



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales

Quality Standards for National Trails and the Wales Coast Path



Llwybr Arfordir Cymru
Wales Coast Path

LLWYBRAU CENEDLAETHOL
NATIONAL TRAILS 

Edition 3.1

August 2016

THE STANDARDS

Surface & Surroundings		Page
S1	Surfaces and surroundings should be unobstructed so that they are readily passable by users	5
S2	The number and length of road sections should be kept to a minimum.	7
S3	The amount of litter and dog mess should be kept to a minimum	8
S4	The off-road sections of the routes should be as widely accessible as possible and be suitable for wheelchair users wherever practicable and appropriate.	9

Furniture & Other Structures		Page
F1	Furniture and other structures should be of high specification and be in good condition	10
F2	Finger Posts and Waymark Posts should be of a high specification and be in good condition	12
F3	Stiles should be replaced by less restrictive options whenever possible	13
F4	Seats should be in good condition at all designated locations	14

Information		Page
I1	Satisfactory official guidebooks should be available	15
I2	Satisfactory summary leaflets should be available	16
I3	Accurate public transport Information should be easily available	17
I4	At least one satisfactory accommodation and services guide should be available	18
I5	All routes should have a satisfactory official website	19
I6	There should be interpretation / information Boards at all Key Access Points	20
I7	Routes should be a satisfactory social media presence	21

Navigation		Page
N1	Routes should be correctly recorded on current Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 maps	22
N2	The routes should be easy to follow on the ground	23
N3	Temporary diversions on routes should be signed and publicised appropriately	24

Links & Access Points		Page
L1	Key Access Points should be public transport accessible between Easter and the end of September	25
L2	Key Destinations within 3km of the routes should have access connecting them with the routes	26
L3	Adjoining Key Link Paths should be usable and clearly signed from the routes	27

Route Alignment		Page
F1	The official line and the walked line should be coincident	28
F2	The official line should be coincident with a permanent right of access throughout	29

Front cover: Dave Maclachlan, former Pembrokeshire Coast Path Officer, crosses one of the hundreds of stiles removed from the route in the interests of accessibility.

Introduction

This document sets out Quality Standards for the Welsh National Trails and the Wales Coast Path. Thus it applies to:

- Glyndŵr's Way National Trail
- Offa's Dyke Path National Trail
- Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail
- the Wales Coast Path ¹

Throughout this document they are collectively referred to as the 'routes'.

Purposes of the Standards

The above are the principle long distance walking routes in Wales. Natural Resources Wales co-ordinate the routes at a national level and are responsible for policy, including setting standards, marketing and allocating Welsh Government funding. Local authorities are primarily responsible for development and maintenance on the ground.

As befits their high profile status, it is important that they reach the highest possible standards in terms of infrastructure, information and other supporting services. These standards, and associated monitoring and reporting, will help to meet this aim by:

- defining an agreed suite of high quality standards on which route management and funding can be focused, thus raising quality
- informing the public of the standards that they can expect the routes to reach

Monitoring, Work Planning & Funding Allocation

Each of the routes will be regularly monitored against these standards by route managers – both through on the ground condition surveys and desk based research – and quality standards assessment reports and action plans will be produced. Work planning and funding allocations will be targeted towards achieving and maintaining these standards.

¹ It is important to note that whilst the Wales Coast Path outside of Pembrokeshire is not a designated 'National Trail' it is regarded by Natural Resources Wales as being of equivalent status and therefore has the same high standards.

Previous Editions

The First (2007) and Second (2008) editions of these standards were published as the 'Handbook of Quality Standards for National Trails in Wales'. The document was produced by the Countryside Council for Wales on behalf of, and in conjunction with, a Quality Standards Group consisting of representatives from relevant local and National Park authorities.

