

A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland

From The National Trails Office



national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative



The National Trails Office

The National Trails Office (NTO) is an Irish Sports Council initiative focused on supporting the development of recreational trails in Ireland. This programme encourages more people to become active in outdoor recreation and contributes 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 canoeing 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 Walks Scheme (trail maintenance scheme) introduced by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Development and delivered by Local 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.

Policy Endorsement

The National Trails Office Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland has been endorsed by the following agencies:

- Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport
- Irish Sports Council – National Trails Advisory Committee
- Fáilte Ireland - The Irish Tourism Development Authority
- Waterways Ireland
- Irish Local Development Network (ILDN)
- Mountaineering Ireland
- Canoe Ireland
- Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
- Irish Cattle and Sheep Association
- Walking Trails Ireland
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht - National Parks & Wildlife Service
- Coillte - The Irish State Forestry Company
- Bord na Móna
- Shannon Development
- Cycling Ireland
- Horse Sport Ireland
- Irish Farmers Association
- Inland Fisheries Ireland

The planning and development process set out in this publication must be followed by all new recreational trail planning and development projects in Ireland from January 2012.



Table of Contents

PAGE

Introduction	1
Section 1: Things to Consider About Trail Development	5
1.1 Categories of Trails in Ireland	6
1.2 Trail User Needs	7
1.3 Strategic Planning	7
1.4 Land Ownership & Access	8
1.5 Landowner Consultation and Agreement	10
1.6 Permissive Access	10
1.7 Impact on National Heritage	11
1.8 Other Environmental Considerations	15
1.9 Other Permissions and Permits Required	16
1.10 Safety	17
1.11 Irish Trail Classifications System	18
1.12 Trail Grading	19
1.13 Trail Management Standards	20
1.14 Liability & Insurance	20
1.15 Development Costs	22
1.16 Long Term Maintenance Commitment	25
1.17 Funding & Funding Applications	25
1.18 Partnership Approach	25
Section 2: The Trail Planning Process	27
Section 3: Practical Trail Planning Advice	35
3.1 Site Maps	36
3.2 Useful Trail Planning Equipment	36
3.3 Trail Surveys – What to Look Out For	36
3.4 Identifying Positive and Negative Features on Site	37
3.5 Consider Landscape Topography	38
3.6 Consider Trail Carrying Capacity	38
3.7 Identification of the Line of the Route	38
3.8 Trail Head Location	39
3.9 Consider Additional Trail Facilities and Services	39
3.10 Trail Construction Techniques	40
Glossary & Appendices	41
Glossary: Trail Terminology	42
Appendix 1: Initial Trails Planning Questionnaire (National Trails Office)	45
Appendix 2: Summary of Management Standards for Walking Trails in Ireland	49
Appendix 3: Fáilte Ireland - National Loop Walks Criteria	51
Appendix 4: Initial Site Assessment Report (Sample Report)	53
Appendix 5: Trail Development Plan (Template)	59
Appendix 6: Checklist for Final Inspection of Trail	65
Appendix 7: Guidance Note - Public Liability Insurance Policy for Recreational Trails	67
Appendix 8: Trail Furniture & Material Suppliers	68
Appendix 9: Indicative Costs for Items of Trail Furniture	70
Appendix 10: Useful Contacts & Links	71
Appendix 11: Shared Use Trails - Code of Conduct	74

A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland

Introduction



Dedication:

Joss Lynam, one of the leading lights in walking trail development in Ireland passed away in January 2011. This guide is dedicated to him. May his work inspire others to develop and manage new trails in the coming years.

Acknowledgement

This guide was developed by the National Trails Office of the Irish Sports Council. The National Trails Office would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following people ; Jean Boydell, Doug Corrie, Daithi De Forge, Members of Mountain Meitheal and specifically Bill Murphy, Members of Walking Routes Ireland, Des Moore (Dept of Environment, Community & Local Government), NPWS, Heritage Council and Mountaineering Ireland. We would like to acknowledge Fáilte Ireland and Mayo County Council for many of the images used throughout the document.

Introduction

Trails have been part of the Irish landscape for many centuries and were the principle means of getting around the country. Some of these old trails still exist in the form of Pilgrim Paths which are still used to this day. Trails nowadays are developed and used principally for the purpose of recreation.

Recreational trails help people to enjoy the outdoors and facilitate, promote and manage a range of outdoor activities including countryside walking and hiking, on and off-road cycling, trail running, canoeing, horse-riding and even motorised sports. Trails are being developed in both rural and urban areas, in parks and forests, along old railway lines, in coastal areas and on our off shore islands all with the aim of providing a pleasant, safe and enjoyable experience to trail users and visitors to an area.

Trails are also used to manage recreation in the outdoors and to ensure that outdoor recreation activities are undertaken in harmony with our environment and the many other commercial and non-commercial activities that are undertaken in the outdoors.

This publication provides guidance and advice to any individual, group or organisation interested in or involved in planning a recreational trail in Ireland. It does not hold all the answers but does set out some of the things all developers need to be aware of and consider before, during and after trail development. It also provides a development pathway which developers should follow on their projects.

The simple objective of all trail development projects should be to create a trail that has long term appeal, sits in harmony with the environment where it is developed, has the full support of all landowners and the community and is manageable and viable in the long term. The best way of achieving this is to plan carefully and thoroughly from the outset, to consult widely with landowners, land management agencies and others and get advice and support when needed. It is important that a potential market and its target users are identified for any proposed development. Committing scarce public and community resources should only occur when there is a clear business case for the proposed development. Considerations should include the cost of developing the trail and its ongoing maintenance versus the potential number of users.

A trail development project is not a short term undertaking but a long-term commitment. By allowing sufficient time to plan and design a new trail, this will greatly ease the maintenance and management commitments in the long term.

Cormac MacDonnell

National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council

Sustainable Trail Wheel



Layout of Trail Planning Guide

This publication offers information and advice to trail developers in the planning of recreational trail projects.

The challenge and goal in all trail development projects is to plan the development of trails that will attract trail users, are acceptable to all landowners, funders and other stakeholders, have long term appeal and are manageable in the long term. This is what is referred to as a sustainable trail. In order to do this, a thorough understanding of the many issues relating to outdoor recreation need to be considered by the developer.

Section 1: Things to Consider About Trail Development

This section provides an overview of a number of important topics which need to be considered when planning a trail including information on land ownership, trail user needs, different types of trails, permissions and permits required, environmental, safety, liability issues and more.

Section 2: The Trail Planning Process

Sets out a *Step By Step* process that trail developers should follow when planning a new trail. This process is designed to bring developers from an initial trail idea through to the production of a Trail Development Plan and implementation of the project.

Section 3: Practical Trail Planning Advice

Offers some practical advice when undertaking site evaluation and planning work, identifying route lines and putting together trail development plans.

This publication does not provide details on the construction of a trail after planning has been completed. Details on trail design and construction can be found in *The Handbook of Trail Design and Construction* published by Mountain Meitheal¹ and available through the National Trails Office or directly from Mountain Meitheal via the website www.pathsavers.org.

¹ Mountain Meitheal is a voluntary trail construction and repair organisation in Ireland.

Why Develop Recreational Trails?

- Trails provide a wide variety of ways to be physically active for example; walking, jogging, hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, cycling, horseback riding and canoeing or kayaking on water trails.
- Recreational trails make it easier for people to visit areas, to be active in the outdoors and to connect with nature and heritage. In urban & rural areas, recreational trails provide safer places to walk or cycle.
- Creating or improving access to places for physical activity is strongly linked to increasing activity in communities. Numerous studies have found that people become more physically active in response to the creation of or improved access to places for physical activity. This includes developing or improving walking, cycling and other recreational trails.
- Availability and access to walking trails has been shown to increase the number of individuals partaking in physical activity. Studies on walking trail use in the U.S. (Brownson and colleagues, 2000) show a 55% increase in the amount of walking on certain trails once developed and promoted. Similar research in the United Kingdom on the National Cycle Network (NCN) revealed that 43% of individuals that used cycle routes had increased their levels of physical activity 'by a large amount' (Cope et al., 2003).
- Research undertaken by the Irish Sports Council and Coillte in 2006 estimated the direct economic expenditure by Irish trail users on items such as food, drink, accommodation and trail equipment to be €307 million annually, while the public good value to users of trails was found to be €95 million.
- Developed recreational trails are an integral part of the walking tourism product in Ireland. Fáilte Ireland estimate that over 800,000 overseas tourists engaged in walking while on holiday in Ireland in 2010.
- In addition to the economic impacts, there are many health, social and environmental benefits associated with recreation trail use in Ireland and worldwide.
- Developing recreational trails is a very effective way of managing recreational activity in the outdoors and protecting the natural environment.

A Guide to Planning and Developing
Recreational Trails in Ireland

Things to Consider about Trail Development

1.0

- 1.1 Categories of Trails in Ireland
- 1.2 Trail User Needs
- 1.3 Strategic Planning
- 1.4 Land Ownership & Access
- 1.5 Landowner Consultation and Agreement
- 1.6 Permissive Access
- 1.7 Impact on National Heritage
- 1.8 Other Environmental Considerations
- 1.9 Other Permissions and Permits Required
- 1.10 Safety
- 1.11 Irish Trail Classifications System
- 1.12 Trail Grading
- 1.13 Trail Management Standards
- 1.14 Liability & Insurance
- 1.15 Development Costs
- 1.16 Long Term Maintenance Commitment
- 1.17 Funding & Funding Applications
- 1.18 Partnership Approach



1.0

1.1 Categories of Trails in Ireland

Generally, developed trails fall into one of four categories:

Walking Trails - can range from urban walkways to rural paths.

Cycling Trails – road based or off-road trails including mountain bike trails.

Horse riding Trails – trails designated for horse riding generally in rural areas.

Water Based Trails – generally canoe trails on inland waterways.

Where trails are suitable and appropriately designed, they may be **shared-use** and capable of facilitating walkers, cyclists and in some instances horse riders or some combination of these users. Such trails are sometimes known as **'greenways'**.

Another possible option is to develop a trail network which may cater for more than one category of user, using different trails within the network. For example trails for walkers, cyclists and horse riders could be provided in the same area (e.g. in a forest) but each using different trails. This provides an area which caters for a range of recreational needs thus maximising the use of the land available.



1.2 Trail User Needs

When planning a trail a fundamental aim should be to ensure that the intended users of the trail have a good quality recreational experience and the trail provided suits their abilities and expectations. To do this it will be necessary to determine what type of users the planned trail is intended to attract.

Users can range from those who have limited experience and/or ability to very proficient and expert users seeking a very challenging outdoor experience. For example a casual walker who wants to go for an easy walk on fairly level ground with no hills, will want a trail very different in nature from an experienced hiker who is looking for a trail which will challenge his/her physical abilities.

For each category of trail (walking, cycling, horse riding and canoeing) users can generally be segmented into different types as follows:

- 1. Reduced Mobility /Disabled Users**
- 2. Family Groups**
- 3. Casual/Novice Users**
- 4. Enthusiasts (interested but not experienced users)**
- 5. Experienced Users**

It is important to understand the needs and expectations of the range of users and then to decide which segment or segments of potential users the trail being planned is intended to satisfy. This will affect the **Classification and Grading** of the trail (Ref 1.11 & 1.12)

1.3 Strategic Planning

When planning a new trail development, the developer should consider how the development sits strategically with all other trail developments, other related amenities, services, business etc, in the local community and county. It is important to look at what trails have already been developed in the region, which ones have worked well and what type of trails are missing that may have appeal. There may be little point in developing a new walking trail in an area if there are a number of similar amenities already available. Similarly, there may be a shortage of a particular type of trail in an area, for example family friendly walking trails or shared use walking and cycling trails and it would be more beneficial to develop a trail to meet this need.

This research is important as it provides a context for the new development and gives ideas and information that will help define and shape the new development. For larger projects a regional, national and even international perspective should be taken.

It is also useful to liaise with potential trail users, local businesses, clubs and tourism contacts as well as other groups that have developed trails in the region, as much information and advice can be shared.

1.0

1.4 Land Ownership & Access

The vast majority of trails in Ireland are developed on a permissive basis, refer to Section 1.6. It is imperative for trail developers to have a good understanding of land ownership in Ireland and to be clear about the ownership of the land where the proposed trail is to be developed. This may be private land or public land, including both public and private rights of way. In all cases a trail can only be developed with the full consent of all relevant landowners and land managers. Land owners should always be contacted about a proposed trail development at the very start of the planning process. The landowner's permission will have a significant impact on where a trail can or cannot be developed or even if a proposed trail can be developed at all.

Private Land

Private land is land which is owned by private individuals or companies. Private land includes jointly owned and commonage land, in which a number of people have shares. There may be multiple rights associated with commonage including grazing, turbary and fishing rights and often right holders may not have the freehold. The majority of private land in the country is farmland but it can also include other areas which may be suitable for trails such as forestry plantations, estates attached to large houses etc. There is no legal right of access to private land.



Trails developed on public land require the consent of the relevant agencies

Public Land

Public land is land which is owned or controlled by the state or semi-state bodies including:

Local Authorities

Local Authority land can include parks, other open spaces, surfaced roads and unsurfaced roads or tracks which are owned and controlled by the local authority and therefore may be available for public use.

Coillte – State Forestry Company

Coillte is a commercial Semi-State Agency that currently manages over 400,000 hectares of land. While Coillte manages this forest estate primarily for timber production it also has a recreational policy and is supportive of recreational trail development, where possible. Coillte has developed many trails on its estate throughout the country including walking trails, mountain access trails, off-road cycling trails, orienteering trails and others. All projects developed on Coillte property must be developed in conjunction with Coillte staff and must comply with Coillte standards in relation to their construction and maintenance.

In relation to Off-road Cycling, Coillte have published a specific strategy addressing the development of cycling trails on their land. This document should be consulted for guidance if you are proposing such development on Coillte property.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) operate six National Parks and nearly 80 Nature Reserves around the country, each of which have been designated for their particular importance, value and contribution to natural heritage from a national and in some cases international

perspective. To the greatest extent possible, NPWS encourages and facilitates public access to and appropriate visitor use of these parks and reserves. Some designated walking trails are already provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Service but there is potential for the development of further trails.

Bord na Mona

Bord na Mona owns 80,000 hectares of peatland within the country. Themed routes, showcasing elements of our bogland heritage would be worth considering in suitable areas.

Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland provides designated trails along several of its waterways and there may be potential for the development of other trails on Waterways Ireland land, including cycling and canoe trails.

Irish Rail

Over the years much of the rail network in Ireland has been decommissioned and is potentially very suitable for the development of multi-use trails. Prime examples of such trails are the Great Western Greenway and the Great Southern Trail both of which are developed on the route of former railways. It is important to be aware that the land on which the railway once ran may or may not currently be in the ownership of Irish Rail.

ESB (Electric Ireland)

ESB is another semi-state organisation and while not an owner of large areas of land, the company does have some landholdings which may be suitable for the development of trails including water trails.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Inland Fisheries Ireland is the state agency responsible for the protection, management and conservation of Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources. Ireland has over 74,000 kilometres of rivers and streams and 128,000 hectares of lakes all of which fall under the jurisdiction of IFI.

Anywhere a fishery exists in freshwater there is a right to fish or a fishing right. This right is owned by someone, either a private individual or group such as an angling club or the State. IFI owns the fishing rights to a large number of fisheries in Ireland but many are also privately owned. If a trail is planned alongside a fishery it is important to contact the fishery owner (if this is known) for their consent as trail users could potentially disturb anglers fishing. To find out more about fishing rights please refer to www.fisheriesireland.ie/State-Fisheries/history-of-fishing-rights-in-ireland.html.

Public Rights of Way

Public rights of way offer passage along a path or road, even if the road or path is not in public ownership. The maintenance of a register of public rights of way by Local Authorities is now required under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2010.

In general, it can be said that any road or pathway that was and is still used by the public since time immemorial (before 1189) is a public right of way. Otherwise, public rights of way were created by an event called a "dedication" by a freehold landowner to the use of his property by the public coupled with an acceptance by the public of that dedication. A dedication is an absolute statement of permission that the landowner consents to the public traversing the specified route without interruption or interference for the future. A subsequent change of ownership cannot undermine or change in any way a pre-existing public right of way. In exceptional circumstances a landowner may apply to their Local Authority to extinguish all or part of a public right of way.

