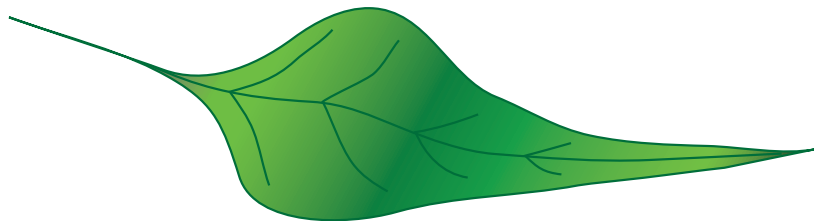
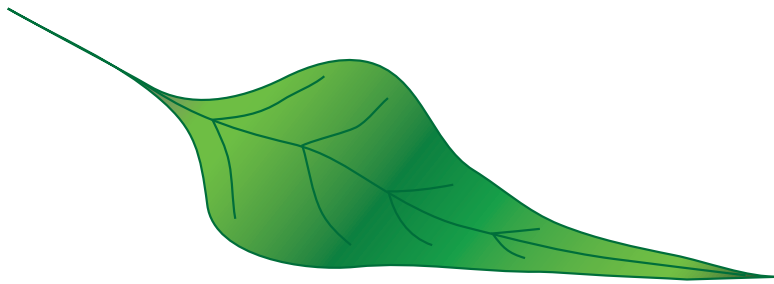


Green Access for Countryside Recreation

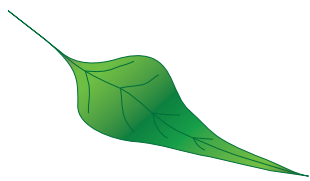
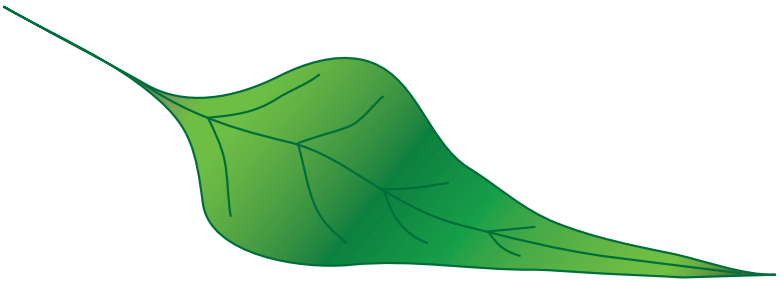
How to make it easier for more people to visit the countryside and its
tourist attractions whilst reducing their environmental footprint



By Chris Wood, Widen the Choice
Funded by the East of England Development Agency

E E D A
East of England Development Agency

eastofengland
Space for Ideas



**This guide is dedicated to the memory
of Rob Brock (1964-2009),
who applied these ideas to great
effect in the YHA, was an all-round
inspiration to people involved in
sustainable leisure travel and cycling,
and is sadly missed.**



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References to legislation and web-site addresses are given in good faith, but no responsibility can be taken for changes to these after this document has gone to press. E. & O. E. If a web address (URL) does not work, try truncating it to the homepage address and looking for links to the document in question.

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Widen the Choice

Widen the Choice brings together The National Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Natural England. Its remit is to make it easier for people to reach the countryside by means other than the car, across the East of England region (*i.e.* Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire). The benefits are reduced impacts of car use, improved access to the countryside by more sustainable means of transport, and greater, sustainable use of the countryside by all sections of society.

The National Trust has an aspiration of reducing the proportion of people arriving at its properties by car from well over 90% in 1995 to 60% in 2020. The RSPB has a similar desire to reduce the environmental impact of visitors travelling to reserves, whilst still encouraging people to visit to promote greater conservation awareness.

Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. Responsibilities include Environmental Stewardship (green farming schemes), increasing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the natural world, reducing the decline of biodiversity, designating National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and managing most National Nature Reserves. Natural England's *Strategic Direction 2008 – 2013* aims, amongst other things, to:

- ensure the provision of an accessible network of places and routes that give people the chance to enjoy a high-quality natural environment at a local, regional and national level;
- champion sustainable access provision, particularly by expanding sustainable transport to areas with high demand;
- ensure the strategic use of National Natural Reserves to complement existing access;
- provide guidance on service standards for access to the natural environment;
- ensure access to the natural environment is actively promoted across the country.

As part of this, all National Nature Reserves in Natural England management will be developing Visitor Travel Plans, and Widen the Choice has assisted this process in the East of England.

Widen the Choice has been an independent, catalytic animator in rural recreational travel, able to make the links between organisations and sectors with different agendas, thereby creating innovative approaches and projects.

The National Trust and the RSPB are registered charities (nos. 205846 and 207076 respectively).

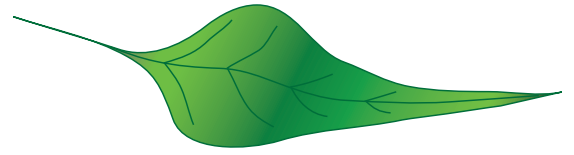
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Introduction



Travel is good for recreation and for broadening the mind. Visitors bring valuable income to tourist destinations and rural shops and services, but they also usually bring their cars with them, and this is an increasing problem in the countryside.

According to the England Leisure Visits Survey for 2005¹, people living in England made 136 million day trips to the countryside in 2005, and 82% of these were by car. A further 15 million trips were to the coast, 80% by car. 10 million of these trips were to National Parks, 91% by car. In addition, approximately 40 million trips from holiday accommodation were to the countryside and 10 million to the coast. This volume of traffic, valuable to rural economies, carries with it significant impacts in terms of air, noise and visual pollution, and climate-changing carbon dioxide emissions, as well as road danger and congestion².

There is a social impact as well. As car ownership rises, fewer people support rural services. This increases transport need and 'access deprivation', i.e. a lack of shops and services people can get to

easily. Buses are a key rural service that is still in decline, and walking and cycling have not been well provided for since the motor car assumed dominance of country roads³. This may not sound encouraging for someone trying to get their visitors to come by greener ways, but it does mean that facilities which meet the needs of locals as well as visitors are more likely to be successful.

Health is a growing concern. Inactive lifestyles lead to serious ill-health⁴. To counteract this, exercise and outdoor pursuits are being encouraged by a variety of initiatives. Active travel is an important part of this; even walking to the bus is beneficial⁵. It is a real benefit to health to be able to get to recreational activities by foot, pedal cycle, bus or train. Places accessible by sustainable, more active forms of transport are more healthy than those that can only be reached by obesity-friendly car!

Furthermore, popular tourism and recreation destinations are under increasing pressure from car-borne visitors. Road safety, air quality and local people's ability to cross the road are all compromised. Land is taken up with car parking, and fly parking causes erosion, obstruction and contamination of sensitive natural habitats. Rural congestion is actually increasing, at least in the summer part of the year (itself expanding with a changing climate). Villages from Wells to Windermere are clogged with cars.

The problem is recognised by local planning authorities and by grant-making bodies. The latter routinely require those developing new visitor facilities to explain how they are going to reduce the environmental impact of the facility and its visitors. Likewise, a Travel Plan is now *de rigueur* for any significant planning consent. In addition, well thought-out Visitor Travel Plans help to make attractions more socially inclusive, by diversifying access opportunities. They also make attractions less vulnerable, to future fluctuations in visitors' disposable income and to changes in the price and availability of fuel.

There are economic benefits to greener visitor travel too. Sustainable travel helps keep money in the local economy, as walkers, cyclists and public transport users are more likely to spend their money in local shops and facilities, especially as they cannot carry all their sustenance with them. Better green links bring new people to the countryside, spending 'new' money, and encourage



The climate is changing for car-borne tourism.
Picture: David Hurdle.

those switching from the car to spend locally. Plus, older people are discovering a new freedom with national concessionary bus travel.

