

Trail Development Guide - Recommended Approach

<http://www.walkireland.ie/homepage.aspx>

NTAC - Critical Path for Developing A Waymarked Way

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Initial Enquiry

An individual or group making enquiries regarding a proposed waymarked way (whether to the local authority, regional tourist office, Bord Fáilte, county sports partnership or the NWWAC) will be issued with this document

Guidelines for the Developing and Marking of Waymarked Ways.

Concept And Purpose Of A Waymarked Way

Both the concept and purpose of the waymarked way need to be carefully thought through before the development of the way can begin. The following questions need to be asked:

- * *What is understood by a waymarked way?*
- * *What is the purpose of developing the way?*
- * *Who will it benefit?*
- * *Can and will the local communities support it?*
- * *Will the local authority support it?*

There should be an initial study to establish who will use the way once it is in place:

- * *Tourist use*
- * *Recreational use*
- * *Daily journeys.*

The purpose for which people will use the way should also be defined:

- * *Health*
- * *Fitness*
- * *Local recreation - short walks - long walks*
- * *Tourist recreation- short walks - long walks.*

Once established that there is a demand, a decision must be made regarding what type of way is most suitable:

- * *Walking*
- * *Cycling*
- * *Multi-use.*

Also the suitability of the terrain and infrastructure for the proposed type of way must be considered.

Appendix 5 gives detailed information on studies leading to route selection.

Detailed initial planning is essential for the development of a successful way.

Formation of a Development Committee

Before starting a project it is essential to form a route development committee to spread and progress the workload.

The local authority and local communities must be involved and it is essential that they both support the proposed project. Many local organisations will be interested in being represented.

The following bodies are very important:

- * *County sports partnership*
- * *Coillte Teoranta**
- * *Regional tourist office*
- * *Local tourism organisations*
- * *Local walker/rambler/cyclist groups*
- * *Local development organisation*
- * *Vocational Educational Committee or other local schools*
- * *Dúchas the Heritage Service, including local wildlife rangers*
- * *Regional fisheries boards**
- * *Waterways Ireland**
- * *County Heritage Officer*
- * *BirdWatch Ireland*
- * *Local authority heritage officer*
- * *IFA/IMSA*
- * *Local youth organisations.*

(* If their property is involved)

The possible contributions of the following should be considered:

- * *FÁS*
- * *Local An Taisce Association*
- * *Local archaeological and historical societies*
- * *Udarás na Gaeltachta (Gaeltacht areas)*
- * *Conservation Volunteers Ireland*
- * *Crann.*

Identification of Possible Line of Way

All waymarked ways, regardless of type or purpose, should be natural routes using existing paths, tracks, forest roads, ride lines, forest firebreaks, green roads, mass paths, school paths, droving paths, coffin roads, boreens and quiet roads. This will not only reduce the costs of establishing the way, but will also provide a more diverse and enjoyable route suitable for use by all age groups and all degrees of experience. See 3.4 for detailed information on route line criteria.

They should also be logical routes. Waymarked ways should avoid deviations from a natural line solely to include items of special interest. Situations where users will be tempted to take a short cut across private land must be excluded.

Walking ways can have a wider choice of small paths, firebreaks and ride lines. They should avoid even quiet roads as much as possible.

Cycle ways require a firm surface. Some of the paths suitable for walkers may be too narrow or too soft for bicycles.

Greenways require the same surfaces as cycle ways, but must be wider in order to accommodate multi-usage, and should preferably include a softer surface for walkers. There may be sections of a greenway where the walkers' path diverges from the path for wheeled users.

Planning and Studies

It is essential that detailed planning is carried out at a very early stage in the development of a way. Studies form an important part of such planning.

