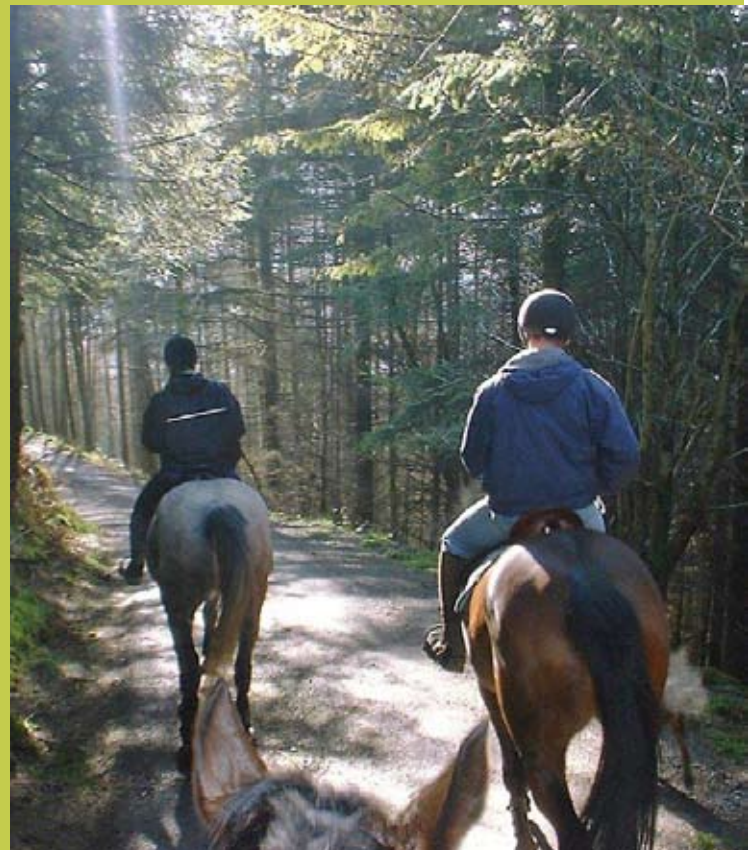
1. Suitable off-road car parking space must be available at the trail head. The amount of car parking space available should be appropriate for the typical level of trail usage.
2. Trail providers should maintain a list of accommodation and appropriate services which are available close to the route, and this should be made available to the public.
3. The hire of suitable bicycles should be available close to the trail head.
4. Bike racks suitable for securely locking bicycles should also be provided.

4.0

Horse Riding Trails

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5.0

5.0 Horse Riding Trails

The following standards apply to horse riding trails and will be the criteria for accreditation.

Plate 5.1: Typical Horse Riding Trails



5.1 Trail Information

1. Information board

Basic information about trails must be available on an information board at the trail head and on longer trails, at popular access points along the trail. Information should include:

- a. A map showing a clearly defined route with a start and finish point and a 'you are here' pointer.
- b. Information on the trail grading (difficulty rating) including a definition of the grades.
- c. The length of the trail from the start to finish, the total ascent in meters and the estimated time to complete the trail for the average user.
- d. Details of waymarking used on the trail.
- e. Information about rest stops along the trail (must be shown on trail maps).
- f. Where a trail traverses open/ exposed terrain a warning about the risks involved should there be a change of weather.
- g. A contact email for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.
- h. Contact details for the nearest emergency services.
- i. The "Leave No Trace" principles (see Appendix 2).

2. Trail map

A paper copy of a map showing the entire route of the trail (where greater than 2km in length) must be available to the public. The map must show:

- sufficient detail such that it can be used for route finding on the trail;
- the start and finish of the trail;
- all junctions or other points where users could divert from the route must be clearly represented; and

- any access points to the trail as well as the start and finish must be shown.

The map may be available in hard copy or as a printable download from the internet.

