



Country Path Service Areas

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Country Path Service Areas

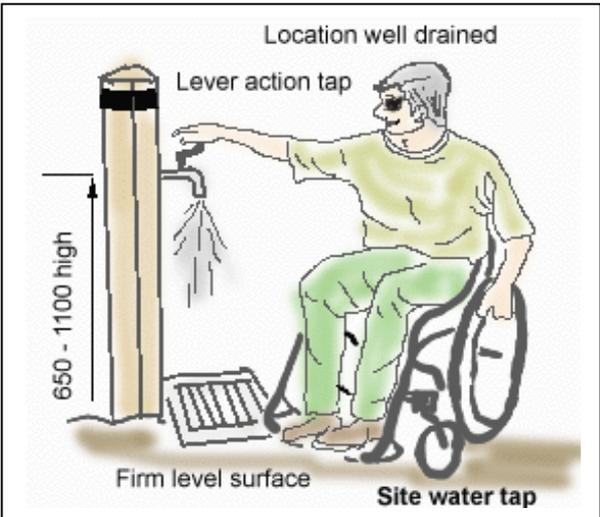
Path Head

Path heads refer to areas specifically designed as primary means of accessing a path or network of paths.

They may include shelters, restrooms, maps, parking, picnic facilities, and other recreational amenities all of which should be designed to accessibility standards. These should be placed at the start of a path and at any place where a reasonable number of users may accumulate to act as rest areas.

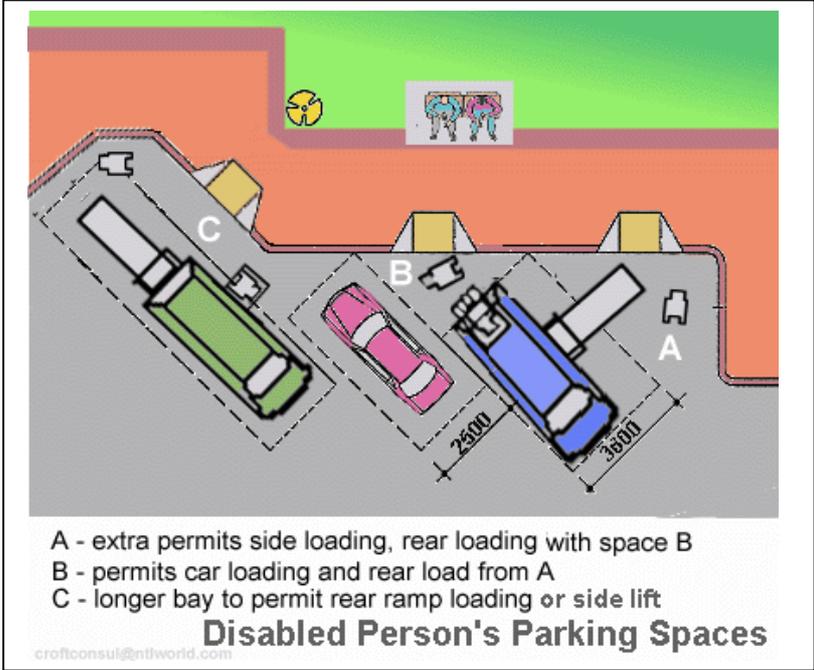
A formal path head is not always feasible or necessary, however, provision of parking, shelter and toilets within reasonable distance from the path head should be considered.

Public service bus and rail stops should be available within reasonable distance of path heads. These should be designed to access standards.