Increasingly, then, it is imperative for any visitor destination to have a plan for how it is going to reduce the environmental impact of its visitors' travel⁶. This is true not only of facilities whose sole purpose is to attract and entertain visitors, but also of those whose main purpose is the conservation of nature or heritage, or the production of agricultural or forestry crops. In fact, it is even more important, politically, for facilities run by organisations with a strong conservation ethos.

However, people involved with running visitor attractions cannot be expected to have all the necessary information and skills to affect their visitors' travel behaviour effectively. Experience in England is reflected north of the border; a recent report for the Scottish Government⁷ has clearly recognisable conclusions. They include:

- Those generating travel (the attractions) provide poor information, and lack know-how and motivation to achieve access by public transport.
- Public travel is rarely linked to other objectives (e.g. climate and parking).
- It is not clear who is responsible for promoting public transport access.
- Transport issues are not flagged up at an early enough stage.
- There is a lack of knowledge-sharing on successful initiatives or ideas.
- There is a lack of consideration of the visitor's end-to-end journey.

Any Visitor Travel Plan has to be based on the travel and access facilities that exist 'on the ground', which is where a Green Access Audit comes in. This guide leads the reader through the process of auditing countryside attractions and destinations for green access. It is a process used by Widen the Choice in preparing visitor travel action plans for some sixty National Trust and RSPB properties across the East of England, for larger areas on the Suffolk coast, linear audits for the North Norfolk Coast and the Icknield Way, and demonstration audits for Natural England's National Nature Reserves. The concept was also adopted by the Youth Hostel Association's Empty Roads Project, in order to give the best access information to people booking accommodation.

Section 1 goes through the detailed process of auditing, whilst Section 2 covers the work of putting the results of the audit to good use, improving green access to your destination, generally through partnerships with other people. Section 3 considers how the audit can be turned into a plan for lasting

change. In addition, Section 4 introduces a wide range of topics of value in carrying out a Green Access Audit and implementing the actions it generates. Each reader, coming from a different background, will know the contents of some of these, but may not know them all⁸.

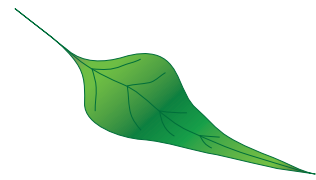


Birch trees in Breckland. Picture: Chris Wood.

Notes

- 1 Research International (2006) *England Leisure Visits: Report of the 2005 Survey* NE13, Natural England, Wetherby, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>. 'Day trips' here refers to the survey's category of 'tourism visits', i.e. leisure visits from home lasting more than three hours, that are not taken regularly. Unfortunately, the report does not give a breakdown of transport used by destination type for trips from holiday bases.
- 2 S. Clifford, D. Fereday, A. McLaughlin and S. Girnary (2008) *The Impacts of Leisure Travel* NERR014, Natural England, Sheffield, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.
- 3 There are notable exceptions to this, mainly on the National Cycle Network and on disused railway lines taken over by local authorities, such as the Ayot Greenway in Hertfordshire. Access Land designations have helped in some areas, but the land covered is not necessarily more accessible physically and is rarely located close to where people live; a journey has to be made to reach it.
- 4 See for instance William Bird's reports for the RSPB: *Natural Fit: Can Green Space and Biodiversity Increase Levels of Physical Activity?* (2004) and *Natural Thinking: Investigating the links between the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Mental Health* (2007), available from <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/health/index.asp>. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has published guidance on *Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity* (NICE Public Health Guidance 8, 2008), available from: <http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH8>.
- 5 See for instance L. M. Besser and A. L. Dannenberg (2005) *Walking to Public Transit: Steps to Help Meet Physical Activity Recommendations* *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 29(4) pp. 273-80: "Walking to and from public transportation can help physically inactive populations ... attain the recommended level of daily physical activity."
- 6 See Section 3 and Speakman, Colin (2008) *Visitor Travel Plans for Countryside Leisure Destinations* NERR022, Natural England, Sheffield, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.
- 7 Steer Davies Gleave (2008) *Transport Research Series: Exploring the links between transport and culture* Scottish Government Social Research, available from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/235020/0064488.pdf>.
- 8 N.B. this guide is written from the perspective of the situation in England; aspects will differ in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