For trails or sections of trails using public roads or rights of way, access is not usually an issue, but the route should always be developed in agreement with the local authority or the landowner if a public right of way over private land is to be used as part of the route. Local authorities have the power to create public rights of way under the Planning & Development Act 2010.

1.5 Landowner Consultation and Agreement

It is imperative that the trail developer consults and gets agreement from the owners and occupiers of all land being considered for a trail development. When a potential trail route has been identified, the developer must establish who are the owners of each piece of land over which the route might pass and consult with these owners at the earliest possible stage. **N.B. This applies to private and public landowners alike.**

The best way of establishing who owns land, if this is not already clear, is by speaking to well informed people locally and also consulting with the Local Authority and the Property Registration Authority. (www.landregistry.ie)

Consultation with a landowner must take place and agreement in principle to the use of the owner's property must be reached before any potential trail route is planned further or communicated to the general public. The announcement of a trail route before it has been agreed with the relevant landowners is a serious issue and may damage the relationship with a landowner. Such an approach may even damage the relationship and potential goodwill of other landowners in the area and the future of the project.

When consulting with landowners the conditions of allowing permissive access should be outlined and discussed (Ref 1.6). Sometimes landowners fear that a right of way could be established if they allow the use of a route across their land for a trail. There is no legal basis for this, and under no circumstances can the use of land for a trail change the status of that land from an ownership point of view.

When it has been agreed that a proposed trail development will proceed, it is recommended that the agreement is documented and signed by all the landowners and the trail developer.

1.6 Permissive Access

The majority of trail developments in Ireland are established on a "permissive" basis. This means the landowner (private or public) gives permission for the trail to pass over the property. Permissive access does not infer that a route becomes a right of way. It is a route that can be used by the public with the permission of the landowner, where users must not damage the landowner's interests. A landowner has always a right to withdraw this permission should he/she so wish, subject to reasonable notice.²

In summary a permissive trail differs from a public right of way in that:

- **no permanent right of way will be created**
- **it can only be used in the way the owner has specified and subject to any conditions he or she has agreed**

² Normally, where public or private funding is utilised for development of a trail, a minimum period (five years) for access is required.

- **the owner retains the right to divert or close the trail if he or she so wishes subject to reasonable notice.**

The National Trails Office recommends that a permissive access agreement is drawn up between the trail development group/ agency and landowners along a trail development. This can be in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding and benefits both landowner and developer.

The agreement should include the following for each landowner and development group/agency;

1. details of the parties involved
2. the nature of the agreement
3. roles, responsibilities and other requirements or detail as agreed by parties.
4. the date
5. signature of both parties

A sample Permissive Access Agreement Template is available by contacting the National Trails Office

To prevent any assumption that a trail developed with permissive access is a right of way, it is recommended that a trail notice is placed on a marker post or on the trail head information board acknowledging the landowners' permission for the trail to pass through their land.

1.7 Impact on National Heritage

Recreational trail developments offer an excellent way of connecting people with nature and the outdoors. It is important, however, that any impact trail development has on the landscape and heritage is kept to a minimum. In order to ensure that these impacts are minimized, trail developers must consider all heritage in the development area.

Heritage includes:

- monuments
- archaeological objects
- architectural heritage
- flora
- fauna
- wildlife habitats
- landscapes
- seascapes
- geology
- inland waterways
- rivers and lakes



Impact on National Heritage must be considered

Sites of environmental, archaeological and architectural significance are protected by law and works in these areas must receive permission from the appropriate bodies before commencement. If a proposed trail route passes through or close to a heritage site this will have implications for the trail development and permission should be sought from the appropriate body at the trail planning stage.

1.0

Heritage site designations and the related statutory bodies who must be consulted are detailed below.

Apart from compliance with the legal requirements, heritage on a trail route should also be considered from the point of view of enhancing the attractiveness of a trail and enriching the user's experience. While not all trail users are necessarily interested in the heritage along the trail this can be a very positive and interesting aspect of the trail for many users. Interpretative information about heritage along the route can be a major attraction for visitors to a trail and can potentially be developed as a major feature of the trail.

Regardless of whether a site is a designated heritage area, trail developers should aim to minimise disruption to the natural landscape and features during the development and construction of a trail.

Statutory Designations

Ireland's natural heritage is an integral part of our national inheritance and forms part of our sense of identity, providing resources of social, educational, recreational and aesthetic value.

The National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) is responsible for the conservation of a range of ecosystems and populations of flora and fauna in Ireland. A particular responsibility of NPWS is the designation and protection of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

Activities in these areas must be notified to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Certain activities which would impact negatively on the habitat to be protected are prohibited. An assessment of heritage will identify which sections of the proposed trail fall into these areas if it is not already known.

Details of the location of all protected natural heritage sites can be found on the NPWS website at www.npws.ie/protectedsites

- **Natural Heritage Areas (NHA)** are designated under the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2010. NHAs are designated because they are considered important for the habitats present or contain species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. NHA's range from raised bogs, blanket bogs, roosting sites for bats to woodlands and lakes.
- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** are designated under the EU Habitats Directive. These are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. Most SACs are in the countryside, although a few sites reach into town or city landscapes. SAC's range from raised/blanket bogs, turloughs, sand dunes, machairs, lakes, rivers, woodlands, estuaries and sea inlets.



National Heritage areas must be preserved

- **Special Protection Areas (SPA)** are designated under the EU Birds Directive. Because birds migrate long distances, it is not sufficient to protect them over just part of their range, so the EU Birds Directive provides for a network of sites in all Member States to protect birds at their breeding, feeding, roosting and wintering areas. It identifies species which are rare, in danger of extinction or vulnerable to changes in habitat and which need protection.
- **Nature Reserves** are areas of importance to wildlife, which are protected under Ministerial order in accordance with the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2010. Most are owned by the State. However, some are owned by organisations or private landowners.
- **National Parks** are designated in accordance with criteria set down by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The purpose of National Parks is to conserve plants, animals and scenic landscapes which are both extensive and of national importance and, under conditions compatible with that purpose, enable the public to visit and appreciate them. There are six National Parks in the country all of which are State owned and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



National Park locations

If a proposed trail development is passing through or adjacent to any of the above designated areas the NPWS must be consulted and permission to proceed with the development must be sought. Depending on the nature of the proposed trail and the designation of the area concerned, the NPWS may:

- authorise the development of a trail with no conditions,
- authorise the development of a trail with specific conditions or
- prohibit the development of the trail.

The NPWS should be consulted as early as possible in the route planning stage. If a site is only a proposed NHA, consent/approval is not a legal requirement but consultation is recommended.

Recorded Archeological Sites

There are many archaeological sites around the country. The Department for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is responsible for the protection of our archaeological heritage, including the licensing of archaeological excavations, in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004.



Trail developers must be aware of archeological sites

1.0

There are a number of categories of monuments under the National Monuments Acts;

1. National monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or a Local Authority or national monuments which are subject to a preservation order;
2. Historic monuments or archaeological areas recorded in the Register of Historic Monuments.
3. Monuments or places recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places;

When anyone proposes to carry out any work at or close to a recorded Monument they are required to give notice in writing to the National Monuments Service at least 2 months before commencing that work. This is to allow time to plan how the work may proceed in accordance with the protection of the monument.

Details on all designated archeological sites are available on the **Archaeological Survey of Ireland Sites and Monuments Database** available at: www.archaeology.ie/ArchaeologicalSurveyofIreland/

Some of the route may run alongside protected archaeological sites while other trails will pass close to or through listed sites. There may also be many archaeological sites (including ancient sections of early roads) that may not be listed on the database and others that may only come to light during the project.

All work on trails therefore needs to be approached very carefully and a detailed Archaeological Impact Assessment may need to be commissioned on certain projects.

Protected Structures

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, a protected structure is one which a planning authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical point of view. The protected structures in each Local Authority area are listed on the 'Register of Protected Structures' (RPS). The RPS is usually found as an appendix to the City or County Development Plan.

Any type of structure can be listed on the RPS, for example, buildings, statues, follies, lime kilns, bridges, milestones etc. Under planning legislation, any works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure would require planning permission. Certain works carried out in the vicinity of a protected structure (i.e. not only those carried out to the structure itself) may also be deemed to materially affect its character and would therefore also require planning permission.

It is the role of the local planning authority to decide whether or not proposed works would materially affect the character of a protected structure. If it is obvious that the proposed works would materially affect the character of the structure in question, it is best to apply for planning permission from the outset.

Should there be uncertainty on this issue, a 'Section 5' application may be submitted to the local planning authority. The local planning authority will then formally decide whether or not the proposed works would materially affect the character of the protected structure in question and therefore whether or not planning permission is required.

Each protected structure and set of proposed works will be different and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, for example, the fixing of a plate to a protected structure may be deemed to materially affect its character.

It is strongly advised that the local planning authority be contacted in relation to all proposed works to protected structures, ideally in the form of a "Section 5" application in order to determine whether or not planning permission would be required.

1.8 Other Environmental Considerations

Protection of Native Trees

Trees and shrubs should not be removed unless they are threatening walkers' safety. This approach will ensure the preservation of semi-natural woodlands and scrub which add significantly to the enjoyment of routes and are important habitats for wildlife.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows in Ireland form important features in maintaining wildlife diversity and in establishing wildlife "corridors", particularly for birds. Section 40 of the Wildlife Act, 1976, as amended by Section 46 of the 2000 Act, provides protection for hedgerows by providing that it is illegal for a person to cut, grub, burn or otherwise destroy hedgerows or vegetation growing on uncultivated land during the nesting season from 1 March to 31 August, subject to certain exceptions. It is important that necessary work to hedgerows is carried out outside this period. The prohibition also applies to clearing drains.

High Ground

For environmental and safety reasons the use of high ground (over 300m) as part of a waymarked trail should be avoided. Typically higher ground is more fragile and more susceptible to erosion. Even where a path or trail already exists, it is more difficult and expensive to maintain a sustainable trail on high ground, due to the gradients that may be involved, remoteness and more severe weather conditions. Waymarking and trail development also change the sense of wildness that is characteristic of upland landscapes. It is recommended that these areas are not developed (waymarked etc) and should be left in their natural state.

There are also safety considerations when developing a trail on higher ground. At higher levels in exposed areas, the terrain and weather conditions may be outside the experience of many walkers who are only familiar with waymarked trails on distinct tracks in lowland areas. These walkers are unlikely to have the skills, clothing and equipment for safe travel on higher ground. Conditions of poor visibility are more frequent on higher ground, meaning that at times it will be impossible to see the next waymarker; this presents a problem where there is not a discernible path. Bringing inexperienced walkers into upland areas could be hazardous as the consequences of losing the trail and becoming disorientated are much more serious.

However, there are exceptions to this guidance. For example, in a situation where a long established route on a distinct and sustainable path exists, it may be acceptable to waymark a trail if it is considered an integral part of the route.

1.0

Promoting the Principles of Leave No Trace:

Leave No Trace Ireland has developed from a partnership of State Agencies and outdoor recreation groups with the aim of promoting responsible use of Ireland's natural environment. Leave No Trace Ireland's educational programme empowers recreational users to take ownership of the impacts their activities have on Ireland's natural environment and other people.



The Leave No Trace principles can be used to encourage trail users to minimise their impact on the heritage and the environment but can also provide some guidance to trail developers when planning new recreational trails developments.

In the early stages of planning your trail, trail developers should become familiar with Leave No Trace Ireland, the Principles and educational message.

In addition to promoting the seven basic principles, trail developers may wish to emphasise a particular rule or requirement that relates to their trail to trail users. For example, trail developers may not permit dogs or may require dog walkers to keep their dogs on a leash at all times while on a trail, certain trails may only permit camping and camp fires in designated sites along a trail or not at all. Any local requirements for a trail should be clearly highlighted on trail head information boards, on trail notices along a trail and in print and online promotional material.

Further information on the Leave No Trace Ireland can be found at www.leavenotraceireland.org. Trail developers could also consider:

- Reading the Leave No Trace Skills & Ethics booklet
- Inviting a Leave No Trace instructor to help with your trail planning
- Including a Leave No Trace Awareness session as part of the activities to launch your trail
- Becoming a partner in Leave No Trace Ireland
- Providing feedback from your trail to help in the development of the Leave No Trace educational programme

1.9 Other Permissions and Permits Required

Trail developments may require a number of other permissions from State Agencies depending on the type and location of the development.

Forest Service

Where trees are required to be removed to facilitate the development of a trail, a felling licence from the Forest Service may be required before tree removal commences. Under the 1948 Forestry Act, a licence is required for

- a. the felling of any tree which is more than 50 feet from a dwelling and
- b. for any tree felled or uprooted over 10 years of age.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Where any trail development works are proposed alongside or close to a river, lake or watercourse, consultation should take place with Inland Fisheries Ireland. A new bridge crossing or fording a watercourse should also be discussed with IFI who can advise on precautions to be taken to prevent any discharges of silt or soil.

Planning Permission - Car Parks and Buildings

Planning permission is usually only required for the construction of a new car park or building such as

a toilet/shower block. Consultation with the planning section of the relevant local authority is recommended where any doubt exists about planning requirements.

Early and thorough consultation with the relevant grantees of permission will ensure that costly trail planning and design is not derailed at a later stage.

1.10 Safety

While there will always be a certain element of risk associated with all outdoor recreation activities and people engaging in outdoor activities must take responsibility for their own actions, trail developers must also plan developments with user safety in mind.

During the planning stage of a trail project, all potential dangers or hazards should be identified and taken into account when identifying the line of travel for the trail. Potential safety issues can be managed by providing trail users with sufficient information to allow for informed decisions to be made. A decision will need to be taken as to whether the hazard is avoided completely or managed.

Some key safety considerations in relation to a proposed route are outlined below.

Roads

Trails are generally intended to provide users with a safe, enjoyable, interesting, and varied experience. With this in mind, trails are generally developed off-road. The National Trails Office recommends that trail routes should avoid roads where possible (with the exception of urban trails and road based cycling trails).

The use of some tarred roads on a trail may be unavoidable. Where roads are used on a trail, only lightly trafficked local roads, minor roads or boreens are considered appropriate for use. **The use of main roads (National (N) or Regional (R)) or other busy roads should always be avoided.** If a trail must come into contact with such roads, this should be limited to crossing points or very short sections to join up two parts of a trail either side of the road. Where this happens, signs to alert motorists to the possible presence of trail users should be erected on the road. If a trail suddenly joins a busy road, the use of signs on the trail to alert trail users should also be considered. Where possible, on a busy road, the trail should be routed off the trafficked surface on a segregated path. In some cases if there are longer sections of the route on road, which joins up two off-road sections, it may be appropriate to designate these as "link sections" on the route.

Hazards

The route should not traverse areas which may endanger trail users, including exposed crags or cliff tops, tidal beaches, military ranges, or land which contains any hazard. If a route goes close to a hazard, adequate warning should be provided to the trail user.



Trails should avoid tidal beaches



Busy roads are not suitable for trails

1.0

High ground or exposed areas

There are safety considerations when developing a trail on higher ground. At higher levels in exposed areas, the terrain and weather conditions may be outside the experience of many walkers who are only familiar with waymarked trails on distinct tracks in lowland areas. These walkers are unlikely to have the skills, clothing and equipment for safe travel on higher ground. Conditions of poor visibility are more frequent on higher ground, meaning that at times it will be impossible to see the next waymarker; this presents a problem where there is not a discernible path. Bringing inexperienced walkers into upland areas could be hazardous as the consequences of losing the trail and becoming disorientated are much more serious. This is one reason that trails should not normally go higher than the 300m contour.

Farm Animals

All trails should minimize interaction between recreational users and unpredictable farm animals in particular; bulls, horses, suckler cows and aggressive dogs. Trail users should be informed about the risks associated with livestock and encouraged to modify their behaviour accordingly.

Flash Flooding

Areas that are subject to occasional or seasonal flooding should be avoided.