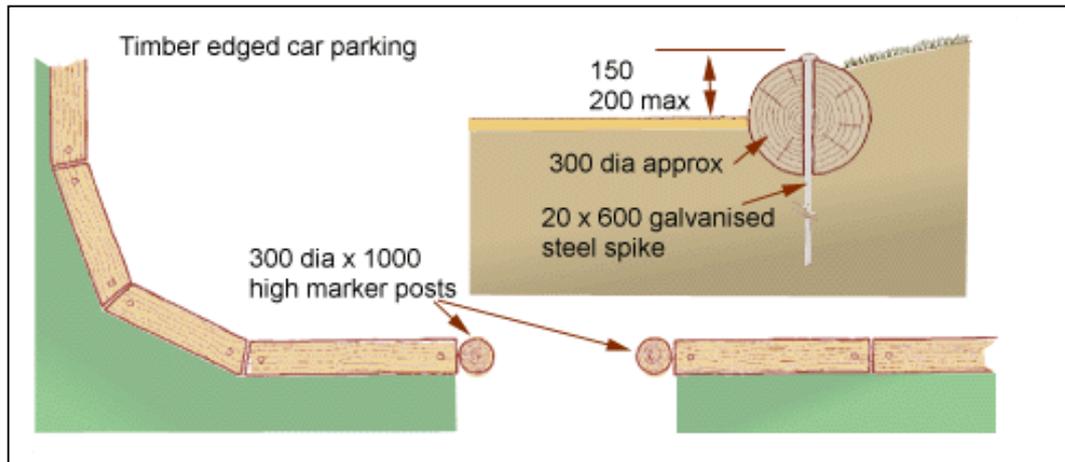


Path heads should at least include parking and a path network map, but may also include restrooms, drinking water, picnic facilities, horse tie-rails & drinking troughs, and other recreational amenities.

Parking areas should be drained, level and free from gravel and other unsuitable surfaces. At least 1 and 6% (larger car parks) of parking spaces should be designated for disabled users. At least 1 disabled parking space should be suitable for a van as many people with disabilities use vans for transport.



Timber edging can be used to delineate the parking area. Timber should be approximately 300 mm diameter and set into the ground half their diameter. Galvanised steel spikes 20 dia x 600 long should be used to fix the timbers every 2000 mm. Vertical timbers with reflective/coloured band at the top can be used to mark entry points. The timbers help keep vehicles in areas where they are wanted and away from sensitive locations.



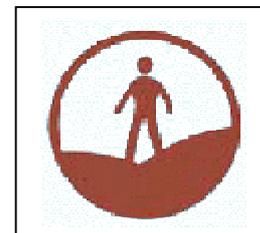
Where the path is intended for use by equestrian users the parking area will need to be large enough to permit unloading of horses. These areas should be separate from those used by the general public.

Where the path/service area is intended to cater for boating and water sport parking space for trailers needs to be considered together with access to the water.

The service area may also be intended for use by campers with touring vans, camper vans, tents etc. (see our Guide 'Accessible Camping' for further details.)

Access Points

Access points refer to minor connections between the path and nearby parks, communities, or roadways. Access points are important because many paths will run for long stretches surrounded by private property, and access should be provided wherever possible, but controlled so that ad hoc paths do not occur on private land. Some access points are automatic, such as when a path crosses a roadway, and others may be carefully planned and implemented, such as a connection to a path which would require a railway crossing.



Access points should include signage identifying the path (see our Country Signs guide) and may include a map and drinking water. Limited parking may also





be included, but because path access points are designed to give access from local amenities to the path, it may be unnecessary.

Public transport stops should be within reasonable distance of access points and their route adequately signed. Consider providing shelter and lighting at public transport stops.

Rest areas

Rest areas are generally small support facilities located along a path, which do not provide access to surrounding amenities. Rest areas are places to stop and rest off the main travelled way of the path. They may also serve as interpretative areas or overlooks. The design of rest areas can be as varied as the path modes they serve, and the specific design at each location should be considered individually. The following guidelines set forth some general recommendations regarding path rest areas. (See also our guides to 'Picnic Areas' and 'Street Seating'.)

- Path rest areas should at least include a seating area and a place to park the vehicle (mobility scooter, bicycle, horse, etc.). They may also include drinking water, restroom facilities, and signage. Rest areas on equestrian paths should include hitching posts and a suitable water supply (a stream or a trough).
- Path rest areas should be located approximately every twenty minutes to half hour of travel time. The distance between rest areas is dictated by the use modes on the path.
- Path rest areas should be located after any prolonged uphill slope, especially for bicycle and walking routes.
- An accessible public transport stop nearby, signage at the shelter should give service times. Not everyone has use of personal transport, only 60%, less in some areas and amongst certain age and ability groups, have use of a car. The percentage amongst tourists, disabled and older people without private transport can be much higher, these are the people who need to be catered for as these are the people who bring money into the area.

