

# Blueway Management and Development Guide







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# Introduction

The rivers, canals, loughs and coastline on the Island of Ireland provide a vast array of opportunities for exploration and enjoyment by visitors and locals alike. The relatively recent development of Blueways in Ireland has sought to maximise this opportunity.

This Blueway Management and Development Guide has therefore been designed as a resource to:

- assist developers to develop, manage and promote Blueways more effectively
- outline the accreditation criteria, process and support mechanisms

Further details are provided on [www.bluewaysdevelopment.org](http://www.bluewaysdevelopment.org)



## AIM

The guide has been designed with the aim of providing detailed information and advice in order to answer the following queries:

- **Definition** – What is a Blueway?
- **Target Market** – Who will be attracted to a Blueway?
- **Accreditation** – Who is managing the accreditation process?
- **Benefits** – Why become accredited?
- **Criteria** – What are the fundamental components of a successful Blueway?
- **Achieving Success** – How to achieve Blueway Accreditation
- **Planning** – How to plan the development and management of a successful and sustainable Blueway

## WHAT IS A BLUEWAY?

A Blueway is defined as:

*“ A network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on, and closely linked with the water, together with providers facilitating access to activities and experiences. ”*

The Blueways Ireland brand represents:

- Being active in nature
- Exploration of waterscapes
- Service providers enabling easy access for all
- Multi-activity trail options
- Set within the context of places to stay, eat and go
- Enriched by local culture, heritage, arts and visitor attractions
- Responsible recreation within the environment

# The Blueway User

Whether a Blueway user is a member of the community enjoying their local waterway or a visitor exploring a new destination, it is essential the Blueway delivers a memorable experience.



## TARGET MARKET - WHO WILL BE ATTRACTED TO A BLUEWAY?

Blueways in Ireland are designed for a range of users from those who have **little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities right through to experienced participants.**

Therefore a Blueway needs to offer the following:

### Features

- A mixture of land and water activities
- A rich opportunity to experience the culture, history and scenery on the island of Ireland
- A safe experience

### Locations

- Attractive locations - not simply just anywhere with water, but scenery unique to the island of Ireland which visitors do not find closer to home
- Coastal locations – especially important to attract overseas visitors
- Sheltered waters - i.e. not the brunt of the ocean

### Water-based activity offering - should be:

- Delivered by guides
- Focus on the easier entry level
- Follow high safety standards

It is clear that potential Blueway users are attracted by the proximity to water, however it is evident the preference remains to be alongside water rather than in or on the water. Hence the importance of multi-activity options.

### TOURISM

It is important to realise that a visitor to a Blueway is set in the context of holistic visitor segmentation. It is recognised that the physical activities (whether water or land based) will not be enough on their own to differentiate the island of Ireland from many other destinations. Therefore the tourist will require a full package of unique cultural and historical attractions and experiences to be enticed to visit.

### LOCAL COMMUNITY

The attachment of the Blueway brand to a local waterway should act as a catalyst for local participation initiatives for example through school, youth organisations, clubs and sports partnerships.

# Criteria - What are the Fundamental Components of a Successful Blueway?

Extensive international benchmarking has identified the external assessment of high quality recreation trails utilise a holistic criterion encompassing all aspects of the visitor experience.



As such, the Accreditation Criteria for Blueways on the island of Ireland combines a visitor focused approach with fundamental safety, technical, access and environmental components. All of these are underpinned by sustainable management techniques and processes.

In summary:

### EXPERIENCE

Are the visitors' expectations met?

### SAFETY

Is risk being appropriately managed?

### TECHNICAL

Does trail infrastructure and signage follow best practice?

### CONSERVATION / ENVIRONMENT

As a minimum does the Blueway avoid any negative impact on the environment or ideally how does it add to or improve the environment e.g. through education and access?

### ACCESS

Will the Blueway be open for public use for at least ten years following accreditation?

## SUSTAINABILITY

Are the management structures / partnerships, plans and processes in place to ensure the Blueway can continue to meet the required standard?

In order to achieve accreditation, a Blueway must demonstrate how it meets the criteria (see pages 16-17).

Detailed guidance on how to achieve the criteria is provided within [www.bluewaysdevelopment.org](http://www.bluewaysdevelopment.org)



# Accreditation - Who is Managing the Accreditation Process?

Accreditation has been identified by the Blueway Partnership as fundamental to ensure a consistent high standard of Blueway development on the island of Ireland.

## AWARDING BODY

The Blueway Partnership has set the criteria required for Blueway accreditation and will also act as the awarding body.

The accreditation panel will be supported by a Blueways Accreditation Inspector who will carry out required inspections of Blueways on the island of Ireland.

A Blueway Technical Advisory Panel is being created encompassing key organisations that can provide technical advice on specific aspects of Blueway development (sports specific advice, safety advice etc.)

Detailed guidance for Blueway Developers is available at [www.bluewaysdevelopment.org](http://www.bluewaysdevelopment.org)



## BLUEWAY DEVELOPMENT AND ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK



# Benefits - Why become Accredited?

The accreditation of a Blueway by the Blueway Accreditation Panel will bring the following benefits:



## BRAND

An accredited Blueway will be afforded the opportunity to avail of the official Blueway brand which can be utilised within user information and signage. External accreditation will also provide enhanced consumer recognition of the proposition.

For further information on brand guidelines see the Blueway Design & Brand Guidelines at [www.bluewaysdevelopment.org](http://www.bluewaysdevelopment.org)

## QUALITY STANDARD

External accreditation will help reassure key stakeholders that a best practice approach is being implemented. This may include:

- Key decision makers within your organisation
- Key funders
- Local community and business

In addition, an approved brand is more marketable.