Trail users should be informed about livestock



Interaction with livestock should be minimised

Whilst hazards should be avoided where possible, if there are potential hazards on a route, adequate warning should be provided in the information about the trail and warning signs should be in place at the location of the hazard. Potential safety issues can be managed by providing trail users with clear and accurate information at the start of the trail, on trail information boards and in trail promotional materials to allow for informed decisions to be made.

1.11 Irish Trail Classification System

A Trail Classification system provides a means of classifying a trail based on its physical attributes and needs to be taken into consideration when planning trails. The class is determined by:

- the type of trail surface,
- the width of the trail and
- the gradient (steepness) on the trail.

Trail classes range from Class 1 to Class 5. A Class 1 walking trail has a smooth, wide surface with no gradient while a Class 5 trail has a rough narrow surface with severe gradients, occasionally there may be no discernable trail surface, if the trail is lightly trafficked. The other classes would be somewhere between these extremes. While the general principles are the same, there are different classification systems for each of the categories of trails as described above (e.g. walking, cycling etc.). Trail planners should aim to provide a trail class (or classes) which correspond with the intended user's needs and expectations.

While consideration of the intended users of a trail is critical, the land type through which a trail will pass must also be taken into account when planning a trail. For example, while a highly developed trail may be appropriate in an urban or core recreational area in a park or forest, such a trail may not be appropriate in a remote natural area. This balance between user needs and expectations and the environment must be carefully considered before developing any trail.

1.12 Trail Grading

Trail Grading information (sometimes called Difficulty Rating) is important because it helps to ensure that users choose trails that match their level of ability. This information and a definition of each grade should always be provided with information about a trail.

TRAIL GRADES				
WALKING TRAILS	CYCLING TRAILS		HORSE RIDING TRAILS	CANOE TRAILS
	Off Road	Road		
- Multi-access	- Family	- Easy	- Easy	- Easy
- Easy	- Moderate	- Moderate	- Moderate	- Novice
- Moderate	- Difficult	- Difficult	- Advanced	- Intermediate
- Strenuous	- Severe			- Advanced
- Very Difficult	- Very Severe			- Expert
				- Extreme

Trail Grading is directly linked to the Classification of a trail. For example a walking trail graded as Easy will typically be made up of sections of Class 1 or Class 2 trail. Likewise, a trail graded as Strenuous will predominantly be made up of Class 4 trail but may include shorter sections of Class 1, 2 or 3 trail.

Systems for trail classification and grading are described in detail in the National Trails Office publication entitled *Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails* available for download at www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/ in the publications section. This document should be consulted by trail developers when planning a trail.

1.13 Trail Management Standards

When trails are well managed and maintained they are likely to attract consistent use, good publicity and repeat visits. To help ensure trails are well managed and maintained, trail management standards have been published by the NTO. These have been developed around a number of key areas and the requirements have been provided under a number of headings as follows:

- Information
- Vegetation
- Trail management
- Route
- Litter
- Services
- Waymarking
- Trail Furniture
- Trail surface
- Insurance

Requirements under each of these headings are summarised in Appendix 2.

The requirements for all categories of trails are described in detail in the National Trails Office publication titled **Management Standards for Recreational Trails** which is available for download at www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/

The requirements outlined in these standards are the basis for trail accreditation by the National Trails Office. For a trail to be accredited and listed on the NTO website www.irishtrails.ie, it will need to meet these requirements.



Trail developers should be familiar with these requirements during initial trail planning. For example requirements related to the route and the trail surface will need to be considered early on in the planning process. Other requirements such as information on the trail and waymarking will need to be considered a little later on in the process.

However, it is important to remember that all requirements need to be considered from the outset, in terms of costing the development and funding for the ongoing management and maintenance of the trail once opened.

1.14 Liability & Insurance

Public liability is an issue to consider when developing a trail. Liability in respect to recreational use of land is defined in Irish law under the provisions of the Occupiers Liability Act 1995. The Act clarifies the legal responsibility of owners/occupiers of land in respect to recreational users, stating that they should not intentionally injure persons or damage their property, or act "*with reckless disregard*" for their safety. With regard to recreational trail developments it should be noted that the Act states (Section 4 -subsection 4) "*where a structure on premises is or has been provided for use primarily by recreational users, the occupier shall owe a duty towards such users in respect of such a structure to take reasonable care to maintain the structure in a safe condition.*"³

Indemnification of landowners - during the construction phase

It is important that landowners are indemnified during the construction phase of a trail. To achieve this, the trail development group will need to organise public liability insurance during development

³ Such structures can include a stile, gate, foot-bridge or other similar structures installed on a trail.

and construction of the trail. Employers Liability Insurance will also be required if persons are directly employed or contracted by a development group or working as volunteers to carry out trail development work. If a development group is contracting work out to a third-party they should ensure that the third-party has their own insurance. It is essential that the landowner is aware that this insurance cover is in place.

Public lands – Responsibility for maintenance and insurance on developed trails

Where a recreational trail is developed on State owned land, responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the trail generally falls to that public landowner after the trail is complete, unless otherwise agreed. Most State Agencies that own or manage public land have public liability insurance policies in place for their properties. The availability and suitability of the insurance cover for trails traversing public lands owned or managed by a State Agency should be confirmed at an early stage with the relevant Agency. Therefore it is essential to have approval from the public landowners before any trail development work is proposed as it will impact on their liability and resource allocation.

Private lands – Responsibility for maintenance and insurance on developed trails

Where a recreational trail is developed on a permissive basis between private landowners and a development group, the development group normally retains responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the trail, unless otherwise agreed. This means that the duty of care in respect to maintenance and upkeep of the trail and trail structures rests with the development group and not the owner/occupier of the land. Arrangements in respect to maintenance and upkeep of a recreational trail must be clarified and agreed at the consultation phase of a project and should be documented in the form of a Permissive Access Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (Ref Section 1.6)

It is critical that there is clear and unambiguous evidence as to who has assumed responsibility for maintenance of structures such as stiles, footbridges, gates etc. to ensure that landowners are not exposed to liability in that regard.

Many trail development groups put in place public liability insurance to protect both themselves and private landowners in the event of a claim that may arise from an accident or injury on a developed trail. On some projects, public liability insurance may also need to be put in place during the development phase of the project. Employers' Liability Insurance is also a matter to consider if persons are directly employed by a development group to carry out trail development work. If a development group is contracting out work to a third party or utilizing volunteers, they should ensure that they are also suitably insured.

NTO/Local Authorities public liability policy

The National Trails Office/ISC in conjunction with Local Authorities throughout the country administer a scheme with Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd where public liability cover is provided to private landowners and voluntary development groups on recreational trails. (Ref Appendix 7 – Guidance Note - Public Liability Insurance Policy for Recreational Trails) To be included on this policy, a trail development must be inspected and approved by the National Trails Office. This can be organised by contacting either your Local Authority or the NTO and requesting a final inspection of the trail, once it is completed. All trails listed on the policy are inspected regularly by the National Trails Office and the responsible authority / local management committees are expected to have a maintenance programme in place to ensure the trail is maintained.

1.0

1.15 Development Costs

Significant costs can arise when developing a trail. All trail development projects are unique and therefore the associated costs can vary significantly even for trails of similar distance. The existing infrastructure (e.g. car parks, old roads, paths etc) , nature of the terrain (remote upland, easily accessible etc), scope and complexity of the project will all have a major impact on the costs. If for example, a walking or cycling trail is being planned for a forest area and it is planned to use forest roads and tracks, this may lead to very little new trail construction work and a much reduced cost. On such projects, the site may simply require some basic trail infrastructure such as information boards and signage and the associated costs could therefore be quite modest.

On other projects, where trail surfaces need to be constructed and significant trail design and building work is required, cost can be considerable.

The costs associated with trail development should be considered for three distinct areas:

1. **Trail Planning Costs (Pre-Development):** May include costs for undertaking feasibility and planning studies, environment and heritage impact studies etc.
2. **Trail Development Costs (Building Stage):** Would usually be the main cost area for a project and would include any costs relating to the construction of the trail.
3. **Maintenance and Management Costs (Post Development/Ongoing):** Would include costs associated with carrying out monitoring of the trail, annual maintenance and promotion costs.

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES

The case studies below provide some examples of the costs involved in the development of different types of trail. Further information on costs is provided in Appendix 9.

Case study 1: Great Western Greenway, Co. Mayo

Trail Overview:

The Great Western Greenway is a shared use trail (walking and cycling) developed on the route of a former railway line running from Westport to Achill. The Greenway is approximately 42km long.

Description of work undertaken:

CLEARANCE AND DRAINAGE:

Clearance of vegetation and undergrowth from existing railway line.

Opening up existing railway drainage network or installing new system where required.

CONSTRUCTION INCLUDED:

Construction of a 3m wide cycle path (consisting of broken stone sub-base, clause 804 layer and regulating layers, fine limestone dust finish layer).

The finished surface is limestone dust finish with macadam or bitumen bound surfacing in some sections.

Installation of Geotextile fabric.

Road separated cycleways were constructed where the cycle path was adjacent to the public road.

ADJOINING WORKS

Adjoining works comprise slope stabilisation measures, water main replacement, accommodation works, fencing, boundary control measures, seating and trail furniture, bike counters, safety and information signage.

Costs:

The Great Western Greenway cost approximately €5.7million⁴ to construct and an additional €565,000 to cover engineering/design costs over the two years.

⁴ There was considerable expense on the Newport/Westport section of this project where the route went through private property which was sold to the owners by Irish Rail when the line was abandoned in 1937. While there was no land purchase cost adjustments to the route were required. The Limerick GST - a CIE owned line which closed in the 1980's - has also been developed but at significantly less cost. The development of greenways on former railway lines therefore needs to be treated on a case by case basis.

1.0

Case study 2: Mc Swyne's Gun – National Looped Walk, Co. Donegal**Trail Overview:**

McSwyne's Gun Loop Walk is a 10km looped walking trail on Horn Head north of Dunfanaghy in the North-West of County Donegal. The trail is developed on a mix of sandy paths, pasture land and farm tracks.

Description of work undertaken:

On Horn Head there was no need for treadway construction or other surface work, since drainage is good on the sandy soil, there is great run-off on the headland, and insufficient vegetation and soil to hold water. As a result waymarking and trail furniture were the only costs incurred in the development of this trail. This included a number of stiles and kissing gates needed, 3 small bog bridges, markers and info plates, as well as the trail head board and directional fingerposts to the trail head and car park.

Costs:

Overall the cost for the trail was ca. €11,000 or €1,100 per kilometre.

The cost of a new car park at the trailhead came to an additional €10k.

Case study 3: Derroua Mountain Bike Trail, Co. Galway**Trail Overview:**

This trail was developed as a challenging cross-country mountain bike trail in a very large forest property near Oughterard, Co. Galway. It is 17kms in total length and combines 13 kms of purpose-built 'singletrack' with 4 kms of forest roads and is graded as 'severe' with technically challenging sections and over 350m of ascent on the trail.

Description of work undertaken:

The trail was laid out following a process of initially examining potential corridors, followed by detailed flagging of the trail line across the forest. Detailed construction specifications for the exact flagged line of the new trail were then written. By following the detailed specifications, the contractor was able to cost their construction accurately and the trail developer (Coillte in this case) was able to ensure that the trails were delivered to a specified standard.

The trail was developed using 3 different trail construction techniques, namely bench-cut, reversal build and timber boardwalk. The timber boardwalk was used to cross very poor ground which could not have been otherwise avoided, with bench-cut techniques used over 70% of the trail line. As there was good parent material available under the topmost peat layer, the trails were built by 'reversal' where the ground became very flat and did not allow for 'bench-cut' to be used.

Costs:

For the design and planning of a new trail system such as at Derroua, a cost of €2 to €3 per metre is likely, given the nature of the challenging terrain and ground conditions.

Construction costs are in the range from €25 to €35 per metre for reversal trail, €28 to €40 per metre for bench-cut trail and from €65 to €90 per metre for timber boardwalk. It is important to note that every trail project will have variations on costs of delivery subject to location, ground conditions, access into and around the site, topography, availability of on-site materials, proximity of trail-building contractors, etc.

1.16 Long Term Maintenance Commitment

All trail developments will require ongoing maintenance to ensure they remain safe, continue to meet user expectations and remain free from erosion or other issues which may impact the user or the environment. Maintenance will include surface monitoring and maintenance, maintenance of trail furniture, signage and waymarking and vegetation control. Provision for long term maintenance of a trail needs to be considered before a trail is developed.

During the planning stage it is critical that the ongoing maintenance and management of a trail is considered. Without maintenance and management a trail can fall into disrepair. If this happens users lose interest in the trail and it can become a waste of a valuable resource.

1.17 Funding & Funding Applications

The following agencies provide funding and support for trail development in Ireland;

- Fáilte Ireland (Irish Tourism Authority) – Tourism Development Projects
- Local Authorities – County Development Projects
- Local Development Companies (through Rural Development Programme funding and maintenance by Rural Social Schemes) - Community Projects
- Shannon Development – Shannon Region
- Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport – Sports Capital Programme
 - Sustainable Transport /Travel Projects

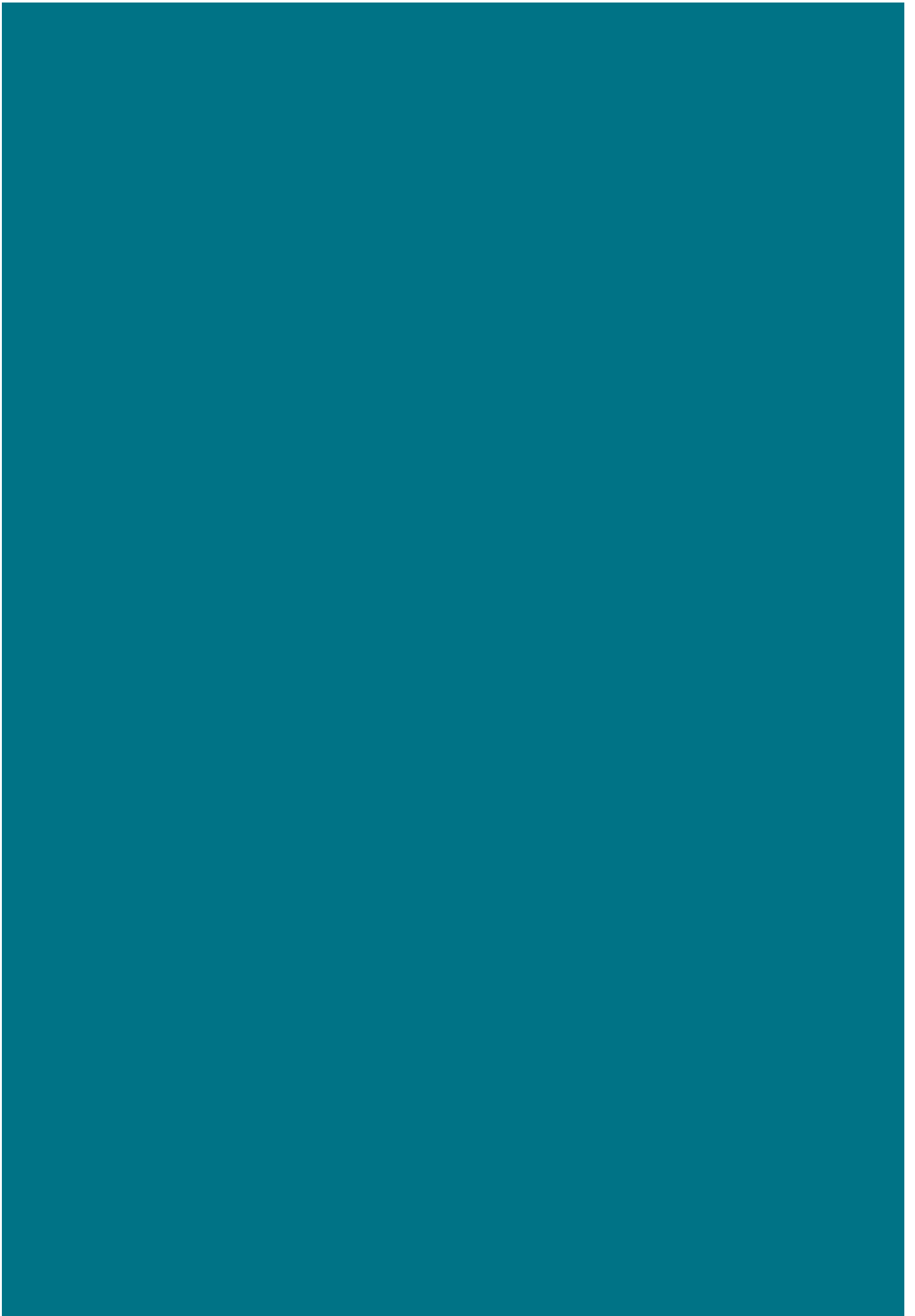
Funding programmes and schemes become available from time to time from the above agencies and it is important that trail developers are aware of potential funding opportunities and are keeping potential funding agencies fully up to date on their ideas and plans.