When developing path heads and access points, it is important that designers recognise that people with disabilities enjoy all types of paths in addition to pedestrian facilities and hiking routes. People with disabilities participate in path activities at a wide range of skill levels. Therefore it is recommended that an accessible pathway be provided to all path-heads and access points, regardless of the permitted use modes. Furthermore, built facilities, such as restrooms and parking, should be designed according to the accessibility guidelines.

Information Features

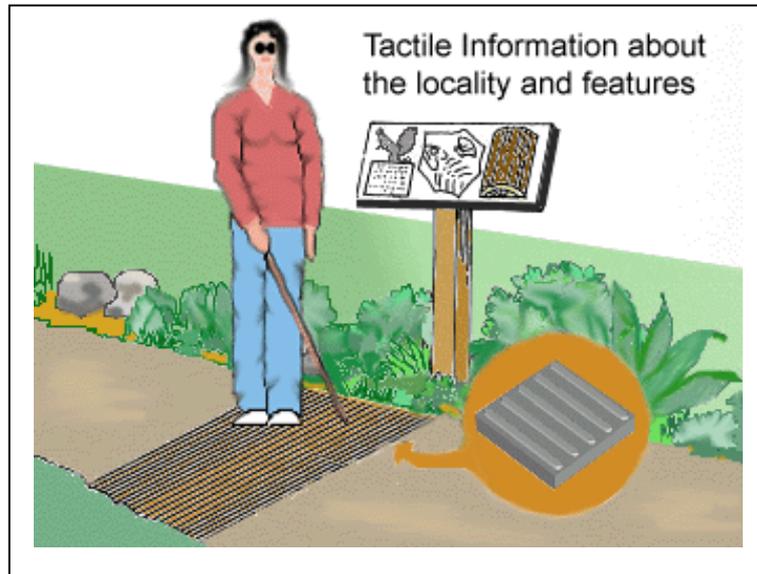
Part of the draw to a country path is to gain an understanding of the environment through which it passes. Many paths will offer the opportunity to educate the user on various aspects of the landscape, including native plants and animals, geologic history, local history, and local economy.

Information facilities should offer a view of the item to be interpreted, whether that be the agricultural landscape in general or a specific type of tree.

Some paths may capitalise on many Information opportunities, while others may offer them as educational diversions incorporated into rest areas. Each

path's Information program is different and the extent of interpretation should be based on the use of the path, with interpretation facilities decreasing as user speeds increase. The following guidelines offer some general suggestions regarding Information facilities.

- Information facilities should include signage with ample graphics, to engage users of all ages. They may also include any of the rest area facilities listed above.
- Consideration should be given to providing information in a format that is accessible to people with vision impairments and people with limited language skills. This may include providing objects that can be examined or manipulated, or providing audio information in addition to written information. Providing tactile readable 3D maps of the area providing text and audio in alternate languages (dependent on likely visitor numbers)
- Information facilities should be placed wherever there is a significant cultural, historical, or natural phenomenon.
- Small Information facilities may be implemented more frequently if user speeds are low, as on walking/hiking paths.
- Forest management and archaeological sites should also be included. Erect signs explaining work done at a site. Thinning areas and even small clear cuts can be interesting. Explaining



what has been found and what the site hopes to achieve are of interest to visitors.

Colour relationships for the siting of signs

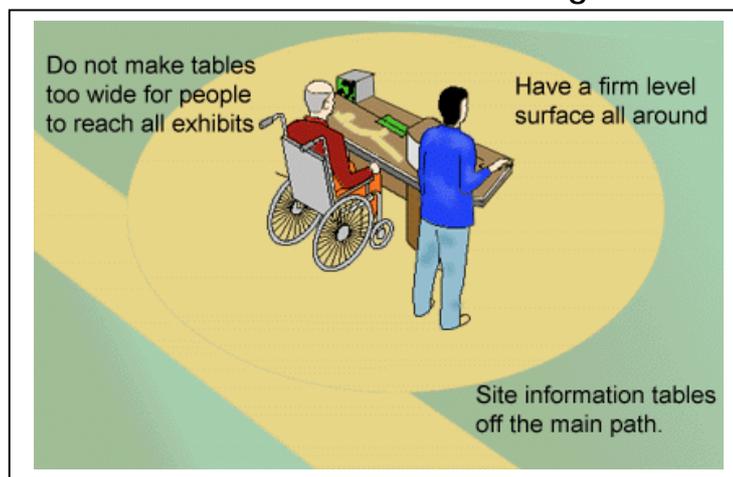
Background	Sign Board (matt surface)	Legend
Red brick or dark stone	White	Black, dark green or dark blue
Light brick or light stone	Black / dark	White or yellow
Whitewashed walls	Black / dark	White or yellow
Green vegetation	White	Black, dark green or dark blue
Back-lit sign	Black	White or yellow

- Selection of the colour scheme for the notice board and it's text is another consideration in making information accessible. See table.