5.2 The Route

1. There must be unrestricted and permitted access to and from the trail at the start and finish and at any defined access points along the trail. The exception to this is when the trail is closed to the public for health and safety reasons, or works on the trail or adjacent lands.
2. All sections of the trail must have permitted access from the relevant landowner(s).
3. If a route passes through or is adjacent to a designated site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest, documented authorization from the appropriate authority and evidence of appropriate action to minimize any negative impact as deemed necessary, must be on record. (It is acceptable that this may not be available for older routes established in the past).
4. All sections of the route must be unobstructed and passable in a manner consistent with the trail classification and grading. (See Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails document) e.g. at no point should a permanent man made or natural barrier obstruct a trail such that it is impassable.
5. Horse riding trails should avoid public asphalt roads entirely where possible but may be necessary to provide linking sections e.g. joining two forest areas. Where an asphalt road is used on a route, only lightly trafficked local roads or more minor roads are acceptable for use – no National or Regional roads are acceptable.
6. No horse riding trail should include more than 10% of its length on public asphalt roads.
7. If a route runs from a traffic free section onto a public road, a sign on the trail in advance of the point where the route joins the public road must be provided to warn users of the potential hazard ahead. Likewise a sign must be provided on the public road to warn motorists that horses may be encountered.
8. The route must not traverse areas which endanger the horse or rider including unprotected crag or cliff tops, military ranges or areas which contain any temporary hazard.
9. Any specific hazards along a trail should be highlighted by an advance warning sign (e.g. steep drop, possibility of working machinery crossing the trail etc.)

5.3 Waymarking

1. The access route to the trailhead must be signposted from the nearest public road.
2. Where there are junctions on a trail route or there is a risk of the user diverting from the trail, waymarking must be provided.
3. On sections of trail greater than 1km in length where there are no junctions, reassurance markers must be provided approximately every 500m and at least every 1km.
4. Trail waymarking can be achieved by the use of various types of waymarks including marker posts, sign posts (finger posts), arrow plates or discs, stone markers or painted flashes or arrows on rocks. The same design of marker and marking standard must be used consistently throughout an entire route.
5. If there are multiple trails in the same area, markers must be coloured or numbered differently for each trail such that each route can be clearly followed.

6. All markers and signs must be clearly visible to an approaching horse rider and free from overgrown vegetation; on a trail intended for travel in both directions the waymarker must be clearly visible from both directions. If designed as a trail for one-way use only, this must be stated on the Information Board, maps of the route and on any other sources of information about the route.
7. All waymarks and signs must be securely erected or attached, correctly aligned and clean.
8. Any temporary diversions on the trail must be clearly marked in advance and at the point of the diversion.

5.4 Trail Surface

1. Specifically the trail surface must comply with the guidelines set down in the document titled "Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails" which should be read in conjunction with this document.
2. In general, the trail surface must be durable, robust and fit for purpose.
3. The surface of a trail should be free from severe erosion and drainage problems. Under normal conditions it should not be water logged, have extended sections which are boggy or have deep mud along the route.

5.5 Vegetation and Litter

1. At all times the route must be unobstructed by vegetation, on the surface, from the sides and overhead. Note: hedge cutting is prohibited between 1st March and 31st August.
2. The route must be monitored for and kept free from litter, broken glass and fly-tipped waste.

5.6 Trail Furniture

1. Trail furniture on a horse riding trail may include:
 - Information Boards
 - Mounting Blocks
 - Step Overs
 - Gates
 - Bridges
 - Seating
 - Tying Up Points
 - Corrals
2. Trail furniture must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained such that it is fit for purpose, robust, reliable and safe. On a horse riding trail the specific needs of horse riders must be taken into account (e.g. gates which can be opened and closed without the need to dismount and sufficient turning space to do so, gates set back from the road so that the horse is clear of the road while negotiating the gate.) Please consult the [British Horse Society Scotland \(BHSS\) – Equestrian Access Fact Sheets](#) for details on construction of trail furniture for horse trails.

3. Trail furniture must be provided such that it takes account of the grading of the trail and the abilities of intended users (e.g. a trail for novice riders should not include narrow bridges or step over horse stiles which are difficult to negotiate).
4. The surface on any bridges on the trail must have a suitable 'non-slip' finish and be designed with live and point loads to withstand the weight of the horse and rider. (See *British Horse Society Scotland (BHSS) – Equestrian Access Fact Sheets* for details on construction of trail furniture for horse trails.)