This Third Edition (2016) has been produced by Natural Resources Wales, again in consultation with representatives from the authorities that manage the routes on the ground. This edition additionally covers the Wales Coast Path and the title has been changed accordingly.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ACCESS

Everybody involved with managing the National Trails and Wales Coast Path should work to the principles of 'least restrictive access'. This requires that all work makes access as easy as possible for as many people as possible.

It is important to remember that access to the countryside is not just about the physical presence of paths. It is about the 'chain' of events and experiences, leading from the decision to visit, the journey, the on-site experience, the journey home and the post-visit memories.

For example, a gap is less restrictive than a gate, which in turn is less restrictive than a stile. A leaflet printed in 12-point text is less restrictive than one in 8-point and a modern accessible bus is less restrictive than older vehicles.

For guidance on LRA principles please see:

'By All Reasonable Means', Countryside Council for Wales:

<https://naturalresources.wales/media/2523/by-all-reasonable-means-inclusive-access-to-the-outdoors.pdf>

Countryside for All Good Practice Guide, Fieldfare Trust

<http://www.fieldfare.org.uk/countryside-for-all/countryside-for-all-good-practice-guide/>

Surface & Surroundings Standard S1

Ease of Passage

Surfaces and surroundings should be unobstructed so that they are readily passable by users

Users should expect to find, within the limits of the natural landscape and terrain, weather conditions and seasonal variations, a clear unobstructed route which is well defined and allows easy passage.

They should not be inconvenienced by:

- Poor ground condition, including where the path is unduly wet or muddy or is seriously uneven due to ruts, holes etc.
- vegetation encroachment
- man-made structures
- other obstructions

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: The number and total length of instances where the route is not readily passable

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

For the purposes of this standard:

- the surveyed route should be that which is actually walked. Where there are multiple (braided) paths it will be necessary to decide which one is the main 'managed' route and survey that one only
- route users are the class of user for whom the route, or section of route, is promoted - walkers, users with wheelchairs, users with pushchairs, and/or horse riders and cyclists

Unusable or Inconvenient?

A route is deemed to be obstructed if it is:

a) Unusable

Where the route is hazardous or totally blocked and it is not possible for users to easily and safely avoid the obstruction by passing round it. It includes any obstructions which a user is forced to crawl under or climb over or where there is a risk to the safety of the user. Such occurrences should be dealt with urgently.

b) Inconvenient

A route is deemed to be inconvenient if it is **unpleasant or difficult** for users to proceed.

Examples of these include:

- where it is not possible to proceed without being unduly inconvenienced by water, mud or other substance (excepting during and after extreme weather conditions)
- where it is necessary to physically push or duck through the vegetation or negotiate deep ruts or holes.
- where it is not possible to proceed without running the risk of scratches to the skin or damage to clothing from vegetation or barbed wire
- where a user risks coming into contact with an electric fence

Road Sections & Crossings

The number and length of road sections should be kept to a minimum

The 1949 National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act requires that long-distance routes '*allow the public to make extensive journeys on foot, horseback or bicycle on routes that, for the most part, do not pass along roads used by vehicles*'.

All routes have sections where they either run along or cross roads used by motor traffic and it is vital that in all such cases the safety of the users of both the route and the road are given high priority. There should be a general principal of reducing the number and length of instances where routes use this type of highway.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number of road sections and crossings and length of road sections, including those which have pavements or walkable verges

Assessment Method: Annual survey

A list and maps should be drawn up and maintained of all the locations where the route runs along or crosses a road. Safety management measures for each location should be discussed with the appropriate highway departments.

Surface & Surroundings Standard S3

Litter and Dog Mess

The amount of litter and dog mess should be kept to a minimum

As well as being a health and safety issue, the presence of litter and dog mess is extremely off-putting to many users. Therefore, efforts should be made to keep the route clean, whether or not complaints are received.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number of complaints received (1 Apr – 31 Mar)

Assessment Method: Annual survey

Route managers should arrange for all complaints to be referred to them for the annual survey.