In order to secure funding, a project would normally have to go through an application and evaluation process, where the merits and benefits of the project are examined. Funding applications would normally require certain basic financial requirements on the part of the applicant, such as up to date tax clearance certification and other terms and conditions.

1.18 Partnership Approach

Most trail developments require the input, guidance and support of a range of individuals and organisations, not just to develop but also to maintain and promote the trail. It is for this reason that a partnership approach is recommended on all projects, where people are working together to ensure a top quality trail is developed. The trail developer should engage with all the relevant bodies, individuals and organisations necessary as early as possible in the planning stage of the project and throughout the process. A trail development plan should be developed that everyone is happy with.

Planning and working in partnership ensures everyone is on-side and on-board from the start and also offers the possibility of increased resources both in terms of funding and manpower. Partnership arrangements work best if there are clear arrangements and agreements between the partners as to their respective roles and responsibilities with regard to the project. It is recommended that these arrangements and agreements between partners are documented at the outset.



A Guide to Planning and Developing
Recreational Trails in Ireland

The Trail Planning Process

2.0



2.0

This section of the guide sets out the Step by Step Process for planning and developing a trail, as recommended by the National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council.

The process provides a structure for all trail planners and developers to work with for any recreational trail project. Using this process will ensure that projects are well thought out and planned before detailed design and construction (and possibly expenditure) begins. When developing a trail in cooperation with another agency e.g. Coillte or Fáilte Ireland, the trail developer should also be aware of any specific requirements of that agency. The process also ensures that a consistent approach will be used for trail developments throughout the country and support is provided to project developers.

The process should be followed for all recreational trail development projects in Ireland.

The Trail Planning Process



Step 1: Start Gathering Information & Write the Basic Trail Proposal

When an idea has been proposed, the early information gathering and planning work should begin. The proposer should start collecting initial information on the area being considered, on any other trails in the locality, county or region and start putting together a list of people who might need to be involved or consulted on the project. A proposal for the trail development and an initial project brief should then be written setting out in broad, general terms the basic idea, the type of trail that is proposed, the location where it is being proposed and the rationale.

The trail developer should become familiar with the contents of the following documents produced by

the National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council:

- **A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland (this document)**
- **Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails**
- **Management Standards for Recreational Trails**

Step 2: Carry Out Initial Consultation with Landowners and Others

It is imperative for trail developers to start consultation with landowners (public and private) who own and manage the land where the proposed trail is to be developed at this early stage. Refer to sections 1.5 , 1.6 and 1.7 for further information on this topic. While the trail developer may not have all the details available at this stage, early consultation with landowners is important as it allows for discussion on some of issues that may need to be considered for the project to happen and also offers an opportunity for the developer to get permission from the landowner to undertake more research and planning work along the route.

In addition to initial landowner consultation the other key factors related to the proposed trail that should be considered at this stage are outlined below under headings A to C. Most of these details will be required to complete an Initial Trail Planning Questionnaire (Step 4)

A. Overall objectives and users of the proposed trail

- The category of the trail (walking, cycling, canoeing, horse riding)
- Expected origin of intended users
- Type of users
- Evaluation of demand for the trail

B. Trail information

- General layout of site, landscape and topographic profile
- Ownership of the land over which the trail is to be routed and current land use activities
- Environmental, heritage, other outstanding features and statutory designations.
- Scale of proposed development
- Proposed grade of the trail
- Possible trail route
- Length of trail

2.0

- Loop or linear trail
- Possible location of trail head and other access points
- Agreement in principle with owners

C. Project Organisation

- Responsibility for delivery of the trail
- Other organisations which could/should be involved in the project
- Responsibility for ongoing management of the trail

Step 3: Establish A Trail Planning & Development Group

Before starting to plan a trail development project in detail it is recommended that a Trail Development Working Group should be formed. This is essential not only to spread the workload but also to ensure that key stakeholders in the project are represented.

When developing a recreational trail, in addition to a number of key agencies and individuals, a number of other organisations and local community enthusiasts may need to be involved with the project. In some cases there may be a lead organisation (e.g. Local Development Company) and then other partner organisations, (e.g. Local Authority, Local Tourism Organisation etc). In such a situation the committee will typically be chaired by a representative of the lead organisation. It is recommended that other members of the committee would be representatives from partner organisations and other organisations affected by or interested in the trail development.

In all cases there are some organisations whose support for the project and representation on the committee are important. These include:

- Local Authority
- User groups representatives; walkers, cyclists, mountain bikers, horse riders or canoeists or other potential trail users as appropriate
- Landowners where a significant amount of the trail is to be on their property (e.g. Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Waterways Ireland or private landowners).

In addition to those mentioned above other local organisations may also be interested in being represented including the following:

- Local Community Councils and Chambers of Commerce
- Local Development Companies ⁵
- Local and regional tourism organisations
- Local Sports Partnership
- Local Authority Heritage Officer.

⁵ Local Development Companies may have a Rural Recreational Officer employed. In this case the RRO should be a member of the Trail Development Working Group.

Step 4: Complete the Initial Trail Planning Questionnaire

Following the initial planning, an Initial Trail Planning Questionnaire should be completed. A copy of the questionnaire is included in this publication (Appendix 1) but can also be downloaded from the National Trails Office Website:

http://www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/

- The questionnaire asks for the details established in the studies at the initial planning stage as described above. The questionnaire seeks to ensure that the developer has considered all these essential elements which will be required in a trail plan.
- When completed in full, the questionnaire should be returned to the National Trails Office by email to nto@irishsports council.ie or by post to:

**National Trails Office,
Top Floor, Block A,
West End Office Park,
Blanchardstown,
Dublin 15**

- It is imperative that landowners have been consulted and agree in principle to the proposed trail before the Initial Trail Planning Questionnaire is submitted.
- For the development of National Looped Walks, early contact with Fáilte Ireland is required. (Refer to Appendix 3)

Review of Questionnaire by NTO

- Upon receipt of a fully completed questionnaire, the NTO will review the questionnaire to ensure all details have been completed and the information provided is clear.
- If clarification is needed on any information, the NTO may contact the submitter to get further information or discuss the proposal in more detail.

Step 5: Schedule / Complete A Site Assessment Survey

It is strongly recommended that all trail projects receive some independent advice from either the National Trails Office or other experienced trail planning advisors at this stage.

- If the proposal is appropriate and all required information has been provided the NTO will contact the trail developer to schedule a Site Assessment. A date suitable for both the assessor and the trail developer will be agreed.
- During the Site Assessment the trail developer will accompany the assessor. The assessment will include an assessment of the details in the questionnaire and an assessment of the proposals on the ground.
- After the Site Assessment, the NTO will issue a report on the findings of the assessment including specific recommendations regarding the development of the trail.
- A sample Site Assessment Report is included in **Appendix 4**.

2.0

Step 6: Draft / Agree a Trail Development Plan

If the assessment establishes that the proposed trail development is appropriate and feasible, the report will recommend that the developer proceeds to the next stage of the Trail Planning and Development Process and produces a **Trail Development Plan**.

- Detailed consultation and agreement will be required by all project partners, including landowners, managers, developers and funding authorities on the Trail Development Plan as this document will be the primary reference document for the overall project.
- It is recommended that local communities and likely user groups are also informed and consulted on trail development plans
- The **Trail Development Plan** should include the following:
 - **purpose and aim of the trail development**
 - **roles and responsibilities of the partners in the development**
 - **intended users of the trail**
 - **definitive line of the trail route on a map**
 - **on-site development details including construction (if required), signage, interpretation and trail furniture**⁶
 - **method of trail delivery/development**
 - **resources needed to implement the project**
 - **trail management and maintenance arrangements**

A Trail Development Plan Template is included in Appendix 5

- Depending on the scale of the proposed trail, the plan will vary in detail and extent. For trails which will use existing infrastructure (such as car-parks, forest roads, old tracks, farm lanes, minor public roads, etc) the development plan will be a simple document which provides a map and shows locations of trail furniture. This can be used to proceed with delivery once agreed with all partners.
- Agreement on a long term management structure for the trail is a very important element of the Trail Development Plan.
- Projects which may involve some trail building will have a specification for construction included as part of the trail development plan and may require some further consultation during layout of the route.
- Projects which are substantial regional or national trail developments will require a much greater level of detail and may have a number of stages before a Trail Development Plan is agreed. This may include an initial layout plan requiring public consultation before development of detailed trail construction specifications.
- Trail developers may require assistance in drafting and developing a Trail Development Plan. The National Trails Office maintains a list of recognised trail advisors that can work directly with trail development groups to help them produce such a plan.

A copy of the Trail Development Plan should also be sent to the National Trails Office for information purposes.

⁶ Trail furniture includes stiles, simple bridges, signage and map boards.

Step 7: Secure Trail Project Funding

At some point during the trail planning process funding for the project will need to be secured. Typically, the full extent of the funding required will not become apparent until a Trail Development Plan has been completed, although it may be possible to estimate the cost of the trail earlier in the planning process, particularly if the development is quite basic and will not need any trail construction work carried out.

Most funding bodies will require a Trail Development Plan to be submitted with the funding application. In addition, having a clear well-thought out plan will enhance the developers chance of securing funding. Funding should be in place before any work on the ground commences on a trail project.

Step 8: Plan & Complete Trail Development Work

When funding has been secured, work on the development of the trail can commence. This stage will involve the full implementation of all work outlined in the Trail Development Plan and will usually include trail construction, installation of trail furniture, erection of signage, construction of parking areas and other trail facilities.

On some projects this will involve the developer securing the services of a trail construction contractor and on other projects, local staff resources may be available and can be utilised. When third party contractors are retained for a project, it is recommended that a contract is put in place between parties outlining in detail the full service to be provided, the specifications for all material, all requirements the contractor is expected to deliver, and the timeframe for delivery.

It is strongly recommended that trail development and construction work should be undertaken and supervised by persons with experience in this area.

Step 9: Schedule a Final Inspection Survey

When all work has been carried out and the trail is completed (including signage) the trail developer must seek a Final Inspection from the NTO to have the trail accredited and added to the National Trails Register.

- A Final Inspection Checklist (Ref Appendix 6) and a 1:50,000 map clearly showing the final line of the trail must be submitted to the National Trails Office for a final inspection to be undertaken.
- During the final inspection the Inspector will check the trail against the *Management Standards for Recreational Trails* and the classification and grading against the *Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails* guidelines.
- A representative of the trail development agency who is familiar with the route of the trail must accompany the inspector.
- Upon completion of a Final Inspection, a Final Inspection Report is issued from the National Trails Office to the Trail Developer.
- The report will include an overall comment and a statement on whether the trail complies with the Management Standards for Recreational Trails.

2.0

Step 10: List Trail on National Trails Register

The National Trails Office maintains a register of all developed recreational trails in Ireland.

- Where the trail complies with the Management Standards for Recreational Trails it will be accredited and included on the National Trails Register and will be displayed on the website www.irishtrails.ie.
- Where the trail does not comply with the Management Standards for Recreational Trails a listing of any corrective actions will be included in the report. When all corrective actions have been addressed and confirmed to the National Trails Office, the trail will be listed as being **Fully Accredited**.
- Once a trail is listed on the National Trails Register it will be inspected regularly to ensure it maintains the requirements of the *Management Standards for Recreational Trails*.
- If a trail fails to meet the standards this will be recorded on the National Trails Register and will be highlighted on the website www.Irishtrails.ie until such time as all issues identified have been fully addressed.



Accredited trails are listed on www.irishtrails.ie

A Guide to Planning and Developing
Recreational Trails in Ireland

Practical Trail Planning Advice

3.0



3.0

This section is intended to give practical advice to trail planners when undertaking initial planning work and developing a trail development plan for a project.

3.1 Site Maps

It is necessary for a trail planner to have a good map for the site being proposed. This may be an OSI Discovery Series Map at 1:50,000 scale or other larger scale map (eg 6" Series,) which shows field boundaries etc. It may be possible to use a simple Discovery Series Map for the area in question, or purchase a digital tile for the area from OSI (www.osi.ie). It may also be possible to obtain maps from the Local Authority. When on-site survey and planning work starts, this map will need to be marked up with relevant information and outline the proposed route line.

3.2 Useful Trail Planning Equipment

The following are useful in the planning of a trail:

- **A GPS unit** – useful for route tracking and upload onto digital maps. Also useful for measuring trail distance, gradient, total climb etc
- **Digital camera and voice recorder** - for recording information when in the field
- **Map holder** - for holding maps when doing fieldwork
- **Measuring tape** - for measurements along a trail
- **Marker pegs** - for marking an outline of the trail on the ground or specific locations for work along a trail.
- **Measuring wheel** - for measuring distance along a trail



A measuring wheel

3.3 Trail Surveys – What to Look Out For

When planning a new trail the developer must develop a clear picture of the following;

- **topography, ground conditions and landscape characteristics of the site**
- **areas that are unsuitable e.g. wet ground, hazardous etc**
- **different habitats within the site and any protected areas or designations**
- **heritage sites and other important features on the site**
- **existing road or path infrastructure**
- **access points, car park areas, etc**
- **all positive and negative features on the site**
- **any safety issues on site that may impact the trail development**
- **all existing activities that are carried out on site e.g. farming activities, felling for timber production etc.**

All of this information is compiled through a combination of site surveys and consultations with various people and will all help to inform the trail plan.

The following should be observed when undertaking trail survey work:

- 1. Site survey work should be carried out with the full consent of all landowners**

2. Trail planners and developers should not enter a site to undertake survey work without permissions from the appropriate person or body responsible for the site.

3. For safety reasons, if surveying in a remote or potentially hazardous area it is recommended that a person does not work alone. If you must work alone, you should carry a charged mobile phone and leave details of your plans and expected return time with a responsible person.

3.4 Identifying Positive and Negative Features on Site

All trail development projects will invariably have some positive and some negative features. These features will impact on both the sustainability and attractiveness of the trail.

The following table details some of the positive features to bear in mind on all trail development projects. It also highlights a number of negative features to be mindful of when planning a trail development.

Positive Trail Features

- Scenic locations
- Good distant viewing points/areas
- Exciting and dramatic views
- Natural routes
- Appropriate surfaces
- Varied surroundings
- Existing paths, tracks
- Water features
- Good river crossing points
- Varied terrain
- Picnic sites
- Built heritage
- Natural heritage
- Good local services (accommodation, food, transport, etc)
- Easy maintenance
- Car parking areas
- Linkage to existing attractions in area
- Proximity to villages/towns
- Safe quiet roads or road crossing points

Negative Trail Features

- Roads
- Easily eroded surfaces
- Lack of features
- Rough or difficult terrain
- Wet or boggy land
- Exposed Cliff Edges
- Beaches which pose a danger at high tide
- Long bridges (costly) or difficult river crossings
- New or prospective planting
- Land leased for shooting
- Hazards along the route e.g. bulls, vicious dogs, quarries

Trail Features to be treated with care

- Remoteness
- Special areas such as for wildlife, nature reserves and rare habitats
- Situations where users will be tempted to take a short cut across private land must be avoided.