Plate 5.2: Typical Hitching Post on Horse Riding Trail



Plate 5.3: Typical Mounting Blocks on Horse Riding Trail



5.7 Insurance

The owners and occupiers of private property crossed by the route of a trail must be indemnified against negligence claims by a user for accident, damage or injury sustained while using the trail.

5.8 Trail Management

There should be in place :

1. An organization or body, with responsibility for the management of all sections of a trail.
2. A *Trail Management and Maintenance Programme* must be documented for the trail. This should be a 2 year rolling programme and must include as a minimum plans under the following headings:

a. Trail inspection

Plans for routine inspections on the trail to be carried out at least twice annually. Inspections will check for safety and maintenance issues and where a site of environmental, archeological or architectural interest is on the route, it should be examined for damage potentially caused by trail users.

The plan must detail who will carry out inspections and when.

b. Trail maintenance

What essential maintenance will be carried out annually – who will do the work and when

c. Trail upgrades

What upgrade work will be carried out (if any) – who will do the work and when

5.0

d. Marketing and promotion

Where and how will information be provided to potential users

e. Funding arrangements

How will funding for the work documented in a. to d. above be secured and applied.

3. A contact email or phone number for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.

5.9 Services

1. Suitable off-road car parking space must be available at the trail head with sufficient space for turning and parking vehicles towing horseboxes and parking horse lorries and vehicles towing horse boxes. The size of the car park will depend on trail usage level.
2. On longer trails, rest stops with safe tying up points or corrals.
3. Trail providers should maintain a list of accommodation and appropriate services which are available close to the route, and this should be made available to the public

Water Based Trails

6.0

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6.0

Water Based Trails

6.0 Water Based Trails

Water based trails (as defined by this document) are primarily designed for use by canoeists and can be based on rivers, canals, lakes, estuaries or in the sea. Water based trails are defined primarily by the provision of access points (put in or take out points) to the water along the route of the trail. The trail will be indicated on a map which shows each of the access points provided. An access point will typically have a jetty or slipway or some other defined structure which facilitates access to the water.

Water based trails may be paddled from one access point to another, or users may paddle longer sections, skipping out some points depending on the capability. A water based trail is not necessarily a defined route from one point to another. If the water is not flowing strongly in one direction e.g. on a lake or slow flowing river, the trail can be started or finished at any point. However, on the faster flowing water, e.g. a river, a trail will usually be started at an access point upstream along the trail and will be finished at any point further down stream.

The following standards apply to waterbased trails and will be the criteria for accreditation.

Plate 6.1: Typical Canoe Trails



6.1 Trail Information

1. Information board

Basic information about trails must be available on an information board at the trail head and at other access points along the trail. Information should include:

- a. A map showing a clearly defined route with a start and finish point and a 'you are here' pointer.
- b. Information on the trail grading (difficulty rating) including a definition of the grades. If the water conditions change along the route of the trail, the point at which these changes occur should be highlighted.
- c. The length of the trail from the start to finish and the distance to the next access point.
- d. Details of safety requirements.
- e. A warning about any particular hazards on the trail. This should include a warning about the potential impact of changing weather conditions (e.g. heavy rain, or increasing wind speed) and how this can significantly change the difficulty of the trail and its suitability for less experienced users.
- f. A contact email for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.
- g. Contact details for the nearest emergency services.
- h. The "Leave No Trace" principles (see Appendix 2).

2. Trail map

A paper copy of a map showing the entire route of the trail must be available to the public. The map must show:

- sufficient detail such that it can be used for route finding on the trail;
- the start and finish of the trail and any other access points to the trail.

The map may be available in hard copy or as a printable download from the internet.