If there is a known problem they should work with local authorities to try and resolve it. For example:

- if receptacles are provided they should be emptied frequently
- there should be regular clearance / collection
- contractors should clear any rubbish, redundant furniture etc. created as a result of their work and make good any damage caused when accessing or working on the site

Wheelchair Accessibility and Other Special Access

The off-road sections of the routes should be as widely accessible as possible and be suitable for wheelchair users wherever practicable and appropriate

It is important that the routes are managed according to the principles of Least Restrictive Access and in a manner that complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. All work should seek to make access as easy as possible for as many people as possible whilst being sensitive to locations with particular historic, wildlife or landscape value. Generally, provision that is designed and managed for users with special access needs also benefits other users.

Wheelchair access may include:

Manual: Accessible to lone manual wheelchair users.

Assisted: Accessible to urban, power-assisted wheelchairs (or non-powered with a strong user or pusher).

Cross Country: Accessible to purpose-built, cross-country powered wheelchairs.

Any associated promotion or information should specify which types of wheelchair a route is suitable for.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Length and percentage of the route which is accessible to wheelchair users or other specific users

Assessment Method: Annual survey

Route managers should aim to identify sections that are, or could be made, wheelchair accessible but that are not publicised as such and should prioritise resolving the omission.

Any associated promotion or information should specify which types of wheelchair a route is suitable for.

Sections, that are designed to be, or could be made, suitable for other groups with specific access requirements, such as parents with pushchairs, partially-sighted or older people, should also be considered.

When planning or designing special access routes all relevant guidance should be fully considered and authorities are strongly encouraged to ensure that suitably experienced or qualified persons make assessments and guide the specification.

Condition of Furniture

Furniture and other structures should be of a high specification and be in good condition

The provision of good quality furniture is a key element of route management because it helps to ensure that users have a trouble free and enjoyable journey. Also, poor quality is detrimental to the image of both the routes themselves and those who are involved in managing them.

The following furniture is covered by this standard:

- a) Stiles - Post & Rail, Ladder and Stone
- b) Gates - Pedestrian, Bridle, Field and Kissing
- c) Bridges & Culverts
- d) Flights of Steps
- e) Boardwalks

Standards which apply to all structures:

- (1) Furniture should be complete as installed. (i.e. all posts, rails, steps etc should be in place)
- (2) Furniture should not move, flex or bend unduly upon use
- (3) Furniture should be free from protrusions, additions or sharp edges which could injure a user or damage their clothing
- (4) Furniture should not be sited so as to put the user unduly at risk from an adjacent hazard, including vegetation, barbed wire or electric fences
- (5) All stiles, gates and most bridges (but not culverts) should have an NT or WCP logo or logos visible from both sides (unless the logo is clearly visible elsewhere)

Stiles – Specific Standards

- (6) All post & rail stiles should have a hand-post (either integral or bolted on) on at least one side
- (7) All Post & Rail stiles should not be excessively high or narrow and should have one or more steps as required
- (8) Ladder stiles should have two sets of steps (rather than rungs) which should be horizontal, regardless of the angle of the ground

Note: Consider removal of ladder stiles wherever practicable.

Gates – Specific Standards

- (9) All gates should have hinges and swing freely on them
- (10) Latches & bolts, where fitted, should align correctly without the need to lift the gate
- (11) Gates on sections with bridle access should be fully usable without the need for horse riders to dismount

(12) Kissing gates should allow users with large backpacks or baby-carriers to easily negotiate them without the need to remove the pack

Culverts – Specific Standards

(13) Culverts should be clear of accumulated silt and debris so as to allow the free flow of water after heavy rain

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and % of furniture items which are of a high specification and in good condition

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

It is important to note that this standard covers both condition and specification. Some furniture, despite being in good condition, will not meet this standard because it does not meet the high specification. In general, addressing problems of furniture in poor condition should be given priority over items which do not meet the specification.

