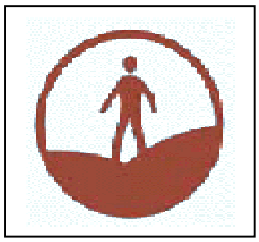
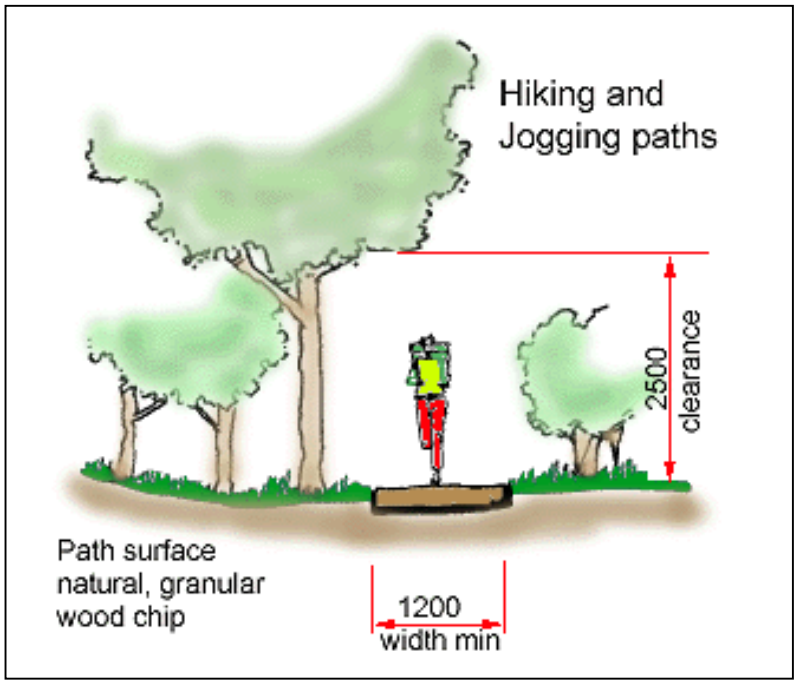
Hiking or Rambler's Paths



These paths are intended for the use of people with little or no mobility disabilities or impairments. They are normally designed to provide challenges (within limits) to users. These paths are unsuited to wheeled travel, users of mobility aids or people who have breathing impairments. Mountain bike paths follow similar criteria but are often narrower, these paths need passing and rest places especially on and at the top of steep gradients.

See Country Paths and Surfaces series of guides for details of path design.



It is recommended that no more than one-third of the total path length for a hiking/walking path exceed 1:12 (8.3%).

Surfaces can be any material but should be smooth and level without tripping hazards.

Please note: it should be realised that cost and experience constraints are both applicable to hiking path design and upkeep.

General user paths

The following gradients are often too steep for many pedestrians and mobility vehicle users. Hiking paths may be steeper than the gradients shown with resting places at greater intervals.

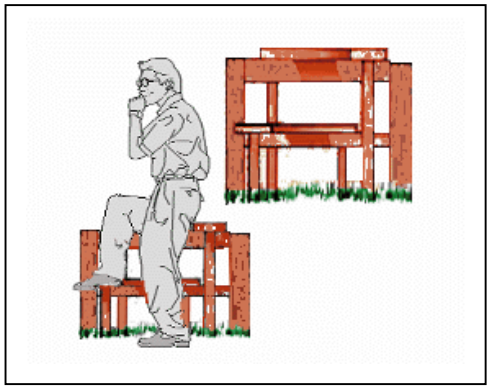
In addition, the following guidelines should be followed for path sections intended for general use:

Gradient	Rest places
1:10 (10%)	20 metres
1:8 (12.5%)	10 metres
1:5 (20%)	5 metres

The path gradient between the maximum gradient segments should return to 1:20 (5 percent), if not level, for a minimum distance of 1800 mm to allow resting opportunities for people who have difficulty travelling over sloped surfaces.

Hiker's paths

- **Hiker's paths should not exceed 1:5 gradients. If steeper climbs are needed the path should have steps in place.**
- **In general user sections if, due to local topography, the path would be steeper than the above (general user) recommendations permit. Switchbacks should be considered to lessen the overall length of a slope.**
- **Where inclines of the steeper gradients (above 1:12) are included in a path a notice should warn users at path head and in advertising literature etc.**
- **Steps are allowable along hiker's paths as these paths are not suited to mobility vehicles. Steps should still be designed for safety and maintained to a good standard.**
  There should be no more than 18 steps in any flight. There should be a maximum of 3 flights in line, then direction should change. Risers should be solid and between 150 and 200 mm height. Treads should be 300-450 deep and 1200 mm wide (where possible) 900 mm min.
  (See our guide Country Steps)
- **Step types can be almost any style but risers and tread going should be consistent throughout the flight.**
- **Provision of handrails along steeper sections of paths should be considered. Handrails should always be sited on at least one side of any flight of steps.**
- **Wider resting places should be provided at intervals on narrow paths. These should be sited at sheltered locations and at look-out points. Resting places should be sited alongside but out of the path route. (see table above)**
- **Steps over water bars and similar should be 200 mm high maximum.**
- **Hiking rest areas should be provided with a mixture of seating opportunities, including dropped tree trunks, rocks and perch/stiles. Very heights e.g. 450, 500, 600, 700 mm to suit people's stature and ability to sit. Similar perches can be used to enhance the utility of look-out**