3.0

3.5 Consider Landscape Topography

Topography relates to the landscape and surface features of an area and it can affect the planning of a trail. Topography can vary from very flat terrain to mountainous terrain potentially rising to high elevations and it may have steep gradients.

If a trail developer wants to plan a strenuous and challenging trail intended for experienced users, this is unlikely to be possible where the terrain is flat. Planning an easy trail for casual use will be relatively easy on flat terrain but is not impossible on sloping terrain.

3.6 Consider Trail Carrying Capacity

The carrying capacity of a trail refers to the level of usage a trail surface can withstand before damage starts to occur. Carrying capacity is determined by topographical and landscape features of an area, the drainage capacity and soil type and the durability of the trail surface.

If planning a significant trail development which is intended to attract a high number of users the carrying capacity will need to be high and this will require the trail to be planned and constructed accordingly.

3.7 Identification of the line of the route

In general a trail route can use existing paths, tracks, forest roads, ride lines, forest fire breaks, green roads, mass paths, school paths, droving paths, coffin roads, boreens and quiet roads. Using existing infrastructure can reduce the costs of establishing a trail and also provide a diverse and enjoyable route. However it may not always be possible to use existing infrastructure or it may be necessary to upgrade the trail surface to make it suitable for the category of users (e.g. cyclists or horse riders) or where the numbers of users are significant and likely to cause erosion.

Where walking and cycling trails are being developed with the intention of attracting users from outside the local community, strong consideration should be given to the development of stacked loops that offer users different levels of trail experience. Stacked or linked loops provide access to a number of trails that vary in length and difficulty. They are often cheaper to construct than individual trails in separate locations as access can be by a single trailhead with facilities such as car parking available. The inner or shortest loop in a stacked system is most suitable for a multi access trail.



Stacked Loops can be combined to form longer loops

3.8 Trail Head Location



Trail head information board



Trail head facilities

Another consideration when planning a trail route is where to locate the trail head, usually at the start of the trail. Generally this needs to be somewhere suitable for users to park a car or get access to public transport. Depending on the expected popularity of the trail the parking space available may range from space for a few cars to space for a few hundred cars. If a trail is intended to be a major development attracting a large number of users, how people access the trail and where they park must be considered. Where an equestrian trail is planned, space for parking and turning cars with horse boxes or other horse carrying vehicles will be required.

A vital piece of infra-structure at all trail head locations will be the trail information board. This provides all the essential information to the trail user. Developers should refer to the publication *"Management Standards for Recreational Trails"* available for download at www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/Publications/Trail_Development/

3.9 Consider Additional Trail Facilities and Services

When developing a trail, the facilities and services available for users should be considered.

Proximity to local community and access to trail site

Consideration should be given to where the trail is located in relation to local communities, villages and towns. This should help increase usage and visitor spending in the area. Careful consideration should also be given to how people will get to the trail site.

Changing Rooms and showers

For some trails, particularly off-road cycling trails, providing a full day's riding or more (usually > 30kms in length), shower and changing facilities should be considered. Also in the case of off-road cycling, bike wash facilities will always be appreciated by users.

Multi-lingual

Consideration may need to be given for the provision of multi-lingual information on certain trails.

Local Trail Services

Consideration should be given to the provision of information to users on local services such as pubs, cafes and shops etc.

3.0

3.10 Trail Construction Techniques

While many trail projects may not require the construction of a path or trail surface, other projects will benefit greatly from the construction of a sustainable trail surface. There are a number of well established trail construction techniques that trail developers should be aware of when planning projects as one or more of these may provide a suitable trail surface. Further detail on each of these trail construction techniques and more detailed information on trail design, planning and construction can be found in *The Handbook of Trail Design and Construction* published by Mountain Meitheal (www.pathsavers.org). All of these construction techniques will, if implemented correctly, provide a robust and durable trail that is appealing to the user, will be easier to maintain and will stand the test of time. **As a general rule trails should only be constructed in upland areas where necessary to manage erosion and protect the environment.**

Standard Constructed Trails: Suited to well drained, level sites where humus (or top) layer of soils is removed and replaced by a layer of stone to form a sub-base and is surfaced with gravel or other fine material.



A: Bench Cut Trail



B: Turnpike Trail



C: Reversal Trail



D: Stone Pitched Trail

Bench Cut Trail: Suited to sites with cross slopes where the underlying material is sufficiently stable to remain in place even when wet. This involves cutting into the slope / hillside and excavating material the width of the trail. (See Photo A)

Turnpike / Raised Causeway Trail: Used on sites with a high water table, where the walking surface is raised above the water table. This involves putting in a retaining boundary, a layer of geotextile with rubble, and gravel added to finish. (See Photo B)

Reversal Trails: Used where there is a covering of peat and a suitable underlying material such as boulder till which can be excavated and used on the trail surface. (See Photo C)

Stone Pitched Trails: Usually used in upland areas, where stone is readily available and used to construct the trail. (See Photo D)

Bog Bridges / Board Walks: Is the simplest form of constructed trail, and ideal for very wet areas, uses timber planks which are fixed together and laid on or slightly above the ground.

A Guide to Planning and Developing
Recreational Trails in Ireland

Glossary and Appendices



Glossary - Trail Terminology

When discussing trails, specific terminology is typically used to describe the different types of trails and the various elements involved in trail planning, construction and maintenance. This note provides a summary of key terms which are used. Terms are listed below in alphabetical order.

Cycling Trails

Off-road cycling trails – any trails which do not use public roads used by motorised traffic. This may include routes in parks, forests, forest parks and may be in urban or rural areas. A particular category of off-road trails are mountain bike trails which are specifically designed for mountain bikes and may require a high level of skill to cycle.

On road - touring cycling trails – any trails on public roads which are waymarked for use by cyclists. Typically roads with low traffic volumes are used. Some off road sections may be incorporated into such trails where the trail surface is suitable for road bicycles.

Difficulty Rating

Difficulty rating is normally applied to designated trail routes. Typically the ratings 'Easy', 'Moderate' and 'Strenuous' are used for walking/ horse riding and water based trails but for off-road cycling trails this is usually expanded to provide a wider range of ratings. (The document Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails published by the National Trails Office provides more details on this topic)

Horse Riding Trails

Trails specifically for use by horse riders but may be shared with other recreational users. Such trails will require a surface which is sufficiently robust to remain sustainable even with heavy usage by horses. Trail furniture may also be purposely designed to facilitate use by horses e.g. gates which can be opened and closed without dismounting.

Information Board

A notice board provided at the trail head which shows such things as a map of the trail route (or routes), the difficulty rating, the trail distance, the average time to complete the trail, contact details for the trail manager. It should also include interpretative information on heritage along the trail, hazards on the trail or other relevant information. For full details of all the information required on the Information Board please refer to the Management Standards for Recreational Trails published by the National Trails Office.

National Heritage

National Heritage includes natural heritage, archaeological heritage and architectural heritage. The development and maintenance of a trail can potentially have an impact on heritage and this must always be considered during the planning phase or during any major trail upgrading work.

NTO Trails Register

All trails which meet the requirements of the Management Standards for Recreational Trails as verified under the National Trails Office Trail Inspection Programme will be eligible for inclusion on the National Register.

Shared-use trail/Greenway

Shared-use trails are routes provided for non-motorised users, of different types, normally walkers and cyclists, but can, where appropriate, include horse riders. Shared-use trails are sometimes known as Greenways. The width of a shared-use trail should be sufficient to accommodate the different types of users allowed. Clear signage on the trail should be provided to indicate the possible presence of other types of user. A code of conduct for each type of user should also be provided. Refer to Appendix 11 to see the National Trails Office suggested code of conduct. The Great Western Greenway in Mayo and the Great Southern Trail in Limerick are two examples of Greenways in Ireland.

Stacked Loops

Stacked loops are where two or more loops have been created, starting from the same point, and getting progressively longer. This provides trail users with a number of options depending on their level of fitness and how long they want to be out. In many cases the shorter loops form part of the longer loops – e.g. all routes may start on the short loop and then branch off onto longer loops.

Trail Design

The trail design refers to the route the trail will take, the way the trail will be constructed, the width of the trail, what services will be provided.

Trail Development/Management Committee

A committee of key stakeholders who will manage the development and ongoing management and maintenance of the trail. The committee responsible for ongoing management and maintenance of the trail may differ in makeup from the initial development committee. Key stakeholders are likely to include, the local authority, local community representatives, landowners, user representatives, government agencies, e.g. Heritage Council, Coillte and Fáilte Ireland. Other groups of stakeholders may be involved as required.

Trail Provider

Trail providers are those that are actively engaged in the recreational trail development and as such can include landowners, trail managers, trail funders and trail promoters. All of these have a role to play in the provision of recreational trails.

Trail Furniture

This refers to any structures on the trail such as stiles, bridges, gates, seating, and signage. Signage may also be referred to as waymarking.

Trail Head

Where the trail commences (and in the case of a looped trail, where it also finishes) and where trail information is provided to the user.

Trail Maintenance

A trail will require ongoing maintenance to ensure it remains safe, continues to meet user expectations and remains free from erosion or other issues which may impact the user or the environment. Maintenance will include, surface monitoring and maintenance, maintenance of trail furniture, signage and waymarking and vegetation control.

Trail Services

Car parking facilities, toilets, showers, bike wash, shelters, information centres can all be considered as trail services.

Trail Specification

The detailed requirements for the construction of the trail.

Walking Trails

There are currently various types of walking trails provided nationally as follows:

National Waymarked Trails – Network of Medium & Long Distance Walking Routes typically multiday walks. They may be linear or looped.

National Looped Walks – These are looped walks, mostly off road, typically from 5k to 20k in length, which finish at the point where they started. The development of these walks is currently funded by Fáilte Ireland.

Coillte Forest Trails – These include the looped walks provided within Coillte forest, typically 5k to 20K in length.

Pilgrim Paths – These are walks which follow the approximate path of former pilgrim routes. They are funded by the Heritage Council.

National Park Walking Trails – usually looped walks provided in National Park areas and typically 5k to 20K in length

Slí na Slainte routes – waymarked routes in both urban and rural areas developed and promoted by the Irish Heart Foundation.

Walks Scheme

The Walks Scheme was launched on 4th March 2008. The scheme is for farmers/private landowners who are paid to maintain a section of trail on their land. It is delivered locally by Local Development Companies (formerly LEADER/Partnership Companies) and administered by the Rural Recreation Section of the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government.

Water Based Trails

These trails are typically canoe trails and may be provided on Inland waterways such as rivers, lakes or canals. Coastal trails which run parallel to the coast or in estuaries may also be provided.

Waymarking

Waymarking refers to directional signage provided on a trail to indicate a route suitable for trail users. It may indicate a linear route from one point to another (e.g. as on most of the long distance routes) or it may indicate a circular or looped route which gets users back to the point where they started. Generally, developed trails will be waymarked with directional signage for users.

Appendix 1 - National Trails Office - Initial Trail Planning Questionnaire

This Questionnaire can be downloaded from the website www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/ in the publications section. A cycling version is also available on the website.

The National Trails Office (NTO) request the following questionnaire to be completed in full, by the organisation or committee proposing to develop the trail. When the questionnaire has been received by the NTO it will be assessed and a Site Assessment of the proposed project will be scheduled with the NTO if required.

An electronic version of this questionnaire can be downloaded from the website www.irishtrails.ie under the publications section. It can also be requested by e-mail from nto@irishsportsCouncil.ie.

A hardcopy of the completed questionnaire and any attachments (overview map etc) should be returned to:

**National Trails Office,
Irish Sports Council,
Top Floor, Block A,
West End Office Park,
Blanchardstown,
Dublin 15.**

General Information

1. Name of Proposed Trail Development: _____

2. Type of Trail(s) to be included (*tick as appropriate*)

- Walking
- Cycling
- Canoeing
- Horse Riding
- Shared use (indicate planned users)

3. General description of the proposed development: _____

N.B. Include: Location, capacity for car parking, nearest services etc.

4. Contact person for project:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Mobile: _____

E-mail: _____

Trail Information

In all questions below the word "trail" means trail or trails - where multiple trails are proposed.

- 5. Proposed trail route or general location of the proposed development:**
(provide a 1:50,000 map showing the proposed trail or general location if a specific route has not been identified)
- 6. Length of proposed trail (km):** _____
- 7. Is the proposed trail to be a loop (circular) trail or a linear (point to point) trail ?**
- 8. What grade of trail do you propose to develop (as per the Classification and Grading for Recreational Trails handbook published by the NTO):**
a. Multi-access **b.** Easy **c.** Moderate **d.** Strenuous **e.** Very difficult
- 9. Will any sections of the trail require construction or will the entire trail make use of existing paths?**
- 10. If using existing paths is the trail surface robust and durable throughout?**
- 11. Are there any outstanding features or characteristics on the trail? (e.g. scenery, physical features, heritage sites etc.)**
- 12. What is the expected origin of most users of the trail? (tick as appropriate)**
- a. the local community (10k radius)
 - b. people from within the county (50k radius)
 - c. people from within the region (100k radius)
 - d. people from all over the country, international visitors
- 13. What are the intended type of users? (tick as appropriate)**
- a. Reduced mobility/ disabled users
 - b. Family groups
 - c. Casual users/ novice users
 - d. Enthusiasts
 - e. Experienced users
- 14. What evidence is there to suggest a demand for the proposed trail from the users identified?**
- 15. Estimate the percentage (%) of total trail length that will use surfaced roads:**

16. (a) Please list the owners of the land over which the trail will pass.

(b) Estimate the length of the trail which will be on:

Private property ___ km

Coillte property ___ km

Other State property ___ km

Other property (specify) ___ km

(c) Has each landowner been consulted and agreed in principle to the proposed development? YES / NO

(d) Have each of these landowners given their permission to enter their land to allow assessment of the trail proposal? YES / NO

17. Will the route of the proposed trail pass through or close to any area of national heritage (natural, archeological or architectural)? YES / NO

If 'yes' have the relevant authorities been consulted and have they given permission for the development to proceed?

18. Is there any trail furniture already in place on the proposed route (e.g. mapboards, signposts, waymarkers, stiles, footbridges)?

19. Is there Public Liability Insurance already in place? If YES, please provide details.

20. Please provide any other relevant information about the trail

Project Organisation

21. (a) What organisation or agency will take the lead role and responsibility for delivery of the proposed trail?

(b) What contribution will this organization make to the project?

22. Will other partnership organisations be involved in the project? YES / NO

If 'yes', please list all partners in the project along with their reasons for being involved in the project and details of the contribution they will make: (e.g. financial, land access, marketing, materials, labour resource etc.)

23. What is the scale of the proposed trail development? (Please tick one)

- (a) Small Scale Project (under €20,000): Short trail system, largely using existing infrastructure.
- (b) Medium Scale Project (between €20,000 and €50,000): Number of new trails, requiring some trail construction and infrastructure.
- (c) Large Scale Project (over €50,000) : Number of trails with supporting facilities/amenities, varied landscapes, trail construction required.

24. How will the project be financed?

25. Who will be responsible for the ongoing management of the trail after development, in accordance with the Management Standards for Recreational Trails handbook published by the NTO?

General

26. Are there any known constraints or conflicts which could impact the project? YES / NO

If 'yes' please provide details:

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix 2 - Summary of Management Standards for Walking Trails in Ireland

The full version of Management Standards for Recreational Trails can be downloaded from the website

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS:

- Must have permitted access from all landowners on the trail route
- Must have evidence of consultation with the appropriate authority if a route passes through a site of environmental, archaeological or architectural interest
- Must not have any hazards with potential to endanger the walker.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

1. TRAIL INFORMATION

Information about the trail should be available to users as follows:

- **Trail Map and trail information:** (hard copy or printable from the internet):
 - Map showing the route, with sufficient detail such that it can be used for route finding on the trail, including – start/finish points, all junctions where the user could divert from the route must be clearly represented and any other recognised access points to the trail in addition to the main start finish points should be shown.
 - Information on the grade of the trail and a definition of the grades.
 - Length of the trail, estimated time to complete and ascent in metres.
 - Brief route description.
 - Description of waymarking used on the trail.
 - Email or phone number for trail management organization.
 - Emergency services contact details.
 - Information on whether dogs are permitted on the trail.
 - The “Leave No Trace” principles⁴.
- **Information Board at the trail head which includes:**
 - Map showing route , start and finish point and a ‘you are here’ pointer
 - Information on the grade of the trail and a definition of the grades.
 - Length of the trail estimated time to complete and ascent in metres.
 - Brief route description.
 - Description of waymarking used on the trail.
 - Email or phone number for trail management organization.
 - Emergency services contact details.
 - Information on whether dogs are permitted on the trail.
 - The “Leave No Trace” principles ⁷ and any specific trail requirements.
 - Details regarding the permissive access nature of the route if it traverses private property.