## SUPPORT

Those engaging in the accreditation process will be able to avail of the support of the Blueway Development Advisor and also best practice knowledge sharing from other Blueway developers / managers through an annual Blueway Forum meeting.

## PROMOTION

External accreditation will also provide enhanced consumer recognition of the proposition. Blueways remain a relatively new concept on the island of Ireland, therefore a critical mass of accredited Blueways which follow the same high standard will help raise awareness. This in turn will generate a cross sell effect, particularly within the domestic market i.e. visitors who have a positive experience on one accredited Blueway will be attracted to visit another.

## OPPORTUNITIES

The Blueway Partnership will continue to engage with relevant funding bodies to ensure the recognition of the importance of accreditation within funding measures. Developers can also use the accredited and quality Blueways to lever further funding for additional developments and increasing the offer of services. There is recognition within local and national tourism development plans for Blueways and for quality, accredited facilities.

# Planning - How to plan the Development and Management of a Successful and Sustainable Blueway

**The recommended process for successfully planning and developing Blueways in Ireland is outlined on page 15.**

The reality of outdoor recreation means the steps in this process may not be delivered in a linear fashion i.e. there will inevitably be overlap, however, it is important each step is delivered.





## BLUEWAY ACCREDITATION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

EXPERIENCE		✓
<b>Engaging Landscape / Culture and Heritage</b>	Offers an opportunity to appreciate and explore an attractive landscape and engage with the unique heritage and culture of the area	
<b>Multi-activity</b>	Offers a combination of water and land based trail (with connectivity to water) options	
<b>Capacity Building</b>	A programme is in place to develop 'Eat / Stay / Go' and 'Activity / Experience' opportunities	
<b>Eat / Stay / Go</b>	Bars, Cafés, restaurants and attractions are easily accessible from trail heads and / or trails	
<b>Activity / Experience Providers</b>	Guided activity experiences appropriate for 'novice' are available and can be booked in advance	
<b>Length of time</b>	Offers a minimum experience duration of between half a day to one day	
<b>Visitor Information</b>	The visitor can access information to allow them plan and enjoy their Blueway experience	
TECHNICAL		
<b>Walking Trails</b>	Walking Trails are compliant with the Sport Ireland – Management Standards for Recreational Trails	
<b>Cycling Trails</b>	Cycle Trails are compliant with the Sport Ireland – Management Standards for Recreational Trails	
<b>Shared Use Trails</b>	Shared Use Trails are compliant with the Sport Ireland – Management Standards for Recreational Trails	
<b>Snorkel Trails</b>	Snorkel Trails follow the guidelines of the Irish Underwater Council	
<b>Paddling Trails</b>	Paddling Trails follow the Blueway Paddling Trail Guidelines	
<b>Sailing &amp; Windsurfing Sites</b>	Sailing & Windsurfing Activities will be compliant with Irish Sailing and/or RYANI Accreditation standards	
<b>Signage</b>	All signage follows with Blueway Signage Guidelines	
<b>Trailhead Facilities</b>	Trail heads are clearly identified and offer adequate parking Toilet and changing facilities are available within close proximity of water based trail heads	
<b>Managing user conflict</b>	Consideration and identification of steps to mitigate against potential conflict with waterway / trail users has been undertaken	
<b>Accessibility/Inclusivity</b>	Reasonable steps have been undertaken to provide disabled access	

## BLUEWAY ACCREDITATION CRITERIA CHECKLIST

ACCESS		✓
<b>Landowner / Authority Agreement</b>	Access is permitted by all landowners and relevant authorities – public and private for a minimum period of 10 years	
<b>Insurance</b>	Public liability insurance is in place providing indemnity for all infrastructure, land-based trails and water trails' access and egress points	
SAFETY		
<b>Suitability</b>	The experience is suitable for the 'novice' with little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Visitors are not exposed to hidden dangers Visitors should be aware of the risks they will face and that safety is a shared responsibility between the visitor and the Blueway Developer/ Responsible Authority	
<b>Activity Providers / Experiences</b>	A programme is in place for activity providers to demonstrate their safety credentials	
CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT		
<b>Statutory Approval</b>	Evidence of consultation and approval with appropriate statutory bodies can be demonstrated	
<b>Biosecurity &amp; Invasive Species</b>	Proactive measures are in place to stop the spread of invasive species and harmful pathogens	
<b>Environmental Education</b>	The Leave No Trace Ireland Principles have been incorporated	
<b>Litter</b>	The Blueway is free from litter and fly-tipped waste	
SUSTAINABILITY		
<b>Management Group</b>	A Blueway Management Group is in place – led by a Local Authority or State Agency	
<b>Management Plan</b>	A Blueway Management Plan is in place	
<b>Visitor Feedback</b>	A formal process is in place to monitor visitor feedback	

## BLUEWAY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

Blueway Development Groups will be required to cover the cost of preliminary and registration assessments to be carried out on Blueways.

It is anticipated that all accredited Blueways on the island of Ireland will also require re-inspection every three years. This cost must be considered during feasibility and planning stages on all projects and should be included in project budgets and funding applications.

Detailed information on the planning process is provided within [www.bluewaysdevelopment.org](http://www.bluewaysdevelopment.org)







**THE BLUEWAY PARTNERSHIP COMPRISES:**



[www.sportireland.ie](http://www.sportireland.ie)



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority

[www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie)



[www.waterwaysireland.org](http://www.waterwaysireland.org)



[www.tourismni.com](http://www.tourismni.com)



[www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

**DISCLAIMER**

Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this publication. The Blueway Partnership cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, future publications will be amended accordingly.