1 Green Access Audits



A Green Access Audit establishes what options exist for reaching a destination by walking, cycling, bus, train and water. It begins with a desk-based survey, followed, crucially, by detailed inspections in the field. This provides the basis for discussions and negotiations with staff and external organisations, particularly local authorities. From this can come real improvements.

The process as presented here is the ideal case; it is rarely so clear-cut. Time limitations inevitably mean that discussions with key people often have to take place before fieldwork is finished. It is important to keep channels of communication open.

The procedure also depends on who is carrying out the exercise. Local authorities have access to resources not available to outside bodies. These resources therefore form part of the desk research for local authorities, whereas other organisations are only likely to gain access to such information at the stage of talking to relevant other people.

Purpose

The purpose of a Green Access Audit is to provide information on which to base any work designed to maximise access¹ to a given property or destination by sustainable forms of transport. It also includes travel *around* larger destinations. Forms of transport considered 'sustainable', or 'green', are walking, cycling and public transport². Public transport includes train, bus, 'demand-responsive transport' (flexible buses and taxi-buses), community transport and boats (ferries and river-buses³). Horse-riding is a popular activity in the countryside, and can be a way for some people to arrive, but this is rare. Most horse-riding is an activity to which people drive, as is the case with canoeing and kayaking.

It is worth emphasising that a Green Access Audit is not designed to be a full disability access audit. There is no reason why this cannot be included, although it will significantly increase the workload. The reason it is not a fundamental part of the audit,



Knocking Hoe National Nature Reserve, Bedfordshire, managed by Natural England, is a long way from buses, and a fair step from public roads. Green Access Audits show exactly how good or bad the links are. Picture: Chris Wood.



Wicken Fen, Britain's oldest designated nature reserve, and the focus for The National Trust's plans for a major conservation and recreation landscape on Cambridge's doorstep - the Wicken Fen Vision. Picture: Chris Wood.

however, is that few rural routes and services are accessible to disabled people, despite the best efforts of some bodies. Detailed disabled access audits are best employed for on-site movement (including links to green access points, not just the car park) and for specific external links, such as from a neighbouring village or a bus stop (see Section 4).

When to do it?

Any organisation, that is serious about greening and diversifying visitor access, needs to carry out Green Access Audits for its property, or properties, as early as possible. For a new facility, or where one is expanding or being upgraded, it is important that green access is incorporated as part of the physical planning process. If, for instance, the access road is already in place by the time of the audit, there may not be the resources left to correct mistakes. It is in any case generally cheaper to get it right at the start than to alter infrastructure at a later date ⁴.

Where land is being purchased, it is important to hold green access in mind, as more than one location may be suitable for the planned facility, and they are likely to have differing access

characteristics. There *may* even be the opportunity to acquire other, adjacent land to provide key green access links, which would be more difficult and more expensive afterwards. In order to make such judgements, a preliminary and necessarily confidential Green Access Audit needs to have been carried out, for each possible location. Such an audit will, of necessity, have to be revisited later.

Who should do it?

The audit is based on common sense, but simplistic assumptions about other people's likely behaviour, lack of knowledge, conservatism and blinkered approaches to health and safety ⁵ often get in the way. A broad experience of green transport is desirable. This can be found in local authorities and some consultancies, but is rarer in organisations managing the countryside. On the other hand, the ideal person to carry out the audit has some on-going responsibility for taking recommendations forward. Each situation is different, and a partnership approach, involving open-mindedness and flexibility, cannot be stressed too much. This guide, and particularly Section 4, is designed to assist this process by empowering those involved.