The following studies must be included:

- 1. The line of the possible route must be identified by the committee.*
- 2. Surveys of demand, heritage, and transport services must then take place. Detailed guidelines as to how this could be carried out are available from the Heritage Council.*
- 3. Areas of heritage sensitivity must be identified and assessed as to the appropriateness of including or excluding them.*
- 4. Consideration must be given to ongoing long-term maintenance and marketing of the way.*
- 5. Study of relevant research projects.*

Route development committees of walking routes should be aware that waymarked ways are now used, with increasing frequency, by the local community, occasional walkers and family groups who are often car-based and who will walk 8-10 kms approximately. They may prefer shorter loop walks based on a long distance route.

Route development committees must ensure that in proposing a waymarked way they have the full support of all the bodies across whose property it passes.

These may include:

** Private landowners and occupiers (in all future references 'landowner' is held to include 'occupier')*

- * *State and semi-state bodies such as Coillte Teoranta, Dúchas, Waterways Ireland, fisheries boards*
- * *Local authorities.*

In designing the route and assessing usage, carrying capacity of the route must be considered.

This involves:

- * *Accommodation frequency*
- * *Easily eroded surfaces*
- * *Delicate landscape items/areas (see 3.11 for detailed information on heritage).*

Route development committees must be aware that funding will be required for all stages of the existence of a waymarked way, including its ongoing insurance, maintenance and marketing.

Section 3.1 deals with planning and studies in greater detail and must be consulted.

Possible Preliminary Inspection

When a walk is not yet on the ground but the members of its development committee have identified the line they wish it to take, it may be useful to arrange a preliminary inspection to ensure the way will comply with the guidelines of the NWWAC. A preliminary inspection is sometimes required for approval for grant applications. See 3.15 for detailed information on inspections.

Negotiation of Line of Way

The line of the proposed way must be negotiated with any landowners through whose property it is intended to pass. See 3.5 for detailed information on consultation with landowners.

Decision on Actual Line of Way

Following successful negotiations, a decision can be reached as to the actual line that the way will take. Local people and interested bodies can then be informed of this line.

Possible Interim Inspection

When the members of its development committee have their plans finalised and are ready to start marking and installing trail furniture, an interim inspection by an approved inspector could be requested. See 3.15 for detailed information on inspections.

Trail Furniture and Other Implementation Works

When route development committees have established the line of the way, the following work takes place:

Trail Furniture

- * *The erection of trail furniture along the route proceeds Implementation Works*
- * *Private landowners through whose property the proposed route will pass must be indemnified against any accidents which may occur to users (see 3.7 for detailed information on insurance)*

- * *Public liability insurance must also be arranged for members of the committee*
- * *Heritage areas must be assessed for suitability (see 3.11 for detailed information on designated areas)*
- * *The new route must be included in the local authority development plan.*

See 3.12 for detailed information on implementation.

Pre-Opening Marketing

The following must be carried out before the waymarked way is opened:

- * A relevant map guide must be produced (see 3.13 for detailed information on preparing a Map guide)
- * The Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) must be notified of the existence and line of the way so that it can be included in the next issue of the relevant 1:50,000 maps
- * A list of approved/registered accommodation along or within 2 kms of a walking route and 5 kms of a cycling route must be compiled (see 3.10 for detailed information on accommodation)
- * Consideration should be given to the possibilities for a radio or television feature on the new route.

Pre-Approval Inspection

When the walk is marked and ready for opening a pre-approval inspection by an approved inspector could be requested (see 3.15 for detailed information on inspections).

Official Opening

Many route development committees mark the opening of their route with an official launch. This may take the form of a press launch or a special function. Whatever the method used, the following may assist in securing as much publicity as possible:

- * *Local and national media should be contacted.*
- * *Consider having the route opened by a well-known figure.*

Ongoing Maintenance and Marketing

Ongoing Maintenance

Measures must be put in place for the future ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the waymarked way. See 3.14 for detailed information on maintenance.

Ongoing Marketing

Attention will need to be paid to the long-term marketing of the waymarked way. Measures must be put in place to cater for this. See 3.18 for recommendations on marketing.

Walk Ireland is an initiative of the Irish Sports Council.

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