⁷ While the standard requires the use of the “Leave No Trace” principles on information boards, it is recognised that some older boards may use “countryside code” messages. This was acceptable up to 2009 but should be updated to the “Leave No Trace” principles (endorsed by Comhairle Na Tuaithe) at the earliest possible opportunity.

2. THE ROUTE

The route must:

- Be unobstructed and passable along its entire length
- Have warning signs on the trail for walkers where it crosses N or R roads or other busy trafficked roads
- Have warning signs for motorists on the road where it crosses N or R roads or other busy trafficked roads
- Be kept away from unprotected cliff tops, tidal beaches, or firing ranges.
- Warning signs must be in place warning of any hazards on the route which require users to take specific care e.g. electric fencing or livestock.
- Have protective tubing on electric fences which need to be crossed by walkers.

3. WAYMARKING

The trail must have:

- Signposting to the trailhead from the nearest public road.
- Waymarking at all junctions
- Reassurance waymarking at least every 1km.
- The same design of waymarking and waymarking standard used throughout an entire route.
- Different colours or numbers on markers or arrow plates if multiple trails are in the same area.
- Use the yellow “walking man” symbol and arrow on National Long Distance routes and this symbol is reserved for such routes.
- Waymarking clearly visible to an approaching walker and free from overgrown vegetation.
- Waymarking securely erected or attached, correctly aligned, clean and not faded.
- Temporary diversions on the trail must be clearly waymarked.

4. TRAIL SURFACE

The trail surface must:

- Be **durable, robust and fit for purpose**⁸ e.g. free from severe erosion and drainage problems. It should not be water logged, have extended sections which are boggy or have deep mud along the route.

5. VEGETATION AND LITTER

The route must be:

- Unobstructed by vegetation.
- Subject to routine general vegetation control
- Monitored for and kept free from litter and fly-tipped waste.

6. TRAIL FURNITURE AND SERVICES

Trail furniture includes:

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|
| - Information Boards | - Seating | - Markers |
| - Signage | - Stiles | - Gates |
| - Bridges | - Bog bridges | - Boardwalks |
| - Steps | | |
- Trail furniture must be designed, constructed, installed and maintained such that it is fit for purpose, robust, reliable and safe.
 - Walking surface on stiles, board walks, bridges or steps must have a suitable ‘non-slip’ finish.

⁸ “Fit-for-purpose” i.e. If a trail is aimed at inexperienced walkers, children, family groups etc, it should be relatively wide, flat and have a reasonably smooth and compact surface. It can then be considered to be “fit for purpose”. Another trail developed for experienced walkers, perhaps in remote or upland areas, may have a surface which is substantially narrower, steeper in gradient and extremely uneven but also be “fit for purpose” because it is intended for a different type of user. See ‘Trail Classification and Standards’ issued by the NTO for further detail.

Appendix 3 - Fáilte Ireland - National Loop Walks Criteria

Fáilte Ireland (Irish Tourism Authority) supports the development of National Loop Walks in Ireland. All National Looped Walk development projects should be planned and developed in close consultation with Fáilte Ireland from the outset.

1. All loop walking trails should adhere to the standards recommended by the National Trails Office, which requires that;
 - Permissive access has been granted for the walking trail;
 - The trail complies with all recommended standards;
 - Public liability indemnity insurance is in place;
 - Each trail has a designated committee or responsible authority to ensure the trail quality is maintained at a high standard.
2. The loop must start from and finish at an appropriate trailhead, which provides, at a minimum;
 - ample, safe car parking facilities;
 - a mapboard with details of the trail (see Mapboard in Loop Furniture).

Other desirable elements of a trailhead include;

- services such as shops, pubs, restaurants;
- toilet facilities;
- changing/showering facilities;

Close proximity to public transport links and accommodation outlets is a bonus.

3. The loop should be of 1.5 hours to 4.5 hours duration for the average walker. As the fitness levels and walking speeds of walkers vary considerably, a distance range is estimated at 8km (5miles) to 12km (8miles) - but this will depend on the level of ascent and difficulty of terrain.
4. A mapguide specific to the loop, and clearly outlining the trailhead, direction of travel, and key features must be easily available.
5. The loop should be as natural as possible. Physical development should only be undertaken where it is advised in a technical appraisal carried out by an approved inspector, and where;
 - the walker's safety would be compromised by not doing so.(e.g. erecting a footbridge at a stream crossing, clearance of vegetation to allow safe access to an old laneway);
 - the sustainability of the loop would be compromised by not doing so (e.g. developing a section of stone pathway to prevent erosion).
6. The loop should be off-road and not use any trafficked roads or tarred surfaces. Exceptions may be made in certain circumstances, for example;
 - where roadway is used to take the walker from the trailhead in an urban setting onto (or off) the loop;
 - where a short section of road is used to link two sections of the loop because no other possibility exists.

Even in these exceptional circumstances, however;

- a loop should never use National or Regional Roads (i.e. roads with N or R in the number) unless it proceeds on a purpose-built footpath;
- a speed limit of 50kms per hour must be in force on all roads which are included as part of the loop.

- 7.** The trail must provide assured access to the walker. In this regard, the route should be clearly waymarked using a consistent standard scheme throughout and the walker must be able to complete the loop without meeting any physical obstructions or challenges from property owners.
- 8.** The loop should provide the walker with a memorable experience. In this regard, key considerations include;
 - a variety of terrain (e.g. open country, deciduous woodland, riverbank, green road);
 - a range of on-route sites of interest (e.g. architecture, archaeology, biology, heritage);
 - quality scenery and good viewing points.
- 9.** The loop should avoid;
 - areas, which endanger the walker in any way. This might include crags or cliffs, steep slopes, deep water, military ranges or game reserves, etc
 - special areas such as wildlife reserves or heritage sites.
 - environmentally sensitive areas or easily eroded surfaces (e.g. bogland)
 - overuse of one type of terrain for example, planted forestry which can be limited in scenic value; or beaches where heavy sand challenges less fit walkers.
- 10.** There must be clear evidence of plans for the sustainable development of the loop and, in particular, ongoing maintenance and marketing. This may be taken on by one organisation (e.g. Local Authority), or may involve a partnership between community organisations, public agencies, and/or private bodies.
- 11.** Loops should fit into one or more of the following themes, with a designated dominant theme:
 - Heritage
 - Nature
 - Mountain
 - Coastal
 - Island
- 12.** All loops will be assigned a 'level of difficulty' ranging from Easy to Moderate to Hard.

Appendix 4 - Initial Site Assessment Report (Sample Report)

This sample site assessment report, as recommended by the NTO, is included to give trail developers guidance on the range of issues that should be considered and explored at an early stage in all trail development projects.

This is a complete site assessment report which was developed for a walk and is for illustration purposes only. It is not an indication of whether this project was completed.

Site Assessment Surveys should be undertaken by persons with knowledge and experience of trail development.

Introduction

This site assessment report has been produced by the National Trails Office and is based on the information contained in the Initial Trail Questionnaire supplied by the trail developer and following a site visit by an NTO trail advisor. It is intended to give advice and assistance to trail developers in the correct planning of proposed trail projects.

The report is laid out in four sections:

1. Overview of project
2. Site assessment
3. Considerations and recommendations
4. Conclusion

1) Overview of project

Name of proposed development:

Lough O'Flynn Walking Loop

Trail type:

Walking

Trail developer:

Lough O'Flynn Steering Group

Contact name/ details:

Contact details withheld, Lough O'Flynn Steering Group

Location:

The proposed trail circles around the shore of Lough O'Flynn, a small lake located 1.6km north of Ballinlough, Co Roscommon, a town on the N60 equidistant between Castlerea and Ballyhaunis.

Outline of proposal:

The proposal aims to extend and improve the existing walkway on the southern and eastern shoreline to encompass the whole lake, thus creating a looped walking route that can be tackled in either direction. The trail head will be located at the small harbour on the south-eastern corner of the lake where there are already amenities available. In total, the complete loop will be 6.27km long approximately. It will necessitate the installation of extensive trail furniture and signage.

Intended/ potential users of trail:

The proposed trail is aimed at a wide market including family groups, casual users, novices, enthusiasts and experienced users from the locality, Ireland in general and from overseas.

2) Site Assessment

Site description:

Lough O'Flynn is a rich shallow limestone lake of about 121 hectares noted for its trout fishery. Previously, the lake was considerably bigger but water levels were lowered by drainage works a few decades ago. The topography in the vicinity of Lough O'Flynn is generally flat and low-lying and there is a band of land surrounding the lake shoreline that is apparently subject to regular flooding during wet weather. When water levels drop back the sod, being generally sandy, becomes firm underfoot and appears to have a good bearing capacity. There are, however, some locations that tend to remain waterlogged and provide poor underfoot conditions.

There are a large number of streams and drains emptying into the lake from all around its hinterland. In particular, Lough O'Flynn is located near to the source of the River Suck which enters the lake on its western bank as a small stream and exits from the eastern shoreline as a sizeable river.

Vegetation on the shoreline is mainly wet grassland that provides rough pasture for summer grazing. There are also some reed beds, bog, natural and planted birch stands and planted pine forestry in the vicinity. The lake holds significant populations of bird life including cormorant, mute swan, widgeon, mallard, pollard, tufted duck, coot and curlew (www.roscommoncoco.ie). There is a crannóg located near the southern shoreline from where dugout canoes have been excavated in the past.

The lakeshore is easily approached on its southern end where a third class road from Ballinlough to Loughglinn provides tarred access to a lakeshore amenity area maintained by Roscommon Co.Co. Here there are plentiful car parking spaces, a toilet and a picnic area with two tables adjacent to the small harbour. Also, there are 14 stiles/ footbridges already installed by Shannon Regional Fisheries Board (SRFB) to facilitate access for anglers to the shoreline on both sides of the harbour. These are mainly wooden structures and some are in need of repair. There is no signage at the site apart from an SRFB information panel. A second tarred road accessing a mid-way point along the eastern shoreline has been constructed by the Co. Co. to facilitate water extraction, fish re-stocking and so on. This area is also occasionally used by local young people for swimming activities.

Land ownership/ access:

Most of the shoreline is in private ownership (about 90%) and much of it is utilised as summer grazing although some is planted with conifers. About 200m of shoreline is owned by Roscommon Co. Co. and a further 400m approx. is held in commonage between a number of landowners. Most landowners have been consulted and are agreeable in principle to the development of the route around the lake.

Land designations:

The lake and its floodplains is proposed for designation as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA). Under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000), NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date they are formally proposed for designation (www.npws.ie/en/ProtectedSites).

The crannóg within the lake is a monument listed on the Sites and Monuments Record (www.archeology.ie/ArcheologicalSurveyofIreland).

Land management:

The land immediately surrounding the lake on all sides is flat and subject to regular flooding during wet weather. Apart from the Co. Co. land on the eastern shoreline (about 200m) and the mature pine

forestry on the west (about 300m) the remainder of the adjoining land is utilised for summer grazing by cattle and horses during dry spells. There is little reason for farm machinery to be brought into these areas. However, Co. Co. and SRFB vehicles occasionally use the tarred access road to the eastern shoreline and it is possible that there is an intention to extract at some stage the small area of privately-owned mature pine to the west.

Further back from the lake, and excluding the unused Co. Co. land and the mature conifer plantation, the flood plain area grades into meadows (about 60%), birch plantation (about 25%), dry bog (about 10%) or newly planted conifers (about 5%). In some areas the fields are fenced off from the flood areas but generally grazing animals have access to the shoreline. There are, not surprisingly, a large number of fenced field boundaries to be negotiated in circumnavigating the lake.

Description of area and existing trail:

The harbour on the south-eastern shore is a natural starting point for a walking route around the lake given it is the nearest access point from Ballinlough on the N60. Here there is parking for up to 50 cars plus other amenities as already mentioned.

Taking an anti-clockwise direction from the car park and heading north, a steep aluminium stile leads the walker over a fence and drain and into open grassland/ birch stands that extend as far as the River Suck. Generally, the shoreline here is directly accessible from the fields above.



Footbridge on the trail

Five SRFB stiles and five footbridges are erected over most obstacles from the car park to the first major stream at Mountain Lower (see attached map).

Beyond the first aluminium stile these are relatively sturdy wooden structures but they can be slippery underfoot and many have exposed barbed wire in the vicinity and have vegetation encroaching on them. Two are broken and in dangerous condition. In addition, there are a further seven streams/drains, two barbed wire fences and two electric fences crossing this section of the route to Mountain Lower.

Despite the existing furniture there is no discernible path used by anglers/walkers. The location of the furniture keeps the traveller quite close to the lakeshore but a gentle incline means that, at the time of assessment, underfoot conditions were generally dry and firm. There are, however, three short sections before Mountain Lower where the walker encounters extended wet areas along the shoreline.

From the stream at Mountain Lower to the Co. Co. access road (about 200m) the land is low-lying, wet and scrubby. The next 400m to the eastern River Suck is open and provides good underfoot conditions for walking. There is already a rough vehicular track along part of this section. The southern bank of the River Suck is dry.



Low lying wet land

The northern bank of the eastern Suck leads into a low-lying floodplain area that reaches inland from the lake for a few hundred metres and extends all around the northern lakeshore.

The shoreline area here is soft underfoot and looks likely to be frequently flooded. The floodplain area is bounded by a line of gorse bushes that separates it from an extensive birch plantation as far as the big drain on the northern shore. Beyond this, the birch is replaced by a young conifer plantation and then by bogland as far as the western River Suck. There are at least five streams/drains and two fences crossing the route between the eastern and western River Suck.

The western and southern shoreline of the lake mainly consists of fields leading down to the water's edge, apart from a 300m stretch of mature pine forest located about mid way along the western shore. From the western Suck to the pine forestry and for some distance beyond the latter, there is a discernible raised bank separating the fields proper from the flood areas nearer the lake. About half way to the forestry the bank is accentuated into sandy cliffs for a few hundred metres.

At the moment, the short section through the pine forest is almost impenetrable due to rough underfoot conditions and unrestrained vegetative growth. The terrain here is peaty and relatively soft and the land behind is low-lying and wet.



Lough O'Flynn map

Approaching the car park there are already five stiles in situ but there are a further 15 fences and 10 streams/drains crossing the route between the western Suck and the car park.

3) Considerations and Recommendations

Matching the trail to the environment

The proposed trail has easy access by car and minimal gradients. It will traverse lowland farm and forestry and will have variable surfaces and be uneven in places. There will be a large number of stiles and footbridges/boardwalks to be negotiated.

Recommendations: The trail will be suitable for casual users, enthusiasts and experienced users with at least a moderate level of fitness. It will not be promoted as accessible for those with reduced mobility and not suitable for wheelchairs or buggies.

Matching the user to the trail

The proposed trail will be suitable for those with a moderate level of fitness. Due to the length of the loop, the number of stiles and the vicinity of water the trail will not be ideal for family groups including small children and older people.

Recommendations: The trail should not be promoted to family groups. It will be suitable for casual users, enthusiasts and experienced users with at least a moderate level of fitness.

Trailhead

The proposed trailhead at the existing pier is the nearest access point to the lake from neighbouring towns. Car-parking is more than adequate and other amenities are available here. There is ample room to erect a mapboard of the route.

Recommendations: The proposed trailhead is ideal for the route.

Level of use

Anglers and others already utilise the existing amenity area and access parts of the southern and eastern shorelines of the lake. There is little doubt that the development of a looped walk around the entire lake would attract increased usage of the existing amenities as well as opening up the lake to a wider public. The access roads and car park have the capacity to bear any likely rise in usage.