Desk-research

The aim of this first part of the audit is to gather background information on access possibilities, what visitors already do, and where they come from. In addition, it is important to identify concentrations of people (*i.e.* towns and villages), who are attractive for the purposes of income, education or social inclusion. Access possibilities can be taken from the following sources.

Maps, particularly the Ordnance Survey Explorer series (scale: 1:25,000; see page 39), give details of roads (Public Highways), Public Rights of Way (see page 32 for details of these), Access Land, *etc.* Information on permissive and habitual routes can often be gleaned from cycle route and local walks maps (although the legal status of these routes will need checking before promoting them) and on major cycle routes from Sustrans (<http://www.sustrans.org.uk>).

Farm conservation walks, under time-limited environmental stewardship schemes, can be found on the web-site of Natural England (<http://cwr.naturalengland.org.uk>). Further on-line resources include the Government agency interactive environmental designation map web-site, <http://www.magic.gov.uk>, which even includes a distance-measuring tool. Local authorities are likely to have geographical information facilities to hand.

Timetables for public transport services in the area are available from operators or local authorities (the county or unitary council), although the latter may not have the resources to keep printed material up-to-date. The best on-line sources are Traveline (<http://www.traveline.org.uk>) for scheduled buses and National Rail Enquiries (<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk>) for trains. Individual operators or local authorities may have useful on-line resources, some of which are more user-friendly than Traveline. Ask your Train Operating Company about carrying bicycles on trains.

Demand-responsive buses tend to be less well promoted, not currently featuring on Traveline, so that local knowledge and communication with the Passenger Transport and Community Transport officers of the county or unitary council is needed. These people will also, between them, have knowledge of any ferries, river-buses and community transport services available locally, as will transport officers (where they exist) of county Rural Community Councils/Charities (RCCs). A few counties in England still have independent Rural Transport Officers, most frequently based at the RCC, who will be able to help.

Local knowledge on the part of staff and any volunteers is important, if only because it can save time and resources. All information has to be checked, however.

As regards **visitor origins and behaviour**, any existing surveys of visitors to the property, or others nearby, may be helpful, although the less so the older they are. Unfortunately, surveys (or the reports on them) do not always contain helpful travel information, particularly if they have been carried out to ascertain customers' satisfaction or wants, or how much they spend. The basic information useful in a survey is given in the surveys and monitoring section, below. For smaller properties and extensive countryside destinations, with multiple access points and dispersed usage, surveys can be difficult to carry out effectively and affordably, especially given existing staff and volunteer commitments.

However, ascertaining current travel behaviour provides a baseline against which to measure progress with greening visitor travel. Knowledge of where people are coming from helps focus work on improving links; if 50% of visitors are coming from a specific place, then it would make sense to ensure links from that place are of a high standard!

In the absence of and in addition to survey data, anecdotal evidence from staff, who talk to visitors



*Find out what facilities are supposed to be available and then see how well they work on the ground.
Icklingham, Suffolk. Picture: Chris Wood.*

on a regular basis, and any other sources, such as visitor books, can be valuable, as long as the limitations of such data are recognised. For instance, people from further away may be more likely to sign your visitor book than locals.

With this knowledge, it is possible to build up a picture of where people are coming from and how they are travelling, that can actually be translated into targets for encouraging people to shift to greener transport. Gaps in geographical distribution can also be seen. These may be significant, as they could be places whose residents are attractive for reasons of education, social inclusion or revenue. Similarly, it may be that few visitors come from places with good bus, cycle or foot links to your destination. Promotional work could then concentrate on attracting visitors from these places and so increase the proportion of non-car visitors relatively simply – and possibly satisfying other imperatives, such as social inclusion, at the same time.

Surveys and monitoring

Surveys are time- and resource-consuming, but give valuable information about visitors, their travel behaviour and where they come from. Standard marketing surveys are frequently poor at asking the right questions from the point of view of green access. Distance travelled and 'drive time' contours are of limited value, except as a means of assessing where car-borne visitors could come from. The basic information actually useful in a survey includes the following items.