When considering the installation of furniture, full regard should be given to Least Restrictive Access, aesthetics, sustainability and traditional local materials and designs. The desirability of using local contractors should also be considered.

Unusable or Inconvenient?

Unusable

A furniture item is deemed to make the Route unusable if:

- a) its condition prevents the safe passage of Route users; or
- b) it is not a lawful structure for the status of the underlying right of way².

Inconvenient

Most problems will make the item inconvenient rather than unusable. In some instances the furniture or structure might not meet the standard but may have no effect on the user, such as a gate where the latch mechanism has been removed allowing it to open freely, or where a logo is absent but it is clear that the structure is on the route. Any item which does not meet all the criteria but has no detrimental effect on the user should be recorded as "criteria not met-no effect on user"

² For example, a stile on a bridleway should always be recorded as unusable even if it does not prevent the passage of all route users.

Condition of Navigation Aids

Finger Posts & Waymark Posts should be of a high specification and be in good condition

Finger Posts (FPs) and Waymark Posts (WPs) are key indicators of the alignment of a route and it is important that they are in good condition and show relevant information.

A satisfactory FP/WP should:

- point in the right direction
- be clearly visible when approached along the route or other Public Right of Way or highway
- be in good condition
- have an NT acorn logo or WCP dragonshell on the finger and/or the post
- show the legal status when it is at a junction with a road or other PRoW
- be bilingual if in Wales (if text included)
- Finger Posts (but generally not Waymark Posts) should include the route name (or, subject to space, an abbreviation of it)

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and % of Finger Posts & Waymark Posts which are of a high specification and in good condition

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

Some routes may use alternatives to timber waymark posts in some situations such as concrete plaques or painted stones. For the purposes of this standard alternatives may be considered as waymark posts provided that the structure has been specifically placed for the purpose of bearing a waymark, be it attached or painted. For example if a stone has been placed at the location and painted with a waymark it should be counted as a waymark post but if a stone is already in place but has a waymark painted it should be considered in the same manner as a waymark disk attached to a fence.

FPs are always required at road crossings. Where the route directly crosses a narrow minor road a single FP on one side with two fingers may be sufficient. Wider roads require separate FPs on each side. The surveyor should decide whether one or two are needed.

Note: To be satisfactory it is not necessary for posts to be separate structures. Fingers attached to other items, such as lamp posts, are acceptable.

Removal of Stiles

Stiles should be replaced by less restrictive options whenever possible

In accordance with the principles of Least Restrictive Access, there should be a reduction in the number of stiles on the routes.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Numerical and % reduction in quantity of stiles

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

The cooperation of the relevant landowner will be required to remove stiles that are lawful limitations on a public right of way.

In order of preference, from an accessibility point of view, the following options should be considered:

- a gap
- a field, bridle or pedestrian gate
- a kissing gate
- a stile (the use of ladder stiles is very strongly discouraged)

Particular priority will be given to removing stiles which are damaged, coming to the end of their life, or a barrier in an otherwise more accessible section.

However, any opportunity to reduce the number of restrictive structures on a route should be explored whenever it arises.

Provision of Seats

Seats should be in good condition at all designated locations

It is appreciated that many people like to sit on a bench, whether to admire the view, eat a picnic or simply have a rest. Therefore, good quality seats should be provided at appropriate locations.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: % of designated locations with seats in good condition

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

Route managers, in consultation with others as appropriate, should draw up a list of 'seat designated locations' along the length of their route.

The criteria for designated locations are not fixed but, for example, they could include:

- popular areas near key access points
- viewpoints
- features of interest
- key path intersections
- long climbs
- sections accessible to wheelchair users or others with restricted people

Once designated locations have been listed it will be easy to assess which ones have seats in good condition.

Information Standard I1

Official Guidebook

Satisfactory official guidebooks should be available

Despite the increasing availability of internet guides, there is still a healthy demand for traditional printed Guidebooks and it is important that all Routes have an official guide.