Recommendations: No action required.

Health and Safety

Walkers will have direct access to the lake with its variable water levels. In addition, there are very many open drains and streams crossing the route as well as many barbed wire and electric fences. Users of the trail will need to be made aware of this situation.

The existing trail furniture is not fit-for-purpose for a number of reasons – some wooden structures are deteriorating and damaged and all of them can become slippery in wet weather, the steep gradient on the two aluminium stiles is very steep and the location of the furniture means many are probably inundated by lake waters regularly.



Stile unfit for purpose

Recommendations: Clear and accurate information regarding the nature of the terrain should be provided at the trailhead. Replace if possible, or repair and upgrade, the existing furniture to make it fit-for-purpose. If replaced, the new furniture can be relocated on a line above the flood areas of the lake. Sturdy footbridges/boardwalks and stiles need to be installed across all streams/drains and fences respectively.

Environmental issues

Lough O'Flynn is designated as a proposed Natural Heritage Area.

Recommendations: Any work within the area of the lake itself or on the shoreline would be deemed a 'notifiable action' by the National Parks & Wildlife Service and will require their approval to proceed.

Ground conditions

Ground conditions are variable around the periphery of the lake. Generally, underfoot conditions are quite good especially above the high water mark. Although much of the shoreline is firm underfoot when lake levels are normal, the developers of the walk need to give consideration to periods when the lake is flooded. Due to the unpredictable nature of the flooding, it would be risky to develop a line for the route that is regularly inundated by lake waters. Consequently, the trail should generally be located at or above the high water mark. The fact that this line coincides with a discernible bank in many places (photo) is appropriate although setting the route back from the usual lake shore levels may cause problems for some landowners.

In some locations, especially on the eastern shoreline where waterlogged areas extend back from the lake for some distance, it may be more appropriate to install boardwalks or bogbridges over the wet areas. There are three such locations before Mountain Lower.

From the stream at Mountain Lower to the Co. Co. access road on the eastern shore, the land is low-lying, wet and scrubby. At this location, since it will be difficult to find a dry route without bringing the walk onto the nearby road it may be best to consider installing an extended boardwalk directly over

the shallow waters of the lake inlet at the mouth of the stream. While the boardwalk would need a handrail and be 100m or more long, its installation would mean that the flood areas on each side of the stream are avoided and there would be no requirement for a footbridge over the stream itself. It would be important that the boardwalk exceeds the maximum height of the lake waters. Such a structure could incorporate stands for anglers.



Bog bridges or boardwalks may be required

Beyond the outflowing River Suck there is also a low-lying flood plain area that extends all around the northern lakeshore. Consideration should be given to taking the route away from the shoreline in this section. It could follow the bank of the Suck up to the road to cross the river and then quickly return towards the lake perhaps taking a line following the gorse/ birch plantation boundary (at a higher elevation than the flood area) as far as the big drain on the northern shore. Beyond this, the route could follow a line through the young conifer plantation and dry bog to rejoin fields before the inflowing River Suck on the western shore. This proposed walk line would be 100-200m distant from the lakeshore but has good views, passes through a diversity of habitats and will remain above the high water mark.

A 300m section through the pine forestry on the western shoreline is peaty, overgrown and uneven. More active development of a suitable trail surface will be required here. A defined route will need to be cleared and, due to the nature of the ground conditions, the provision of a firm sustainable tread will need to be considered. This will possibly necessitate the use of machinery and the installation of boardwalk(s) or footbridge(s) at some points. Since the forestry is privately owned less intrusive options are likely to be more readily negotiated.

Recommendations: Ensure that the route of the walking loop generally stays on dry ground above lake flooding levels. In some locations the installation of boardwalks/bogbridges that are set to a height above high water may be more appropriate. It may be possible to find a route through the forestry on the western shore where scrub clearance and the application of an ecogrid-type surface is sufficient for the purposes of a walking trail. If this is not possible, the consideration of constructing a bog bridge or developing a new trail surface utilising the mineral layer beneath the peat may be necessary. This is however, a more expensive option and may be seriously disrupted by any plans to extract wood from the site.

4. Conclusions

The proposed walking loop around Lough O'Flynn will provide an attractive and diverse walking experience for those with moderate levels of fitness. Setting the route of the loop back from the normal shoreline will not only protect the sensitive boundary between lake and land but will also ensure that the trail is accessible and safe all year round. Even while utilising the existing furniture, construction of the trail will necessitate the installation of a large number of new stiles, footbridges, boardwalks and/or bogbridges. It is recommended that the local group undertake a more detailed costing of the overall project, including the development & annual maintenance costs, and agree arrangement for maintenance and upkeep of the trail post-development before a final decision is made on progressing the project further.

This assessment has identified a number of important issues that highlight the potential viability and sustainability of the project. These matters will all need to be considered carefully before the project is progressed.

Appendix 5 - Trail Development Plan Template

This template can be downloaded from the website www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/ in the publications section.

Trail Development Plan

This plan forms an important reference point for this proposed trail development as it defines the roles of partners in the proposal and ensures that each partner knows what is required of themselves and others to ensure effective delivery and management of the developed trails.

It also details the required inputs and resources for all aspects of trail construction, signage, interpretation and associated facilities such as car-parking or picnic areas, etc.

The report is laid out in three sections:

1. General overview

- a. Background information
- b. Purpose and aim of the development
- c. Roles and responsibilities of the partners ⁹

2. Trail development

- a. On-site development details ¹⁰
- b. Resources required

3. Post-Development

- a. Management and maintenance arrangements

Appendix 1. Map showing definitive line of trail route

Appendix 2. ‘Special structures’ detail – e.g. kissing gates or stiles, etc.

Appendix 3. Signage detail – e.g. information plates or fingerpost signs.

⁹ The partners in the development include the landowners, trail developer, funding agency and trail promoters

¹⁰ Includes construction details, signage, interpretation and furniture requirements

1) General overview

a) Background information

Trail proposer details:			
Name:	Insert name of proposer group, body or individual		
Contact details:	Insert contact name		
Insert contact number	Insert contact email address		
Trailhead details:			
Address/ location	Insert townland, village/town, county		
Grid reference:	Insert OS Sheet no., Grid reference		
Elevation:	Insert elevation at trailhead		
Trail details:			
Trail name:	1st trail name	2nd trail name	3rd trail name
Length:	Length in kms	Length in kms	Length in kms
Highest elevation:	Max elev in metres	Max elev in metres	Max elev in metres
Grading:	As per "Trail Class and Grading" - NTO	As per "Trail Class and Grading" - NTO	As per "Trail Class and Grading" - NTO
Duration (return):	Duration in hours	Duration in hours	Duration in hours
Terrain type:	Insert description of terrain e.g. farm track, farmland, open mountain, old mountain track, forestry.		

b) Purpose and Aim of the Development

- Sets out the context of the proposal referring to its location and proximity to similar or other trails in the area, villages or towns etc.
- Refer to the suitability of the area in general for the proposed trails, e.g. If the activity is already well established in the area or has particular facilities in the area which complement the proposed trails.
- Are the proposed trails looped or linear?
- What are the main objectives of the proposed trails, e.g. to access a particular viewpoint, to provide a mountain access route, to provide challenging off-road cycle trails, to provide a multi-access trail, etc.
- Comment on the grade of trails being established and the intended users of the trail.
- Be specific about why the trails are being established,

Example 1: This National Looped Walk is aimed at the more experienced walker and will be graded as 'difficult'. It is intended to provide challenging walking in an area which has 'easy' and 'moderate' grade looped walks already established and evidently well-used.

Or Example 2 for a large off-road cycle trail system. This mountain bike trail centre is being developed as a short-break destination for cycling enthusiasts. It will have challenging graded trails to provide sufficient riding for 2 days.

c) Roles and Responsibilities of the Partners

- The following table names the partners in this proposal and sets out their inputs to the project. Each partner should be consulted and their roles and responsibilities detailed below to reflect their position.
- Where there are partners with multiple and perhaps different objectives they should be listed here also. This will usually only apply to large trail developments with more complex partner structures.

Partner name	Role in trail development	Area of responsibility
Insert name	Trail proposer/ developer	e.g. Responsible for development of trail and trailhead in line with specifications; public liability insurance for the trails; management and maintenance of the routes
Insert name	Landowner	e.g. Permission to allow the trail to be developed and access to walkers on the route
Insert name	Landowner	e.g. Permission to allow the trail to be developed and access to walkers on the route
Insert name	Landowner	e.g. Permission to allow the trail to be developed and access to walkers on the route
Insert name	Trail funder	Funding for the trail development
Insert name	Trail promoter	Promotion and marketing of the trail development
Insert name	Trail management	Management of the trail
Insert name	Trail maintenance	Maintenance duties on trail

2) Trail development

- The trail development details including construction, upgrading, signage, waymarking and interpretation are set out on the following pages in tabular format.
- **NB: If there is any vital consultation that must be carried out before advancing with trail development, list it here e.g. the trail lies partly within an SAC and consultation with NPWS is required before advancing to trail development.**
- Insert text summarising the layout of the trail and any particular features and issues that will be encountered along the route.
- Explain the colour-coding or signage protocol for the trail(s) e.g. Walk A will be waymarked with green directional arrows and all directional signage into the area will refer to the Walk A and direct people to the trailhead.
- Explain the options for method of delivery e.g. The method of delivery of the elements set out below should be determined by the trail developer. A contractor can be engaged to deliver the full specification, once a price is agreed. Alternatively, the group may wish to carry out the work in a voluntary capacity in as far as possible, with materials purchased from suitable suppliers.
- Include any additional information that will help the proposer/ group/ body to implement the plan detailed below, e.g. This loop will form part of Fáilte Ireland's National Looped Walks scheme and signage layout and style will comply with their requirements or if the trail lies on Coillte land, there are templates available to assist with compiling the signage information.
- The plan outlined below is taken from a sample trail development plan which sets out the work required on a proposed walk (Walk A) and is for illustrative purposes only. It sets out the work required at that walk, and includes an estimated cost for the work required.
- A map is also used in some Trail Development Plans to specify work requirements at various locations along a proposed development.

Walk A

Included below is an extract from a trail development plan which specifies in detail the work required for this trail. This extract is included for guidance on the level of details required in a trail development plan.

Point on map	Chainage point	Length (in metres)	Location	Work Required	Notes	Direct costs
1	0	0	Trailhead	Clear old machinery and spoil, surface with hardcore to create car-parking space for 6 to 8 cars along sheds on southern side of yard. Erect 'Do not block access' signs at entrance to farm sheds and laneway leaving yard. Erect mapboard and affix directional arrows in front of shed on RHS of gate leaving farmyard.		Mapboard €1,200 Clear yard and surface €1,000
2	0	0	Leaving trailhead	Erect new farm gate with kissing gate section for walkers to pass through (see appendix 1 for detail) Erect waymarker and affix directional arrow	Gate will need to be one-off to fit existing opening	Gate €800 1 waymarker €100
3	0 -40	40		No work required		
4	40 – 120	80	Laneway	Open drain on lower side of laneway to alleviate flooding. Surface good – no work required.	Use 6 tonne machine . max	Machine work €350
5	120 - 152	32	Laneway	Brush/ prune back overhanging branches and clear scrub for laneway. Surface good – no work required. Erect waymarker and affix directional arrow	Use chainsaw or billhook/ loppers/ bushman	Clearance €120 1 waymarker €100
6	152 - 154	2	Gate	Build stone stile on both sides of dry-stone wall to facilitate easy access over wall. Erect waymarker on LHS and affix red, green, blue arrows.	Stone available on-site	Build stone steps for stile €850 1 waymarker €100
7	154 - 185	31		No work required		
8	185 - 289	104	Open field	Use Ecogrid on softer areas underfoot to create durable trail tread. Place 2 sections of ecogrid side-by-side to form 600mm wide tread. Ensure all grids are fully clipped together. Use spade to remove undulations in ground before fitting ecogrid.		Ecogrid (fitted) €1,738
9	289	0	Stream crossing	No tread work required. Stream can be crossed at all times. Erect waymarker with directional arrows. Attach information plate 1 (see appendix 3)		1 waymarker €100
10	289 – 589	300	Open land to corner of forestry	No tread work required Erect 6 waymarkers and affix red arrows and green arrows	6 no. waymarkers required	6 waymarkers €600
11	589 - 1103	514	Along forest boundary to junction with track exiting forestry	Construct 3 waterbars where water crosses trail. Use stone available locally on-site. Erect waymarker and affix directional arrows red and green.		3 waterbars €360 1 waymarker €100
12	1103-5600	4497	Along Fence	No tread work required. Replace 15 waymarkers and affix directional arrows (green). Repair 12 existing waymarkers and paint yellow and affix arrows.	Follow existing line of white posts to the top	15 waymarkers €1,500 Paint 12 waymarkers €240
Totals		5600m				€9,258

3) Post – Development Details

Management and Maintenance Arrangements

This section of the plan must set out who has the responsibility for management and maintenance of the trails post-development. This section must be definitive. If there are arrangements where one body inspects the trail and another is charged with carrying out the maintenance, then it should be clearly stated.

e.g. The trails will be managed by 'X' community development group. This will include 3 formal inspections of the trail route per year to ensure that the trails are kept up to the original standard. After the formal inspections are carried out, a maintenance list may be compiled with tasks set out for repair or upgrading of signage or trails.

The trails will be maintained by, for example, Coillte. 'X' LEADER company will undertake to provide Coillte with 2 RSS workers for 4 days each month to assist with trail maintenance duties.

Appendix 6 - Checklist for Final Inspection of Trail

The form can be downloaded from the website www.irishtrails.ie/National_Trails_Office/ in the publications section.

1	Name of Trail	
2	Agency Responsible	
3	Name of Main Contact Person	
4	Contact Address	
5	Telephone Number	
6	E-mail Address	
7	Length of Trail (km)	
8	Length on private property (km)	
9	Number of landowners	
10	Have all relevant landowners and occupiers been consulted and given permission?	
11	Length of route on unsuitable road (km)	
12	Length of route on suitable road (km)	
13	Are there any environmental designations in the area ?	
14	Are there any National Monuments along the trail ?	
15	If answer is yes to Q13 or Q14, have NPWS and/or National Monuments Services been consulted ?	
Please list any of the requirements of the Management Standards for Recreational Trails which have not yet been met for each of the headings below?		
16	Trail Information	
17	The Route	
18	Waymarking	

19	Trail Surface	
20	Vegetation and Litter	
21	Trail Furniture	
22	Car Parking at the trail head	
23	Name of person to accompany the NTO/ISC Inspector during inspection.	
24	Do you require inclusion on the NTO/IPB insurance policy to provide indemnity insurance for private landowners?	
25	Does your committee or group have public liability insurance?	
26	Please provide a copy of map as 1:50,000 scale with the route clearly shown and other information when returning this form.	
I have personally inspected the entire trail route and confirm I have seen that all development work is completed and all required trail furniture and waymarking is in place.		
27	Signed:	Dated:

Explanatory Notes for Checklist for Final Inspection of Trail

Item 10 If land is rented to an occupier, permission should be obtained from both the landowner and the occupier.

Item 23 It is essential that a person nominated by the Management Committee accompanies the NTO/ISC inspector to discuss any changes/additions that are required. **This person must be familiar with the trail.**

Item 24 Indemnity insurance is required for all private landowners/occupiers of land on or adjacent to the trail. It is possible for all developed and approved waymarked trails to be included under a policy administered by the National Trails Office (NTO)/ISC and Irish Public Bodies (IPB) Mutual Insurance Ltd.

Note that insurance for sections of the trail on land owned by state bodies is not covered by the IPB insurance policy. It is essential that if the trail is on any such land, this has been agreed with the bodies concerned.

Appendix 7 - Guidance Note - Public Liability Insurance Policy for Recreational Trails

Policy administered by Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd, National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council and Local Authorities.