- Origin (postcode⁶ or the name of the settlement, with county).
- Whether this is their home or where they are staying temporarily.
- If the latter, where home is.
- What forms of transport (all of them) they used to reach the destination.
- Where they found information on green travel, if that is how they came, or where they might look should they consider walking, cycling or using public transport.
- How many others they are travelling with.

In addition, once the fieldwork has been completed, questions can be asked about specific routes and needs, as well as seeking people's reaction to any proposals, such as a new Bridleway or bus route. It is important to remember, however, that surveys carried out at the property only catch existing visitors; they obtain no information about the majority of people who do not come. Surveys elsewhere, such as in nearby towns or on key public transport routes, are more difficult to organise and



*Footpaths can be obstructed by ploughed fields and crops.
Picture: Chris Wood.*

only a proportion of those asked will be likely to visit the property. Such surveys are best carried out in partnership with others with an interest in countryside access in the area.

Don't be tempted to do surveys at quiet periods rather than when you're busy – those are exactly the times for which you need the information most!

It is extremely useful to repeat surveys at regular intervals. The first survey gives baseline data – the situation before making any changes – and subsequent surveys allow you to measure success, as long as the questions and format are the same.



*Villages are important access points, where paths to your destination meet local buses, often with useful shops and pubs. Bodham, Norfolk.
Picture: Chris Wood.*

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is the most important part of a Green Access Audit. Having established what *should* be available, it is essential to test provision for real.

Foot links should be assessed on foot, cycle links by bicycle or on foot (although preferably by bike), and public transport by actually using it. Driving around the area is not adequate.

This on-the-ground audit should ideally be carried out in all conditions, wet and dry, summer and winter, if time allows, as the usability of a route can vary tremendously depending on such factors as drainage, being shared with horses (they churn up unmade surfaces) or maintenance regimes. If your destination is open throughout the year or late in the evening, think about whether people can find their way home or to bus stops in the dark.

It should not need stating that the audit goes beyond the property landholding; the survey is of links to where people come from. Therefore, routes need to be followed from key towns and villages, bus stops and/or stations. The audit is best performed without prior announcement, exactly the way a visitor would experience the journey.



Ease of use can vary tremendously according to recent weather or time of year. Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire. Picture: Chris Wood.

When planning fieldwork, especially if you are not familiar with the terrain, it is worth allowing plenty of time, particularly for surveys on foot. Time yourself walking a known distance on good terrain, then allow twice this time for the same distance during the audit. This means that whatever difficulties you encounter, and whatever extra routes you discover, you are still likely to be on schedule. It is important not to rush the audit. Allow yourself time to look at a view, watch a 'bird spectacle' or nose around an ancient monument (or more recent piece of heritage); your visitors are likely to want to do this too and knowledge of these things will help you promote these routes in due course.

You will find some example questions to ask as you carry out the fieldwork on pages 10 and 11.



On some low-lying land, such as grazing marshes, paths can be under water for months at a time, as here, near Sudbourne, Suffolk. Picture: Chris Wood.



If you find any Public Right of Way signs damaged, do report them to your local authority's Rights of Way department, preferably with a map reference (see Section 4). Picture: Chris Wood.

Top: think about how routes enter and leave towns and villages. Here, a Footpath to Dunstable Downs leaves residential streets in Dunstable, Bedfordshire.

Middle downwards: bus stop facilities vary tremendously: Blakeney, Norfolk; Broadclyst, Devon; Winterbourne Monkton, Wiltshire; and the poor example will not be named! Pictures: Chris Wood.



Writing up the Green Access Audit

Each destination is different, so there is no right or wrong way to write the Green Access Audit up. It is important to make the actions or recommendations that emerge from your audit official – put them in your Management Plan, Audience Development Plan or Business Plan, or develop the audit into a full Visitor Travel Plan (see page 21). However you do it, formulate an official plan for how you're going to make your visitors' travel greener.