To be satisfactory the official guidebook must:

- have been published or updated within the last five years OR have been reviewed by route managers within the last five years with no significant alterations being deemed necessary
- be produced or authorised by Natural Resources Wales.³
- cover the whole Route (in one or more volumes)
- be widely available. e.g. through book shops, internet book suppliers and Tourist Information Centres close to the Route
- mapping should be at 1:25,000 scale unless otherwise agreed with the publishers

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Has the route got a satisfactory official guidebook or not?

Assessment Method: Annual review

Route Managers should make themselves familiar with the official guidebooks and assist the publishers to ensure that they are as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

³ Although other guidebooks may exist, NRW will only authorise one 'official' book for each route, or section of route.

Information Standard 12

Summary Leaflet

Satisfactory summary leaflets should be available

The widespread distribution of summary leaflets to outlets such as Tourist Information Centres, tourist attractions, B&Bs and supermarkets is particularly useful in drawing the attention of people who are not aware of the routes.

To be satisfactory a leaflet must:

- have been published or updated within the last five years OR have been reviewed by route managers within the last five years with no updated version deemed necessary
- be consistent with current branding guidelines
- be compliant under the Equality Act 2010
- cover the whole route
- be widely distributed, including to Tourist Information Centres close to the Route

Alternatives to traditional leaflets, such as postcards, are acceptable if agreed by NRW and the local authorities involved.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Has the route got a satisfactory summary leaflet or not?

Assessment Method: Annual review

Route managers should make themselves familiar with the official leaflets and assist the publishers to ensure that they are as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

Public Transport Information

Accurate public transport information should be easily available

For reasons of sustainability, we wish to see as many people as possible access the routes by public transport. Lack of access to transport can also provide a barrier to participation in outdoor recreation.

The linear nature of the routes makes public transport links particularly important for those planning visits, even where participants choose to travel to the area in private cars. To this end, and to provide a service to users, public transport information should be easily available.

Ideally a dedicated guide for the route will be produced, but non-dedicated timetables, such as county guides produced by local authorities, are acceptable if they provide the relevant information and are made easily available to route users.

To be satisfactory, easily available public transport information must:

- be available in printed and/or electronic form
- be available for the whole route BUT not necessarily as one document
- have been published or updated within the last year
- be acceptable to route managers
- be compliant under the Equality Act 2010
- if printed: be available through Tourist Information Centres close to the Route and the public transport sections of the managing authorities close to the Route
- if electronic: be available on, or linked to, the National Trail or Wales Coast Path websites with the ability to print or download relevant content

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Is public transport information for the whole route easily available?

Assessment Method: Annual review

Route managers should make themselves familiar with the available public transport information.

Accommodation Guide

At least one satisfactory accommodation and services guide should be available

To provide a service for users, each route should have an accommodation and services guide. This can be produced by any organisation, provided it meets the criteria below.

To be satisfactory an accommodation and services guide must:

- be available in printed form and / or electronically
- cover the whole route
- have been published or updated within the last two years OR have been reviewed by route managers within the last two years with no updated version deemed necessary
- be compliant under the Equality Act 2010
- if printed: be available through Tourist Information Centres close to the route and the relevant managing authorities
- if electronic: be available on, or linked to from, the National Trail / Wales Coast Path websites with the ability to print or download relevant content

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Has the route got a satisfactory accommodation guide or not?

Assessment Method: Annual review

Route managers should make themselves familiar with available accommodation guides and assist the publishers to ensure that the books are as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

Information Standard 15

Websites

All routes should have a satisfactory official website

It is vital, for marketing and information provision purposes, that all routes have an official website.

To be satisfactory the website must:

- be approved by NRW
- be fully bilingual or compliant with NRW (and other key partner's) Welsh language policy
- be up to date
- meet W3C standards of accessibility

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Has the route got a satisfactory official website or not?