Relationship text size to reading distance

Viewing distance in Metres	Good Text Height mm	Minimum Text Height mm
1.0 metres	29	15
1.5 metres	44	22
2.0 metres	58	29
2.5 metres	74	37
3.0 metres	87	44

- The size of the text relates to the distance and emphasis placed on the information, The table illustrates good text sizes for notices and information boards.
- Text and illustrations on information and notice boards should not be below 720 mm or above 1800 mm above the ground surface.
- Table exhibits should not be too deep for people to reach all parts. Tables should have tops and exhibits between 680 and 1100 mm





height. Clearance for wheelchairs and legs should be available under the table allowing people to approach and reach into the exhibit.

- Have a level drained surface around the exhibit/information table at least 1500 mm wide where possible, 1200 mm min.
- Place information off the main path so that people can pass safely.

Maintenance

Erosion problems should be corrected. Water-bars can be used to slow water flow and minimise erosion on the paths. Drainage system should be checked for blockage and silting.

Once or twice a year, prune trees and shrubs one to two feet from trail edges. Check for any adjacent or overhanging hazards.

Signage should be checked for damage, misdirection and replaced as soon as possible, having a few of the more common signs as spares can help fast replacement. Hazard and danger signs should be kept in store for use where there is particular danger to visitors.

Fallen leaves can be a slip hazard for all path users and managers should assess whether the safety of visitors will be affected and take action to clear excessive build ups.

All paths should be inspected following storms for fallen trees and tree limbs and any other damage along the route.

1.1.1 Tree Planting

The potential for environmental control through tree planting is under exploited in UK. Trees absorb CO₂, save heat loss by sheltering a property or walk from the prevailing wind, and control overheating by casting shade. Shading is best provided by deciduous trees to the west of a building or walk, blocking summer afternoon sun but admitting winter sun when the leaves have fallen. Planting trees to the south is not recommended – even when the leaves have fallen, the trunk and branches block too much winter sun.

Tree planting should also take into account the problem of fallen leaves and branches on paths, footways and to culverts with low water flows.

1.1.2 Buildings

Note: by 2005, under an EU directive, all buildings must be given a certificate relating to their energy performance.

In May 2004, the Sustainable Buildings Task Group recommended that the Government and building industry adopt a national Code for Sustainable Building which would include standards in energy and water efficiency, and waste management that are above the minimum required by Building Regulations.



Questions to developers

- Have the needs of potential users been taken into account in the design, i.e. older and disabled persons, children.
- Is your building orientated to take maximum advantage of Solar Gain?
- Is it designed as low thermal capacity / quick warm-up or high thermal capacity / slow response?
- Have you detailed for low air leakage?
- Will the ventilation system cope quietly and efficiently for all climatic variations?
- Are you proposing the generation of renewable energy?
- What is the design life of your building? How many of the components have that life expectancy?
- What materials have been traditionally used locally, and why?
- Are your 'renewable' materials from a certified source?
- Are your recycled materials carefully sourced?
- Can parts of the building can be readily changed and which parts are permanent?
- Will the partitioning system give adequate noise privacy?
- Will changes cause the environmental control to function less efficiently?
- Would any new proposal function effectively as a life-long building?
- Are you specifying natural materials wherever possible?
- Can sunlight be admitted into living/working areas for much of the day?
- Could the internal living/working areas be described as spacious?
- What is the relationship between internal and external space?
- Does the external space encourage association with the natural seasonal environment?
- Do your proposals reflect the distinctive local character? Are there qualitative shortcomings locally that you could remedy?
- Are the proposals sensitive to the landscape context?
- Are the internal environmental control installations simple to understand and operate? How much could be described as "Install and Forget"?
- Will the new development be visible from long distances?
- How best can the proposal relate to the existing land form?
- What are the characteristics of local traditional settlement patterns? Which characteristics could be used in a modern context?



