

Anne Valley Walk Multi-Access Biodiversity Trail

Opportunities



Overview

The Anne Valley Walk in Co. Waterford is one of Ireland's few Multi-Access graded trails. This 4.5km linear nature trail winds alongside 12 lakes and through restored wetlands, offering full accessibility for wheelchair users, buggies, and those with limited mobility, without compromising its peaceful rural setting.

In 2023 and 2024, the trail saw many upgrades aimed at offering a high-quality amenity for all, including people with additional mobility needs. A major improvement was the resurfacing of large sections of the path, which had suffered erosion over time. The smoother, more even surface now ensures a safer and more comfortable experience for all users.

Wheelchair-accessible features were also improved, including better access to scenic areas. Old timber viewing platforms by the lakes—popular for birdwatching and nature observation—were replaced with durable, slip-resistant platforms made from recycled plastic, offering greater safety and reduced maintenance. To further boost safety, deteriorated wooden way markers were removed and replaced with long-lasting, visible recycled plastic markers.

These updates reflect a strong commitment to universal design principles and environmental sustainability, ensuring the Anne Valley Walk remains an inclusive and welcoming amenity for all visitors.

Objective

The Anne Valley Walk upgrades aimed to improve accessibility, safety, and sustainability, ensuring the trail remains inclusive for all. Works focused on resurfacing eroded paths for smoother access for wheelchair users, families with buggies, and those with mobility needs. Viewing platforms and waymarkers were upgraded with recycled plastic to reduce slipping hazards and maintenance. Overall, the improvements reflect a strong commitment to universal access and environmental responsibility, while preserving the trail's natural beauty for all visitors.



Location:
Waterford



Project Lead:

Waterford LEADER Partnership
Rural Recreation Officer

Tags:

Maintenance, Walking trails,
Nature connection, People with
a disability, Older Adults



Opportunities

The Anne Valley is an amenity which prioritises accessibility and biodiversity, providing opportunities year-round for people with all levels of mobility to be active and engage with nature.

The walk caters to roughly 40,000 users per year. Of these users, a large proportion are wheelchair users, families with buggies, or people with other mobility needs. The upgrades to the surface, waymarking and viewing platforms allow safe access to the natural surroundings, uniquely rich in native biodiversity. Disability support groups, such as the Brothers of Charity, use the walk on a weekly basis at a minimum with their clients.

Challenges

- Informing the investment: Ensuring that the infrastructure and future maintenance is taking into account the needs of users with mobility needs, rather than assuming what is needed.
- Balancing Access with Nature Preservation: Ensuring full accessibility without detracting from the trail's rural and natural feel required thoughtful integration of built infrastructure.

Actions to support environmental sustainability

The upgrades represent more than just functional improvements. They also reflect the strong environmental ethos embedded in the trail by the local community trail management organisation. By choosing recycled plastic over new timber, the project reduces demand for virgin materials and extends the life cycle of existing resources, supporting the circular economy.

These recent improvements reinforce its status as a multi-access trail, suitable for nature lovers of all ages and abilities. By investing in more accessible infrastructure, the walk continues to provide the opportunity to people of all levels of ability to connect with nature at a peaceful, inclusive amenity.

More information

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Solutions

- Informing the Investment: Getting information and hearing the lived experience directly from users with additional needs and support workers informed the many choices made in selecting materials and the placement of infrastructure.
- Balancing Access with Nature Preservation: The recycled plastic materials chosen for their durable and slip-resistant qualities is textured with a wood grain pattern to appear more closely like a natural material, fitting in with the surroundings. The material used to resurface the path is the same type of stone found in the area, ensuring that the colour is not visually intrusive and the stone will not negatively impact habitats.