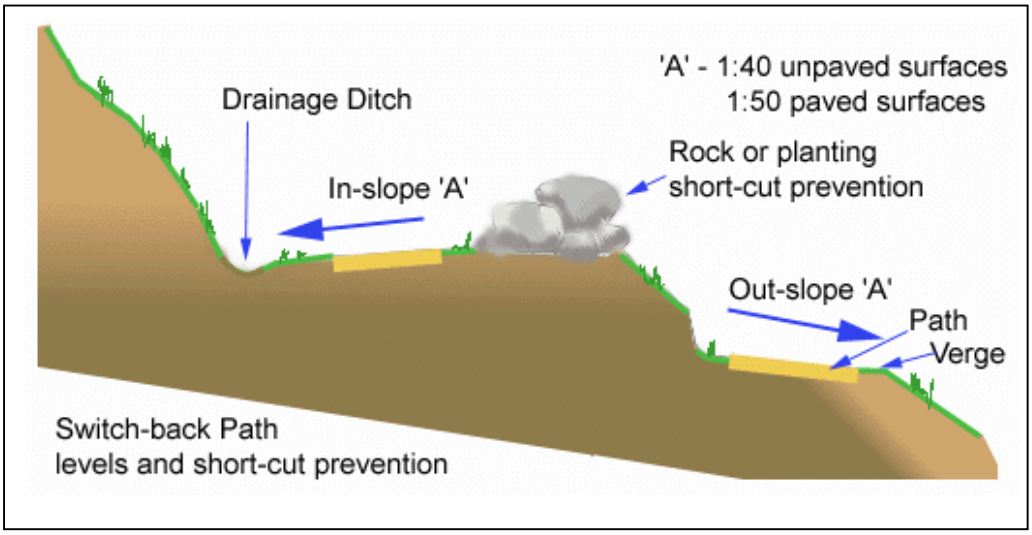


and viewing points and fishing stations. Perches should be maintained and strong enough to support expected weights, 200 x 100 verticals, 73 x 100 horizontals or 300 x 25 thick planks.

§ Shelters should be available at intervals along mountain and coastal hiking paths. In mountain locations where the path is likely to be used in winter consideration should be given to providing a means of communication for obtaining assistance. Managers should check reception for mobile phones along their route where weather could be a problem for path users.

§ All streams and culverts should be bridged where possible. A handrail should be placed on at least one side of any bridge.

§ Use of stiles should be avoided or an alternate method of crossing should be available alongside/near the stile.



§ Where paths climb slopes using switchbacks plan switch intervals to reduce the likelihood of people taking short cuts. Banks are quickly eroded and casual routes are often in places where water flows are likely to be greatest. Rocks and thorny plantings can be used to reduce the chances of short-cuts developing.

§ Surfaces can be natural or reinforced. See notes on Upland and Wetland path erosion and damage prevention in our guide Country path Operation and Management.

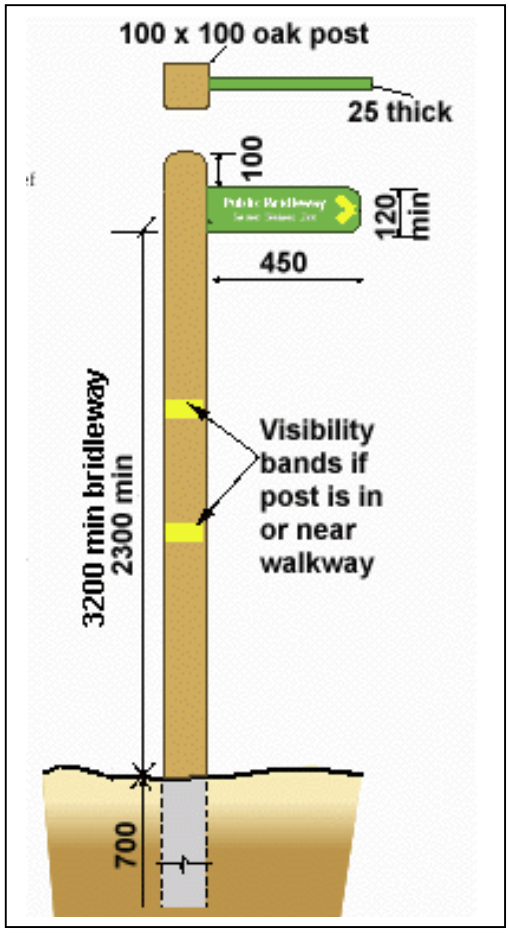
§ Pitched paths sections can be used so long as care is taken during installation and maintenance to avoid tripping hazards.