- Is the scale, layout and siting of the scheme sensitive to the local context?
- Have open spaces and links between the settlement and the countryside been protected or created?
- Does the development site contain trees, hedges, streams, wetlands or other features which contribute to its ecosystem, and which could be retained?
- Has water and sewage disposal been assessed?
 - Have water-efficient accessible appliances, including showers, water closets, white goods and taps, been specified?
 - Has the plumbing design incorporated best practice such as minimised hot water dead-legs, flow regulation and visible overflows and tundishes?
 - Is the landscape water-efficient, e.g. avoiding thirsty plant and raised planters which require heavy irrigation?
 - Can pipes to outdoor taps and drinking troughs be checked for leakage and individually isolated?
 - Have Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) principles been considered and has the infiltration of roof and surface water been maximised?
 - Is mains sewerage available (where possible, connection is advised)?
 - If on-site sewage disposal is required, what measures have been taken to address potential pollution of ground and surface water? (The Environment Agency should be consulted where on-site sewage treatment is required.)

Assessment

When assessing a location for its suitability for use as a service area, consider the following Specific Requirements and Needs (this information may be from previous planning documents):

- Desired level of development (i.e., urban, rural, semi-primitive)
- Availability of water for flush toilets, showers, and/or laundry
- Number of vehicle pull through sites with shade shelters
- Number of shade shelters and group-use areas
- Number of camping sites with full utility hook-ups
- Number of day-use parking sites
- Location of playground, if any
- Facilities that need to be replaced or upgraded to meet Recreation and local regulations and standards
- Seating and tables, in picnic area and along walks.
- Availability of drinking water (this should be free of charge)



- Site-specific issues relative to development that were identified during the planning stage
- Outlines of restricted use areas (i.e., non-motorised areas, cultural sites, wetlands, etc.)
- Requirements for interpretation and the desired associated facilities, (i.e., informational signs or kiosks)
- Environmental compliance requirements that affect site design
- Reservoir/lake/river water surface levels (at season's highest, average summer depth, and season's lowest)
- Concession services required
- Any factors physically limiting recreation (i.e., frequency and depth of flooding in flood plains)
- Anticipated user activities and needs (fishing, hiking, water skiing, cycling, equestrian, etc.)
- Public transport availability. Are there realistic public transport systems available? If not, does the development include such systems?
- Does the new development have reasonable access to a full range of community facilities, ideally accessible by cycle or foot?
- Does the development encourage a reduced level of car ownership or car use?
- Demographics of user (age, physical abilities, etc.)
- Length of stay (a few hours, overnight, few days, etc.)
- Whether the facility is a destination or stop-over site
- Use seasons
- Differing uses by different users as the seasons change
- Number of users expected to simultaneously use the site on an average weekend and/or a holiday
- Type of equipment the user is expected to bring along and the spatial/physical site requirements to accommodate that equipment
- Utility requirements of the user (water, electricity, sewer, etc.)

Operation and Maintenance

Facility Operations and Maintenance Requirements that Affect Site Design:

- Facility security and fire protection
- Fee collection methods and location
- General maintenance of seating, tables and picnic areas.
- Lighting, barriers and utilities maintenance.
- Paths, Roads and buildings needed for general maintenance of the area and their associated spatial and functional requirements



- Requirements for vandal-proof materials
- Requirements to close off one part of a facility from another
- Sanitation cleaning and maintenance
- Signage and notices maintenance.
- Waste management.

Site Topography:

- Site topography covering an area large enough to include all potential site development. The extent of the topography should include the access road and the probable site entrance area. Contours should be at half metre intervals or 250 mm intervals if the site is very flat. The data should be in the form of an electronic drawing file that can be used to create a base map. All points contained in the drawing file should have a "north" axis and a value which corresponds to onsite elevation reference height.
- Underwater contours with the elevation referenced to upland elevation, if needed for boat ramps
- Surface drainage features (i.e., streams and ravines and any existing bridges or culverts)
- Locations for borrow areas, storage of construction materials, and sites for stockpiling of topsoil
- Existing built site features (i.e., roads, parking, turnarounds, buildings, structures, power lines, and buried utility lines and tanks)