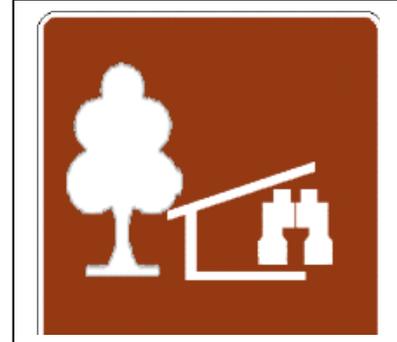


Countryside Formal Areas

Nature Reserves, Wildlife & Bird Watching

These are a common interest for people with mobility limitations wildlife organisations should try to make as much of their area accessible by providing well surfaced routes, adequate bridges, shelters and seating at regular intervals.

If you manage a nature reserve etc., you should provide information on the site (e.g. what is being protected and why) and on where people can best go in order to avoid damage or disturbance. People will normally be assistive in protection of the things they are interested in, and all visitors like to have some understanding of what is new to them.



Providing marked paths can help to manage access and minimise damage. Making reasonable charges for entry, car parking etc. is acceptable and can help defray costs.

Providing facilities for making/selling hot drinks in poor weather and cool drinks in summer is essential to many people, larger sites should consider a cafe etc.

On managed sites drinking water should always be freely available to all employees and visitors.

A visitor centre with accessible literature and audio visual presentations will enhance the visit and encourage a return. Hearing loops and subtitling should be provided for any video presentation.

Lookout and view points should have accessible routes and provide sufficient guarded space out of the circulation routes for people riding mobility vehicles, pushchairs or using mobility aids.

Sufficient seating should be provided at the view point for visitors to sit with their companion mobility vehicle rider. See our guide 'Street Seating'.

Where coin operated telescopes are provided they should be on stands of two (or more) heights 800 mm and 1300 mm, to cater for children, seated people and standing adults.

Where viewing sites are at a distance from car parking shelter should be provided.

Guard-rails and walls at drops should not be high enough to obstruct the view of seated people (680 mm). As this rail height is

lower than the recommended safety height of guard-rails a tactile warning of the hazard should be in place.

Ornamental & Formal Gardens

Ornamental gardens can be a maze of hazards for older and disabled people or young children. Many of these gardens are protected by one of the Heritage organisations who wish to retain the original designed in ambience of the place. This does not mean that nothing can be done and does not remove the owner/manager's responsibility for the safety of all visitors.

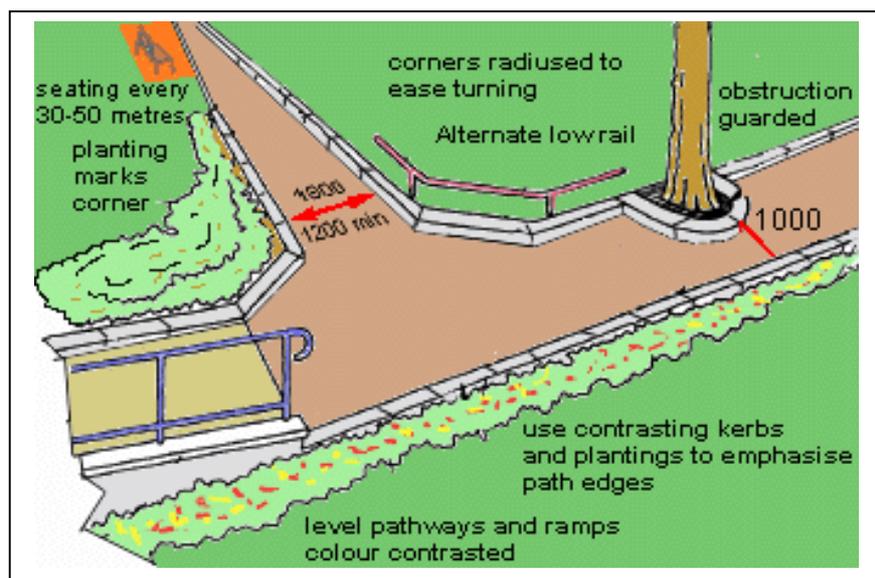
One of the primary if not the most important criteria used to determine the type of surface should be to consider the opinion of those who will be using the path or user preference. For example a paved track for mountain bikers is not the most appropriate design. The most important factors for most users are

- 1) having enough room and
- 2) having a smooth, regular surface.

Reports state that asphalt provides a softer surface and is preferred by joggers and walkers. Experience has shown that joggers and walkers preferred the smoother, softer, asphalt surface of an existing roadway to a concrete path that was constructed for them adjacent to the roadway. In addition, the use of paths by roller-skaters, cyclists, mobility vehicle riders, people with various other disabilities and parents pushing baby buggies is ever increasing and a majority of these users prefer the smooth, joint-free travel that asphalt provides.