§ Suitable guarding should be provided at cliff edges and other places where falls are a potential hazard. On hiking paths these could be a 600 mm wide verge along side a surfaced path. Guardrails should be considered is more well used locations. Where the path has a grass surface a change of surface texture 600 mm wide and 600 mm from the edge should be provided to act as a warning of a hazard.

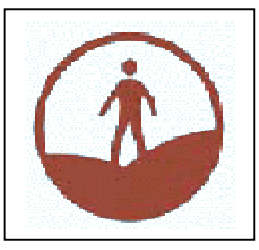
Waymarking

Signage on these paths need not be as constant as for general use paths, as these paths are deigned to provide greater challenges to users.

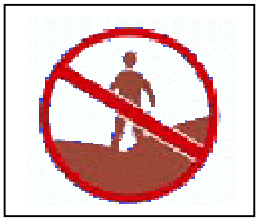
- **Signs should be sited close to the path but not where it could form an obstruction. Where people with low vision can be expected to use the path a tactile readable sign at 1400 mm height should be considered.**



- **Consider placing a tactile readable sign before any dangerous section of a path. Hazardous sections should be signed (e.g. falling rocks, loose surface, cliff edge)**
- **Signs should be easy to identify and consistent style and located in a consistent manner.**
- **Use standard colours for signs. Using non-standard colours on signs can make them loose their meaning for some people.**
- **Indicate on the sign any steep gradients or stretches of path which could be a problem for people with mobility and visual impairments, i.e. slopes above 1:14 or boggy or rough surface sections. Warning should be given in time to prevent people attempting unsuitable paths and having to return to their start point.**



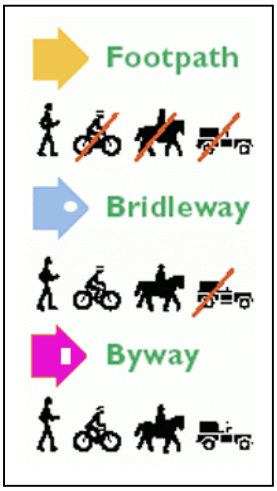
Use this symbol in the countryside, it shows that land may be open for public access on foot (or by wheelchair). Access rights for other activities may also exist. Formal paths are not required although land managers may wish to provide paths to encourage people to stay away from certain sensitive areas.



Use this symbol in the countryside, it shows that there are no public access rights beyond the point where the symbol is located.

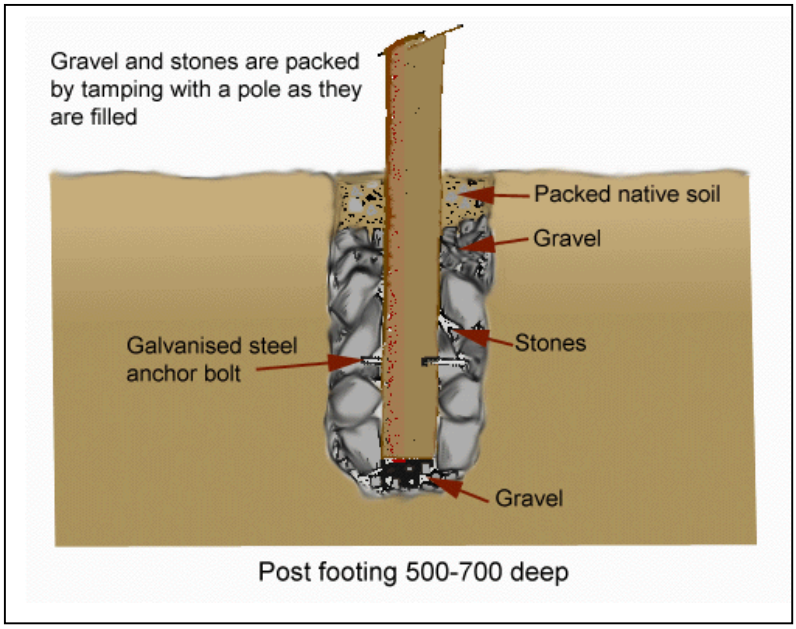
The access symbol should normally be sited at any access point to the land in conjunction with other signage or on existing structures such as finger posts, waymark posts, gates, and bridges, or up against other man made structures such as walls and hedgerows.

- **Waymarkers should be placed at path head and foot or road crossing every path crossing, path dividing/joining and gate.**
- **Maker arrows should be at least 150 mm height.**



The round hole in the bridle path arrow and square hole in the Byway arrow are suggested as aids to people with low vision. These are not 'official' markings but are simple to provide and if used should be used consistently.

Signs should be securely fixed in the ground so that they are not easily turned or pushed over. Use of stones to pack the footing helps secure the sign and reduces rot by improved drainage.



Post footing 500-700 deep