Assessment Method: Annual review

Route managers should make themselves familiar with the Official Websites and assist the producers to ensure that they are as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

Interpretation / Information Boards

There should be interpretation / information Boards at all Key Access Points⁴

Well sited interpretation and information boards can help to inform the public and reinforce the National Trail or Wales Coast Path brands.

For an information/interpretation board to be satisfactory it must:

- be NT or WCP branded (route name and acorn / dragonshell logos)
- have all information correct
- be in good condition
- be well sited
- provide details of contact points to enable faults and incidents to be reported
- be bilingual if in Wales

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and % of Key Access Points with at least one satisfactory interpretation and/or information board

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

Once Key Access Points have been identified by route managers a survey can be undertaken of which have satisfactory information / interpretation boards. It can be produced by any organisation provided it meets the criteria above.

⁴ See Appendix for information about Key Access Points

Social Media

Routes should have a satisfactory social media presence

Social Media is an increasingly important tool in public engagement and promotion. Routes should have an active presence in at least one, and preferably more than one, high profile social media site (such as Facebook or Twitter).

To be satisfactory the social media account must:

- be updated at least once per week
- have a link from the National Trail site, www.nationaltrail.co.uk , or the Wales Coast path site www.walescoastpath.gov.uk
- be compliant with a Welsh Language Scheme approved under section 16 of the Welsh Language Act 1993⁵
- be up to date

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Has the route got a satisfactory social media presence?

Assessment Method: Annual review

Route managers should make themselves familiar with the official social media channels and assist to ensure that they are as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

⁵ In most cases this will be the scheme of the author's employer. If the employer does not have an authorised scheme the content must comply with that of NRW.

Ordnance Survey Maps

Routes should be correctly recorded on current Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 maps

Ordnance Survey (OS) maps are a key tool for many people when they are following a route or planning a visit. It is therefore very important that an accurate route is shown on the 1:50,000 'Landranger' and 1:25,000 'Explorer' maps.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and length of sections incorrectly shown on OS 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 maps.

Assessment Method: Annual comparison of routes shown on OS maps with approved and walked routes.

Where the established walked line and the approved line are not coincident the walked line should be provided to the OS unless there are specific reasons for not doing so. However, where noticeable discrepancies occur they should be corrected as promptly as possible (see R1 and R2).

Ease of Following

The routes should be easy to follow on the ground

National Trails and the Wales Coast Path are used by people with many different requirements and levels of experience of walking / riding. Due to their high profile and 'national' status they are attractive to many people with limited experience and it is very important that they are not put off by getting lost.

We would always strongly recommend that users carry the official guidebook or other map which shows the route. However, people's ability to read maps varies enormously and it should not be necessary to be an expert map-reader to experience the routes. It can also be inconvenient to landowners to have users inadvertently leaving the correct route.

Therefore, waymarking and other navigation aids should be sufficient to ensure that the route is not ambiguous in either direction.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number of locations where the onward route is not clear

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

The requirement for comprehensive waymarking does not mean that the routes should be cluttered with waymarks and signposts. In many cases a clear path, natural features or path furniture (with acorn/ dragonshell logos) are adequate to guide the way.

Additional route marking, in the form of signs attached to structures (walls, fences, lamp posts etc), Waymark Posts or Finger Posts, should only be necessary when the route is ambiguous, such as where there is no clear path or at junctions.

In some areas it may be decided that the provision of additional route marking is desirable, for health and safety reasons or to re-assure users. In all cases the nature of the landscape (including sightlines) and the visual impact should be considered before deciding what form of route marking to use.

The key principle is that the way ahead should never be ambiguous in either direction.

Temporary Diversions

Temporary diversions on routes should be signed and publicised appropriately

From time to time it is necessary to temporarily divert the alignment of a route, for health and safety or other reasons.