6.2 The Route

1. A water based trail will have a series of access points which effectively define the trail route. Typically, one point will be designated as main start/ finish point.
2. All access points to the water on the trail must have permitted access from the relevant landowner(s).
3. There must be unrestricted and permitted access to and from the trail at all access points along the route. The exception to this is when the trail is closed to the public for health and safety reasons, or works on the trail or adjacent lands.
4. If an access point on the trail is adjacent to or on a designated site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest, documented authorization from the appropriate authority and evidence of appropriate action to minimize any negative impact as deemed necessary, must be on record.
5. All sections of the route must be unobstructed and passable in a manner consistent with the trail classification and grading. (See Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails document).

6.0

6.3 Trail Route Marking

1. The route to each access point on the trail must be signposted from the nearest public road.
2. Unlike a land based trail no specific route marking is possible on a water based trail other than the information provided at the access points, as already described in 6.1 above.

6.4 Vegetation and Litter

1. At access points any vegetation which prevents normal use of the facility for putting in or taking out a canoe, must be cut back such that the point remains unobstructed.
2. The area surrounding access points must be monitored for and kept free from litter and fly-tipped waste.

6.5 Trail Furniture

1. Trail furniture on a water based trail may include:
 - Information Boards
 - Ring buoys
 - Jetties
 - Slipways
 - Gates into access points
 - Picnic tables and seating
2. Trail furniture must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained such that it is fit for purpose, robust, reliable and safe.
3. Ring buoys must be available at all designated access and egress points.
4. The surface on any jetties must have a suitable 'non-slip' finish.

6.6 Insurance

The owners and occupiers of private property crossed by the route which provides access to a water based trail must be indemnified against negligence claims by a user for accident, damage or injury sustained while crossing the property.

6.7 Trail Management

There should be in place :

1. An organization or body, with responsibility for the management of all sections of a trail.
2. A **Trail Management and Maintenance Programme** must be documented for the trail. This should be a 2 year rolling programme and must include as a minimum plans under the following headings:

a. Trail inspection

Plans for routine inspections on the trail to be carried out at least twice annually. Inspections will check for safety and maintenance issues and where a site of environmental, archeological or architectural interest is on the route, it should be examined for damage potentially caused by trail users.

The plan must detail who will carry out inspections and when.

b. Trail maintenance

What essential maintenance will be carried out annually – who will do the work and when

c. Trail upgrades

What upgrade work will be carried out (if any) – who will do the work and when

d. Marketing and promotion

Where and how will information be provided to potential users

e. Funding arrangements

How will funding for the work documented in a. to d. above be secured and applied.

3. A contact email or phone number for users to provide feedback and/or report incidents or issues on the trail.

6.8 Services

1. Suitable off-road car parking space must be available at trail access points. The size of the car park will depend on trail usage level.
2. Where possible, toilet facilities should be provided at key access points on the trail.
3. Trail providers should maintain a list of accommodation and appropriate services which are available close to the route, and this should be made available to the public

6.0

Shared use trails

7.0

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7.0

7.0 Shared Use Trails

The standards for shared use trails are the same as those identified above for each of the individual categories of trail.

As most of the requirements are common for each trail category and only a small number of requirements are specific to the trail category, a combination of the standards provided in Sections 3, 4 and 5 should be applied to shared use trails.

However, in addition to the standards for each category of trail there are some specific requirements of shared use trails which need to be addressed as follows:

7.1 Trail Information

Information board

- a) In addition to the specific information related to each category of trail as detailed in Sections 3, 4 and 5, the information board must clearly inform users that they should expect to meet other user categories on the trail e.g. walkers, cyclists or horse riders.
- b) A code of conduct for each user category must be also be provided.
- c) If there are any parts of the trail network restricted to any user category, this must be made clear on the information board.
- d) If sections of trail which are not shared use join a section which is shared use, users must be clearly informed by appropriate signage.

7.2 Trail Route

The route on a shared use trail should be designed to minimize conflict between user categories and as such should ensure that speed of travel on the trail is limited by the nature of the design of the trail (e.g. no steep downhill section where cyclists could meet walkers or horse riders).