Insured	All Landowners & Occupiers whose property/land is crossed or adjoins the Recreational Trails, that have been inspected and approved by the National Trails Office (NTO) and noted in register lodged with IPB .
Cover	To indemnify the individual landowners / lease holders / non profit organisations (details lodged with NTO/LA) whose property is crossed or adjoins the approved Recreational Trails.
New Recreational Trails	New Trails will only be accepted for Insurance once such trails have been approved or are awaiting approval by the NTO and notified to IPB
Land	The term Land includes all Farmyards, Outbuildings, Walls, Gates, Fences, Stiles, Bridges, Boardwalks, Walkways, Vehicles, Plant, Machinery and Animals
Limit of Indemnity	€6,500,000 any one accident, unlimited any one period of insurance
Excess	NIL
Development of Recreational	IPB will extend cover to provide an indemnity to the Committee involved in the Development, maintenance and upkeep of the Recreational Trails, provided they are named on a Register of such Committees maintained by the NTO and do not hold Public Liability insurance in their own name.
OB Specific Exclusions	Use is restricted to recreational or leisure activities and specifically excludes hunting and/or speed trials involving the use of mechanically propelled vehicles.
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Recreational Trails are inspected annually by the NTO.2. Local Authorities (and/or Local Mgt Committees/Local Area Development Company or other Designated Body as notified to the NTO/ISC) in whose jurisdiction the Recreational Trails pass are responsible for the maintenance, upkeep and signage of them.3. Recommendations made by NTO are acted upon within a reasonable timeframe. If remedial works are not carried out or if the annual inspection indicates a very serious defect IPB reserve the right to withdraw cover from the specific section of the Walking Route.
Claims	All documentation received regarding a notification of a claim or knowledge of incidents which may give rise to a claim should be forwarded directly to IPB. Landowners should not enter into correspondence with any potential claimant or should not appoint their own legal defence team. All litigation will be handled by IPB.

Appendix 8 - Trail Furniture / Material Suppliers

Irish Suppliers

Highway Safety Development Ltd.

General products in recycled plastic
Knocktopher
Co. Kilkenny
Tel: 056 7768702
Email: mail@hsd.ie
Web: www.hsd.ie

Signiatec – Sign Technology Ltd

General products in recycled plastic
Castlehale
Co. Kilkenny
Tel: 051 648484
Email: info@signiatec.ie
Web: www.signiatec.com

Murray Recycled Plastic Ltd

General products in recycled plastic
John and Sheila Murray
Claggan
Glenisland
Castlebar
Co Mayo
Tel: 094 9022639
Mobile: 087 2448622
Email: info@recycledplastic.ie
Web: www.recycledplastic.ie

Signal Signs

Finger post signs, directional plates,
anything printed for inside or out
Mickey Griffin
Pinehill Industrial Estate
Mountain Top
Letterkenny
Tel: 074 9126799
Mobile: 087 2325567
Fax: 074 9126799
Email: signal signs@eircom.net
Web: <http://signal signs.wordpress.com>

idesigns

Directional plates and signs, map boards,
information boards
Matt Mills
Unit 1 Warner Centre
Barrack Street
Bantry
Co Cork
Tel: 027 55722
Mobile: 087 7990607
Email: info@idesigns.ie
Web: www.idesigns.ie (holding page)

Sign of the Times

Signs
Avoca
Co Wicklow
Tel: 0402 35665
Mobile: 086 8340358
Email: signtist@eircom.net

Moher Engineering

Stiles
Moher,
Upperchurch,
Thurles,
Co. Tipperary.
Tel: 087 6237418

Woodford Timber Products Ltd

Timber posts, benches, gates
Skellan
Doogarry
Co Cavan
Tel: 049 4333133
Web: www.woodfordtimber.ie

Rennicks Sign Manufacturing

Road signs
Kilbride,
Mulhuddart,
Dublin 15,
Tel: 01 8859200,
Email: sales@rennicks.com,
Web: www.rennicks.com

Taylor Signs

External Signs
Unit C3,
Santry Business Park,
Swords Rd,
Santry, Dublin 9
Tel 01 862 4444
Email: admin@taylorsigns.ie
Web: www.Taylorsigns.ie

Northern Ireland

Ecoplastic Recycling Ltd

Recycled posts, boardwalks, bridging, Ecogrid,
map boards, benches
86 Annacloy Road
Downpatrick
Co. Down
Northern Ireland
BT30 9AJ
Tel: (048) 44831831
Email: info@ecoplastic.net
Web: www.ecoplastic.net

AgriWeb

Ground reinforcement and grass retention
systems
2-4 Balloo Avenue
Bangor
Co Down
Northern Ireland
BT19 7QT
Tel: 0044 2891 275563
Email: info@agri-web.co.uk
Web: www.hexapath.com

Appendix 9 - Indicative Costs for Items of Trail Furniture

Trail Materials and Construction Costs

Prices are valid at October 2011

All prices are excluding VAT and some may be excluding Delivery

Item	Price Range
Plastic Ground Surfacing Systems	€11 to €38 per sq m
Information/Map Board	€250 to €2,770
Waymarker Posts	€18 to €28
Directional Arrow Plates	€4 to €6
Directional Arrow Discs	€2.30 to €4.50
Information Plates for Waymarker Posts	€8 to €10
Stiles (step and ladder, plastic and aluminium)	€224 to €840
Bridges (steel and recycled plastic)	€1,800 to €3,000
Kissing Gates	€595 to €645
Gates	€250 to €828
Gate Signs	€15 to €23
Finger Posts	€55 to €195
Finger Signs Only	€34 to €38
Poles	€45 to €50
Boardwalks	€115 to €170 per linear metre
Bog Bridges	€45 to €80 per linear metre
Signs to Warn Motorists of Walkers on Road	€25 to €45

The Specifications of some of the items above vary considerably and this affects the price.

Trail type or feature	Approx. price range for optimum sites (€)	Variables affecting cost	Notes
Bench-cut	22 - 36 per metre	ground conditions, width, topography	Unsurfaced
Reversal	20 - 30 per metre	ground conditions, width, topography	Incl. reshaping
Turnpike	25 - 35 per metre	ground conditions, width, topography	Incl geotextile to 2m width
Boardwalk	55 - 85 per metre	category of trail, width, access	2m width
Bog Bridge	25 - 35 per metre	width, access, gradient requiring steps	2 No. 230mm x 100mm, surface stapled
Waterbar	100 - 120 per unit	availability of on-site materials or import in and access, width	2m width
Stone drain	100 - 150 per unit	availability of on-site materials or import in and access, width	2m width
Stone steps	50 - 80 per step	ground conditions, availability and quality of material, gradient, width	1m width
Ecogrid	28 - 38 per metre	ground conditions, access	1m width

Appendix 10 - Useful Contacts & Links

State Agencies

National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council

Tel: 01 8608800

Email: nto@irishsportsCouncil.ie

Web: www.irishtrails.ie

Cormac MacDonnell

National Trails Office Programme Manager

Tel: 01 8608800

Email: cmacdonnell@irishsportsCouncil.ie

Jean Boydell

National Trails Office Inspection Manager

Tel: 01 2841764

Email: jboydell@irishsportsCouncil.ie

Doug Corrie

National Trails Office Cycling, Education & Training, National Trails Register

Tel: 01 8608800

Email: dcorrie@irishsportsCouncil.ie

Daithi de Forge

National Trails Office Technical Trails Advisor

Tel: 057 867 8514

Email: daithi.deforge@coillte.ie

Coillte Teo

(State Forestry Company)

Tel: 01 2011111

Web: www.coillte.ie

www.coillteoutdoors.ie

Fáilte Ireland

Outdoor Activity Tourism Department

Tel: 01 8847700

Email: walking@failteireland.ie

www.discoverireland.ie

www.failtelreland.ie

National Parks & Wildlife Service

Tel: 01-8882000

Email: natureconservation@environ.ie

Regional Management Contact Information:

www.npws.ie/contactus

Web: www.npws.ie

Waterways Ireland

Tel: 01 8680148

Email: info@waterwaysireland.org

Web: www.waterwaysireland.org

Integrated Development Companies

Tel: 01 4600091/2

Email: info@ildn.ie

Web: www.planet.ie

Full listing of all companies:

www.planet.ie/integrated_companies.htm

Ordnance Survey Ireland

Tel: 01 8025379

Email: mapsales@osi.ie

Web: www.osi.ie

Rural Recreation Section

Department of Environment Community & Local Government

Tel: 071 9186732

Web: www.environ.ie

Shannon Development Tourism Division

(Clare, Limerick, South Offaly, North Tipperary)

Tel: 061 361555

Email: info@shannon-dev.ie

Web: www.shannonregiontourism.ie

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Tel: 01-8842600

Email: info@fisheriesireland.ie

Web: www.fisheriesireland.ie

Other Organisations

Irish Heart Foundation

Tel: 01 6685001

Web: www.irishheart.ie

EastWest Mapping

Tel: 053 9377835

Email: info@eastwestmapping.ie

Web: www.eastwestmapping.ie

Leave No Trace Ireland

Tel: 048 90303938

Email: info@leavenotraceireland.org

Web: www.leavenotraceireland.org

National Governing Bodies

Mountaineering Ireland

Tel: 01 6251115

Web: www.mountaineering.ie

Cycling Ireland

Tel: 01 8551522

Web: www.cyclingireland.ie

Canoe Ireland

Tel: 01 6251105

Web: www.canoe.ie

Horse Sport Ireland

Tel: 045 850800

Web: www.horsesportireland.ie

Walking Development Officer

Anna Connor

Community & Enterprise Section

Mayo County Council

Tel: 094 9047545

Email: aconnor@mayococo.ie

Rural Recreation Officers

Ann Lanigan

Laois Rural Development Company Ltd

Tel: 057 8661900

Cathleen Fergus

South West Mayo Development Company Ltd

Tel: 098 41590

Con Ryan

Tipperary LEADER Group Ltd

Tel: 062 33360

Deirdre Kennedy

Sligo Integrated Development Company

Tel: 071 9141138

Eimer McCarthy

Clare Local Development Company Ltd

Tel: 061 361144

Eoin Hogan

Barrow Nore Suir Rural Development Ltd

Tel: 056 7752111

Inga Bock

Donegal Local Development Company Ltd

Tel: 074 9744937

James O'Mahony

West Cork Development Partnership

Tel: 023 34035

Patricia Deane

South Kerry Development Partnership Ltd

Tel: 066 976 1615

Martin Dunne
Mid South Roscommon Rural
Development Company Ltd
Tel: 0906 488292

Pat Mellon
County Wicklow Partnership
Tel: 0402 20955

Coillte Regional Trails Officers

Jesper Petersen
Eastern Region
Tel: 0404 72118
Email: Jesper.Petersen@coillte.ie

Martin Ruane
Region West
Tel: 071 67096
Email: martin.ruane@coillte.ie

Mary O'Brien
Region South
Tel: 021 4306973
Email: Mary.O'Brien@coillte.ie

Karen Woods
Dublin Mountains Partnership Manager
Tel: 01 2011187
Email: karen.woods@coillte.ie

Trail Planning Advisors

Darragh O'Sullivan
Tel: 087 7842848
Email: darragh@upwardsireland.com

Deirdre Lewis
SLR Consulting
Tel: 01 2964667
Email: dlewis@slrconsulting.com

Frank Fahey
Fizzical Ltd
Tel: 01 6230188
Email: fizzical@eircom.net

Humphrey Murphy
ILC
Tel: 074 9152800
Email: humphrey@ilc.ie

John Monaghan
Tel: 01 2868603
Email: jmon12@eircom.net

Maria Gibbons
Tel: 071 9820879
Email: gibbons@iol.ie

Appendix 11 - Shared Use Trails - Code of Conduct

As suggested by the National Trails Office

ALL USERS SHOULD:

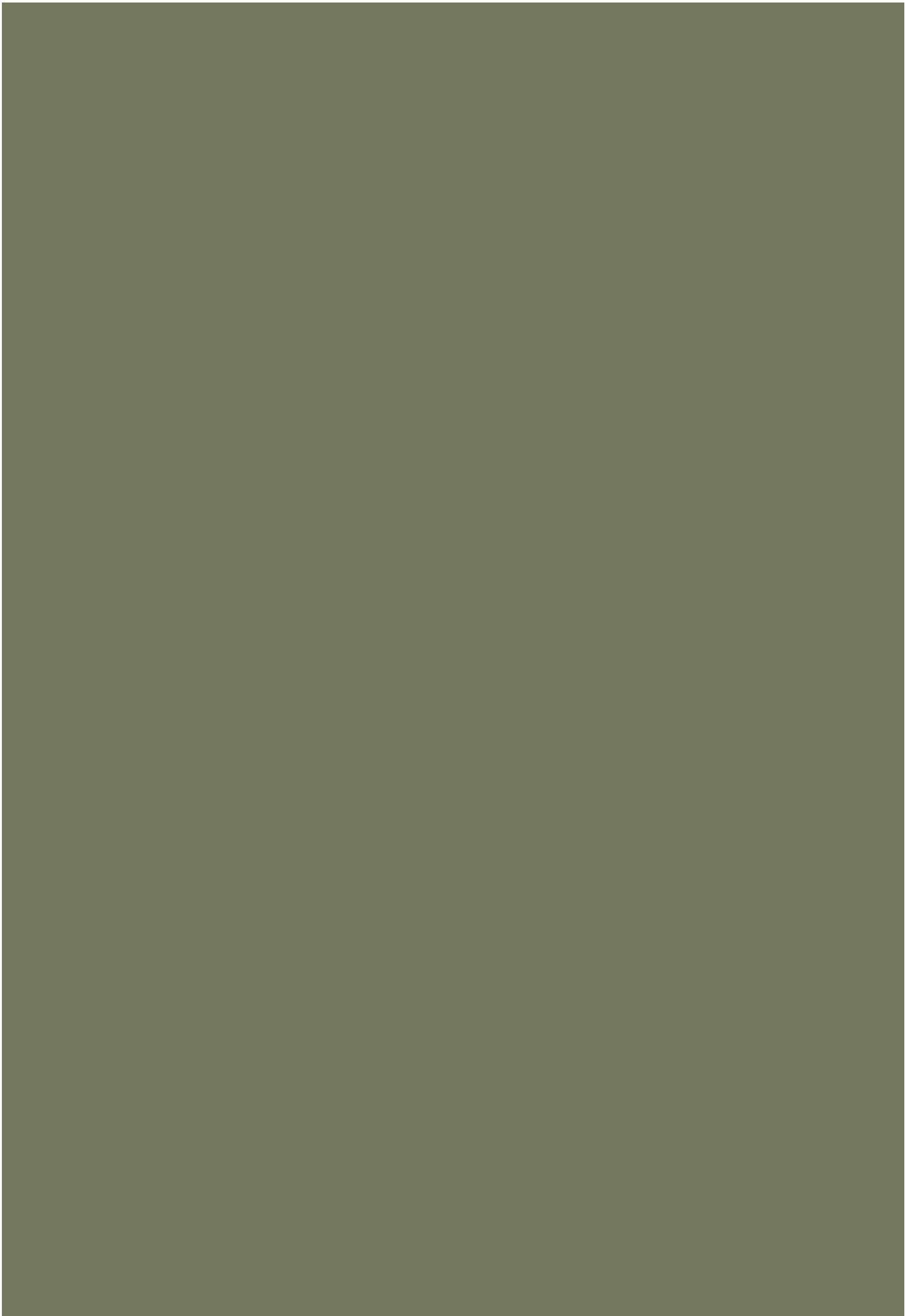
- Recognise pedestrians priority over cyclists.
- Consider and respect other users and the local environment.
- Observe all local bye-laws and notices.
- Practise the Leave No Trace ethic.

CYCLISTS SHOULD:

- Ring bell to catch the attention of pedestrians and other users.
- Pass people slowly and give people space.
- Ride at an appropriate and safe speed for all.
- Take extra care with joining and cycling on road.
- Adhere to the Rules of the Road.

PEDESTRIANS SHOULD:

- Listen for cyclists bells.
- Allow cyclists to pass safely.
- Keep dogs on a leash.





national trails office
An Irish Sports Council Initiative

National Trails Office

Irish Sports Council, Top Floor, Block A,
West End Office Park, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

T +353-1-8608800

E nto@irishsportsCouncil.ie

W www.irishtrails.ie