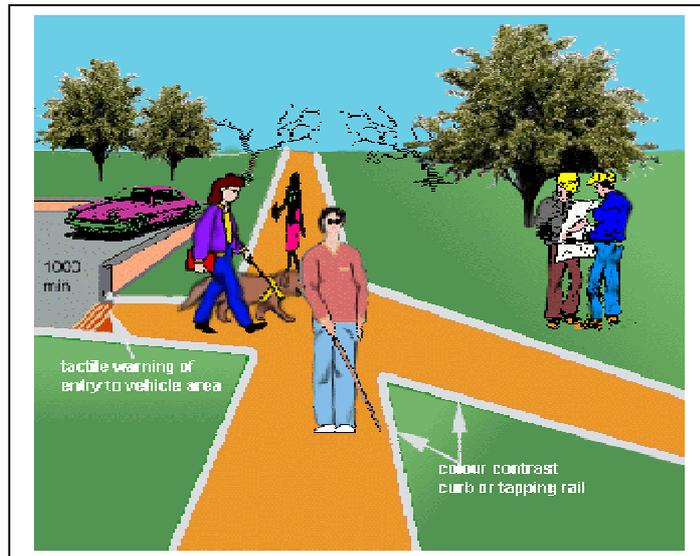
The first measure that must be taken is to carryout an audit of the site and identify every potential hazard for people with disabilities, children and older people.

The Access Audit should be made in conjunction with a Health & Safety Audit and the results applied to a Risk Assessment. This Risk Assessment should be held on record as proof of your exercising your 'duty of care' and included in your Access



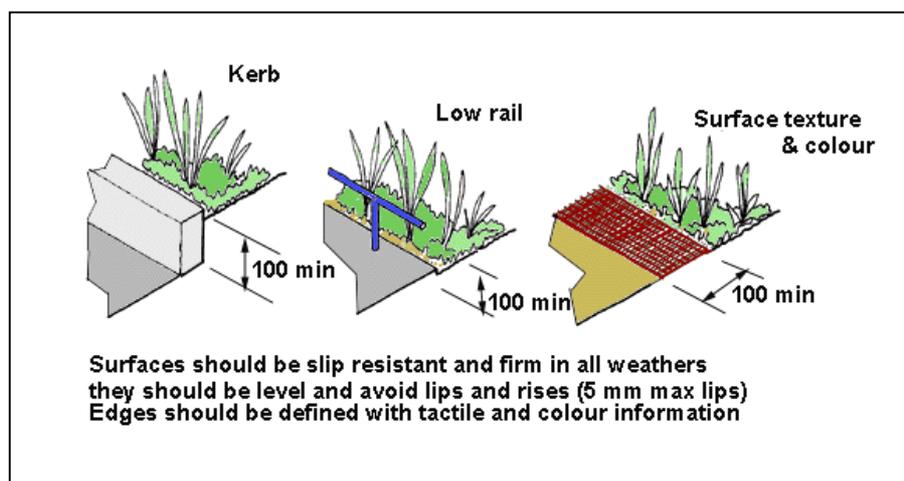
Statement. Remember – Accessibility is basically about safety and your attention to the safety of your visitors will be judged in any legal case.

Based on the audit provide a warning that hazards do exist on the site. This should be given in literature and clear text/symbol notices placed at entry points to the site. A tactile map of the site is another complementary method of providing warning in a form that will assist people with low vision.



During refurbishment and maintenance many of the items identified can be moved, removed or modified to eliminate the hazard. This should be planned on the basis of the audits. e.g. a set of irregular height steps can be made consistent heights, hand-rails which match the period can be added, a new wall could be built to conceal and contain a ramp, a tactile warning strip can be built into the walkway to warn of steps (see our guide to Country Steps,) and pond & fountain edges alternatively the footpath moved slightly to provide a wider grassed bank. There are many similar things which can be done which are unobtrusive and will not harm the original concept.

Some hazards such as sudden un-guarded drops and low level tripping hazards should be rectified as soon as identified. Drops can be protected by use of in period guard-rails, walls or grass verges. Low obstacles (less than 1000 mm high) such as small fountains can have tactile warning in the form of cobbles or similar.