For signage and publicity to be adequate the following should apply:

- At the ends of the diversion a notice should be placed including:
 - a) the reason for the diversion
 - b) if known, the length of time for which it is likely to be in force
 - c) a map showing both the usual and temporary routes - at the discretion of the route managers this may not be necessary for very short or obvious diversions
- The route of the diversion must be unambiguously marked throughout with notices or waymarks which make it clear that it is a temporary route
- The diversion should be posted on the NT / WCP website and at other information points as appropriate

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and % of temporary diversions which are signed and publicised appropriately

Assessment Method: Annual condition survey

All diversions should be for as short a period as necessary. As guidebooks and maps will generally not show such diversions it is very important that adequate information is provided both on the ground and elsewhere.

Public Transport Links

Key Access Points should be public transport accessible between Easter and the end of September⁶

For reasons of public service, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability, it is highly desirable that the routes are accessible by Public Transport. This applies to both:

- links along the routes, to allow users to walk one way and ride the other
- links to surrounding towns and villages and links to the national public transport network

To be satisfactory a public transport link must be:

- served by a bus stop or railway station
- within 1km (by an available walking route rather than 'as the crow flies') of the Route
- served every day of the week between Easter and the end of September with at least one service in each direction before 11am and after 3pm

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: No. and % of Key Access Points which are public transport accessible between Easter and the end of September

Assessment Method: Annual review

Path managers have very little control over public transport provision and in only a very few cases is it possible to arrange for new or improved services.

Therefore, it is generally more practical to develop Key Access Points (KAPs) around existing public transport links rather than the other way round. These KAPs will be route gateways and as such should have a high standard of accessibility, signposting, information / interpretation and seating.

The first stage is for route managers to determine where Key Access Points are. (See Appendix for information on the location of Key Access Points).

Once KAPs have been identified a survey can be undertaken of which have satisfactory public transport links.

As Key Access Points are likely to be locations most suitable for less able users to reach it is logical to target those locations when providing wheelchair accessible or other easy access sections.

⁶ See Appendix for information about Key Access Points

Links & Access Points Standard L2

Links to Services, Facilities & Features of Interest

Key Destinations within 3km of the routes should have access connecting them with the routes

Key Destinations are locations, within 3km of the Trail, which have useful services, facilities and/or features of interest. For example:

- accommodation
- public transport (bus stops and railway stations)
- food outlets (food shops, restaurants, cafes, pubs takeaways etc.)
- tourist attractions (e.g. viewpoints and heritage sites)
- toilets

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: The number and % of key destinations which have access connecting them with the routes

Assessment Method: Annual review

Relatively few services, facilities and features of interest lie directly on the routes. It is therefore important to link them with the surrounding area. Places where such links meet the routes are likely to be designated as Key Access Points (see Appendix).

The first stage is for the managing authority, in conjunction with others as appropriate, to draw up a list of where Key Destinations within 3 km (walking, not 'as the crow flies') of the route are.

A destination may be recorded as 'key', whether it has one or many of these attractions. It is for route managers to consider the number and nature of the attractions when prioritising which locations to improve connections to, having regard to the levels of provision in that area.

The next stage is to determine which of the Key Destinations are suitably connected.

Suitable connections may include:

- Public Rights of Way – fully signposted and open
- minor country roads with very limited traffic
- more busy roads which have a pavement or wide verge
- other access links - preferably by right (those not available by right should only be considered if well established and considered secure)

It is desirable to have a good spread of facilities along the routes - one food shop every 10km is more useful than five clustered together but then none for 50km and this should be considered when planning new or improved links. Consideration should be given to the desirability of destination marking at each end and along the links to inform users of where they are heading.

Key Link Paths

Adjoining Key Link Paths should be usable and clearly signed from the routes

'Key Link Paths' are adjoining public rights of way of particular significance to the routes.

These include, but are not restricted to, those which link the routes with Key Destinations (see L2 for more information) and / or are part of a promoted circular route.