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Appendix 1: Useful References

Guidelines for proper trail construction to ensure an adequate surface is provided can be found in the following books:

- "Guide to Trail Design and Construction" - Mountain Meitheal (available through the website www.pathsavers.org)
- "Trail Solutions IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Singletrack" Published by the International Mountain Biking Association, P.O. Box 7578, Boulder, CO 80306. (www.imba.com)
- "Footpaths a practical handbook" Elizabeth Agate, Published by British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Conservation Center, Balby Road, Doncaster, DN4 ORH. (www.btcv.org.uk)
- Cycle Track Design – Guidelines Manual - Dublin Transport Office (www.dto.ie)
- The National Cycle Network - Guidelines and Practical Details Issue 2 – Sustrans (www.sustrans.org.uk)
- "A guide to creating a barrier free built environment for people with physical or sensory disabilities" – Irish Wheelchair Association – Oct 2004 (www.iwa.ie)
- "Accessibility Standards – A Good Practice Guide to Disabled People's Access in the Countryside – British Telecommunications PLC and Fieldfare Trust Ltd. (www.fieldfare.org.uk)
- "Building for Everyone" – National Disability Authority (2002) (www.nda.ie)
- "See It Right" – guidelines published by the UK charity Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) (www.rnib.org.uk).
- "Equestrian Access Factsheets" – British Horse Society Scotland (BHSS) (www.bhsscotland.org.uk)
- "Countryside Access Design Guide" – Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) (www.snh.org.uk)
- "On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes. Good Practice Guide" – The Countryside Agency (2005) (www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)
- Irish National Disability Authority (NDA) IT Accessibility Guidelines (<http://accessit.nda.ie>)
- Access to Information for All – Citizens Information Board).

Appendix 2: Leave No Trace Principles

Leave No Trace is an Outdoor Ethics Programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. An ethic can be defined as knowing what the right thing to do is, and doing it, even if there is no one about to see you do it. Leave No Trace depends more on attitude and awareness than on rules and regulations.

Why Leave No Trace?

As increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor recreation, our collective mark on the environment and its natural processes, increases. Litter, disturbance to vegetation, water pollution, wildlife, livestock and other people are all indicators of the need to develop a national ethic that protects both natural and cultural heritage. Techniques designed to minimise the social and environmental impacts to these areas are incorporated into the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics Education Programme as seven principles.

The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace

Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Before you go check, where possible, if access is allowed and your activity is permitted in the area you wish to visit.
- Respect any signs, regulations, policies and special concerns for the area that you wish to visit. Permits may sometimes be needed for activities on public lands.
- Where possible travel by public transport or share cars; consider the availability of parking.
- Ensure you have the skills and equipment needed for your activity and to cope with emergencies that could arise.
- Check the weather forecast and always be prepared for changing weather conditions.
- For environmental and safety reasons, and to minimise your impact on other users, keep group numbers small; split larger parties into smaller groups.

Be Considerate of Others

- Respect the people who live and work in the countryside.
- Park appropriately - avoid blocking gateways, forest entrances or narrow roads. Remember that farm machinery, local residents and the emergency services may need access at all times.
- Take care not to damage property, especially walls, fences and crops.
- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Keep noise to a minimum.

Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife

- Dogs should be kept under close control and should only be brought onto hills or farmland with the landowner's permission. Some public areas stipulate that dogs must be kept on a lead at all times, please adhere to local guidelines.
- Observe wild animals and birds from a distance. Avoid disturbing them, particularly at sensitive times: mating, nesting and raising young (mostly between spring and early summer).
- Keep wildlife wild, don't feed wild animals or birds - our foods damage their health and leave them vulnerable to predators.
- Farm animals are not pets; remain at a safe distance.

Travel and Camp on Durable Ground

Durable ground includes established tracks and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.

In popular areas:

- Concentrate use on existing tracks and campsites.
- To avoid further erosion, travel in single file in the middle of the track even when wet or muddy.

In more remote areas:

- Disperse use to prevent the creation of new tracks and campsites.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning to show.