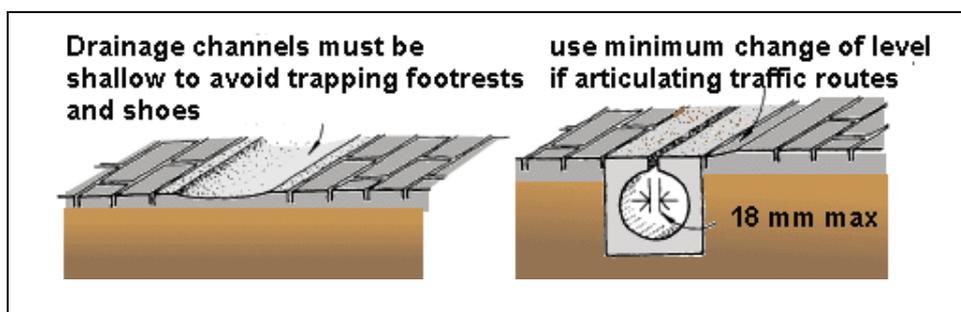


Paths can be edged with kerbs, tapping rails, verges, tactile paving or plantings. These can be selected to suit the ambience the garden is designed to project.

Low hedges can be grown taller (1000 mm),

Single steps are a hazard which is unacceptable for anyone and should be removed by spreading the drop into a ramp or by adding an extra step.

Loose paving, gravel surfaced walks and similar hazards and impediments should be removed by re-paving. Paving level changes should be flared into the walkway so that they do not form a tripping hazard or deflect wheelchair castor wheels.

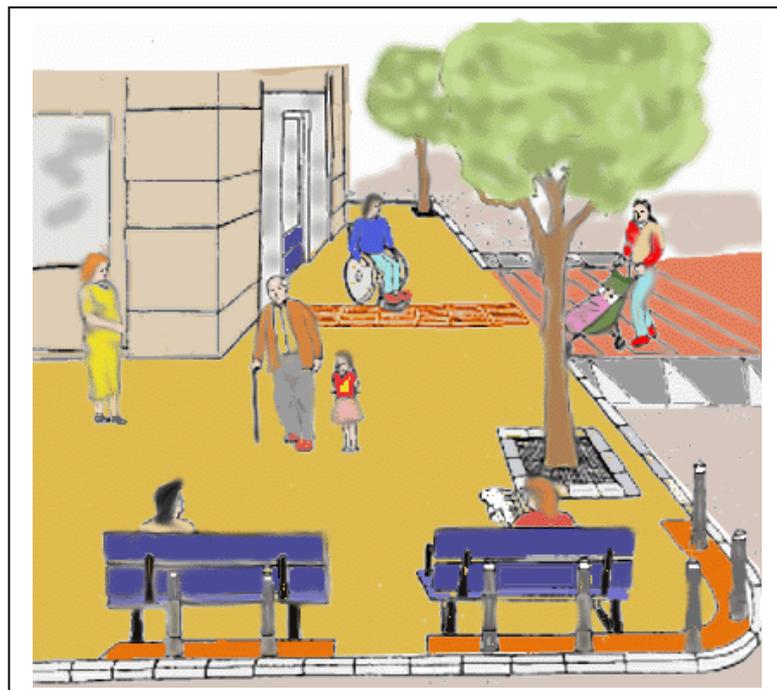


Tactile warnings must not follow the pattern of those for dropped kerbs or other used in busy places. The main criteria is that they must be identifiable and be done consistently throughout the site.

Colour contrasts can be muted so long as they are distinct. There is no requirement or indeed no need for bright garish colours. Beware of using grey on columns and posts as this tends to blend with most background colours.

Colour in the landscape not only improves safety it enhances the location for everyone.

In service areas there is a need to be more formal especially where roadways and pedestrians mix. Standard Part M and BS8300 features should be used in these locations. The site should give



preference to people on foot, riding mobility vehicles or cycles over motor traffic.

With a little thought on the part of the designer most obstacles can be removed or worked around and many of the costs can be absorbed into normal maintenance cycles and costs.

See also our guide 'Street Traders and Cafés' which deals with area seating and outdoors sales areas.

Archaeological & Historical Sites

Archaeological sites and ancient monuments should be respected they are sensitive to damage and removal of items may lose valuable historic information which is every ones heritage. Incalculable damage has been done in the past both purposefully by political and religious rulers and as a consequence of lack of understanding by land users. As individuals and group organisers you should be aware of a plan to reduce interference to a minimum.

Site managers should be aware that people will be interested in what they are doing and finding. It is in their own interest to make provision to cater to this interest. Use of signage and fences will help but providing accessible information about the site will help more. Visitors are less likely to damage something if they are informed than if given a blanket 'keep out'. Remember, what is being dug out is not just part of the archaeologist's heritage it is part of the heritage of all citizens.

Not all sites can be made accessible to everyone without destroying what is being excavated or protected. However, with a little thought and often at small cost part if not all a site can have better accessibility. Providing ramps, handrails, good walking surfaces and large print or tactile information on how visitors can avoid damage as well as information about what is being found. Each site manager should consider what can be done and take appropriate action. To help defray costs it is not unreasonable to make a reasonable charge for access and provision of facilities.

Use of boardwalks with guardrails can protect the surfaces over which they are run while encouraging visitors to remain where the management want them.

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Other organisations please contact us.