For a Key Link Path to be 'usable' it must be:

- free from obstruction,
- clearly signed (but not necessarily finger posted)

Signage should indicate the destination, or indicate a circular walk, and include the distance.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: % of adjoining Key Link Paths which are usable and clearly signed from the route

Assessment Method: Annual survey

Route managers should decide which link paths are 'key'. These may include those which link the route with Key Destinations (see L2 for more information) or are part of a circular route.

Coincidence of Official and Walked Lines

The official line and the walked line should be coincident

It is important that there is no discrepancy between the official route and the walked route to:

- avoid confusion for the public
- ensure that management and funding is targeted towards the correct alignment

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and length of sections not complying

Assessment Method: Annual comparison using GIS and on the ground knowledge

Definition of Official Route

For **National Trails**: That approved by the Welsh Government and its predecessors under the 1949 National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act, as subsequently amended by Varying Reports.

For **the Wales Coast Path**: That agreed between NRW and the relevant local authority.

To correct anomalies it will be necessary to either:

a) re-route the walked line so that it coincides with the official line

or

b) for National Trails use the Varying Report process to move the approved route to that which is walked OR, for the Wales Coast Path, agree a realignment with NRW

In some cases the discrepancy may be so minor as to be considered *de minimis* and NRW will give advice on where this might be the case having regard to the record of the official line.

Route Alignment Standard R2

Coincidence of Official Line and Permanent Right of Access

The official line should be coincident with a permanent right of access throughout

To provide long-term certainty and clarity, the routes should be entirely on routes to which the public have a permanent right of access.

The right should be for walkers throughout. In addition:

- a) where a route runs on alignments with existing rights for horses and / or cyclists, it should be maintained appropriately in line with these Quality Standards.
- b) route managers should fully consider the feasibility and desirability of making other sections available for horses and/or cyclists in line with the wider objectives of increasing public access.

To enable this criteria to be met it will be necessary for the main route to be on:

- Public Rights of Way,
- other highways, or
- other routes to which the public have a permanent right of access.

However, in a few places, it may not be possible to provide a satisfactory permanently available route. In such cases, permissive access, access land, de facto access and other similar arrangements will be permitted as long as the local authority and NRW agree to the exception.

Guidance for Route Managers

Performance Indicator: Number and length of sections not complying

Assessment Method: Annual comparison using GIS and on the ground knowledge

To correct anomalies it will be necessary to either:

- a) create or re-route PROW or other Highway so that they coincide with the official line; or
- b) move the approved line onto a PROW or other Highway through the VR process (for National Trails) or by agreement with NRW (for the Wales Coast Path).

Which of these approaches is taken will depend upon local circumstances.

What are they?

These standards introduce the concept of Key Access Points (KAPs) in relation to the Provision of Interpretation/Information Boards (I6), Accessibility by Public Transport (L1), Links with Key Destinations (L2) and adjoining Key Public Paths (L3).

KAPs are points along a route where

- a) there is an existing significant demand for accessing the Trail, or
- b) route managers wish to encourage access and there is sufficient evidence of potential demand.

Generally a KAP will develop, for example:

- at the start and end of a National Trail or the Wales Coast Path
- where there is easy access from towns and villages
- where a significant amount of car parking is available in rural areas
- where there are good public transport links (bus stops or railway stations)
- where there are junctions with other well used paths
- where the Route runs near to a tourist attraction or other point of interest
- where there are facilities such as toilets, refreshments or accommodation

How should they be developed?

As KAPs are, by their nature, places where significant numbers of people join and leave the routes, they should be developed to be as welcoming as possible. Therefore, the provision of facilities such as information boards, seats and destination sign posting should be carefully considered.

Although largely outside the control of route managers, the possibility of providing or influencing provision of other facilities, such as toilets, public transport links, refreshments and accommodation should be considered wherever they are not already present.

Route managers should consider where their existing and potential KAPs are and develop them appropriately.