If camping:

- Protect water quality by camping at least 30m from lakes and streams.
- Keep campsites small and discreet.
- Aim to leave your campsite as you found it, or better.

Leave What You Find

- Respect property. For example, farming or forestry machinery, fences, stone walls etc. Leave gates as you find them (open or closed).
- Preserve the past: examine - without damaging - archaeological structures, old walls and heritage artefacts e.g. holy wells, mine workings, monuments.
- Conserve the present: leave rocks, flowers, plants, animals and all natural habitats as you find them. Fallen trees are a valuable wildlife habitat; do not remove or use for firewood.
- Avoid introducing non-native plants and animals e.g. zebra mussels in rivers and lakes.
- Do not build rock cairns, structures or shelters.

Dispose of Waste Properly

- "If You Bring It In, Take It Out" - take home all litter and leftover food (including tea bags, fruit peels and other biodegradable foods).
- To dispose of solid human waste, dig a hole 15-20cms deep and at least 30m from water, campsites and tracks. Cover and disguise the hole when finished.
- Bring home toilet paper and hygiene products.
- Wash yourself or your dishes 30m away from streams or lakes and if necessary use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Bring home any solids and scatter strained dishwater.
- For more information on sanitation in the outdoors read the "Where to go in the outdoors" leaflet.

Minimise the Effects of Fire

- Fires can cause lasting impacts and be devastating to forests, natural habitats and farmland. Therefore when camping use a lightweight stove for cooking.
- Where fires are permitted: Use established fire rings, barbecues or create a mound fire.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Do not use growing vegetation for use as firewood.
- Avoid burning plastics or other substances: which emit toxic fumes.
- Burn all fires to ash, put out fires completely, and then scatter cool ashes.

Appendix 3: Trail Material Suppliers

Coillte – The Outdoor Signs Range

Dundrum Saw Mills

Dundrum

Co.Tipperary

Tel: (062) 71101

Email: woodproducts@coillte.ie

Web: www.irishhardwoods.com

Can supply: Broad range of timber products

Highway Safety Development Ltd.

Knocktopher

Co. Kilkenny

Tel: 0567768702

Email: mail@hsd.ie

Web: www.hsd.ie

Can supply: Broad range of trail materials and furniture

Signiatec – Sign Technology Ltd

Castlehale

Co. Kilkenny

Tel: 051648484

Email: info@signiatec.ie

Web: www.signiatec.com

Can supply: Broad range of trail materials and furniture

Rennicks Sign Manufacturing

Kilbride,

Mulhuddart,

Dublin 15,

Tel 01 8859200,

Email: sales@rennicks.com,

Web: www.rennicks.com

Can supply: Signage

Gaelite,

18 Corrig Road,

Sandyford Industrial Estate,

Dublin 18,

Tel: 01 2940066,

E-mail: info@gaelite.com, Web: www.gaelite.com

Can supply: Signage / Information Boards etc

Wicklow Joinery

Rathdrum,

Co. Wicklow

T: 0404 43803

Can supply: Range of timber products, Oak frames & Routing etc

Ecoplastic / BPF Recycling Plastics

86 Annacloy Road

Downpatrick

Co. Down

Northern Ireland

BT30 9AJ

Tel: (048) 44831831

Email: info@ecoplastic.net

Web: www.ecoplastic.net

Can supply: a broad range of plastic recyclable products

Environmental Street Furniture

Valley Business Centre

67 Church Road Newtownabbey

Belfast

Northern Ireland

BT36 7LS

Tel: +44 (0)845 606 6095

Web: www.streetfurniture-uk.com

Email: sales@streetfurniture-uk.com

Can supply: a broad range of metal & plastic signage products

East West Mapping, (Cartography)

Clonegal,

Co.Wicklow

Phone/ Fax: 01- 54 77835

Email: eastwest@eircom.net

Can supply: Maps, Guidebooks etc

Ordnance Survey Ireland,

Copyright administration,

Phoenix Park,

Dublin 8

Tel: 01-802-5320

Email: copyright@osi.ie

Can supply: Maps - (Print & Digital)

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