The job of the audit write-up is to set the scene and make the case for the recommendations and actions arising from it, providing the evidence to inform decision-making and justify actions.



Notes

- 1 Total access may well be limited at a given place for reasons of conservation or other disturbance, but it is more often car-parking pressure that limits visitor numbers.
- 2 Green transport produces fewer emissions than car use, overall. See page 23.
- 3 In addition, promoting access by boat can allow people to see the possibilities for reaching destinations without a car, even though private and privately hired motor boats (e.g. Broads cruisers) are not generally any more environmentally friendly than cars (although some are now powered by electricity or even waste food oil).
- 4 However, there are instances where changes before a contractual hand-over date would result in more expense than changing something physically afterwards. This comes about because of poorly thought-through agreements with contractors and, more importantly, poor green travel planning prior to engaging contractors.
- 5 For example: "There might be a risk to someone walking on a path on our property, with consequent risk of litigation, so we won't provide foot access, leaving pedestrians on the more dangerous road outside our land holding."
- 6 Postcodes can be used to identify where people come from by reference to a postcode atlas. Collins publishes one for the whole of the UK, updated every couple of years, available from booksellers.



Look for resting places along routes that people will be following on foot. If there aren't any, could they be provided? Benches at the National Trust's Ashridge Estate, Hertfordshire. Picture: Chris Wood.



Some questions to ask during the audit

- **Is there a convenient Public Right of Way or permissive path, and for whom is it passable (able-bodied people, wheelchair users, those with pushchairs, cyclists...)?** Remember that most people do not have mountain bikes and not all cyclists can lift their machines (and in any case that bikes are not allowed on Public Footpaths, even if pushed). Some Byways and Bridleways are hardly passable on foot, whilst some Footpaths are broad highways by comparison.
- **Is it permanent, or does it cross a ploughed field?** With modern farming operations this can be legally obstructed by ploughing at any time and may well become covered by crops.
- **Is it safe?**
- **Does it have stiles or gates, and are the latter accessible to wheelchair users and cyclists?**
- **Is there a highway that has a footway (unobstructed by parked vehicles) or that is quiet enough to promote to walkers?**
- **Is there a verge that could conceivably be upgraded?** Beware of promoting verges that have drainage 'grips' or breaks, which are trip hazards.
- **Is the route legible?**
- **Does it have visible and readable signs that give useful information at all points where it is needed?**
- **Are there any 'point' issues?** These might include flooding, a particularly poorly maintained section, regular shooting near a Footpath, a barricaded gate or a footway obstructed by parked cars...
- **Are there places to sit and rest along the way?**
- **Is cycle parking at the destination of good quality?** Is it user-friendly, secure (lockers or 'Sheffield' stands), installed in accordance with Sustrans' guidelines (<http://www.sustrans.org.uk>), where people see it, convenient for the property entrance, unobstructed by cars, motorcycles or storage, and ideally under cover?
- **Are there any facilities for storing gear, such as panniers, rucksacks or other luggage?** Cars are effective luggage lockers, to which walkers, cyclists and public transport users don't have access.
- **Is there a bus or train service at useful times?**
- **How far is it from the bus stop or train station to your property?**



Don't assume paths are of good standard: a Bridleway near West Runton, Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.

- **Is the route clear and convenient?**
- **Is it accessible by disabled people and cyclists?** Remember that people can take folding bikes on buses as well as trains.
- **Can a bus or train user get straight onto your property by a short route, or do they have to use a circuitous route to get to the vehicle entrance?**
- **Is the welcome signage, on routes used by walkers, cyclists and public transport users, at least as good as that on the vehicular access route?**
- **How easy is it to find the bus stop or station in the places people are coming from?**
- **What facilities are there at the bus stops or stations?** Do they have seats, shelter, timetables, toilets...?
- **What is the service like?** Think about ride quality, delays, friendliness of staff, driving style, quality of vehicle, cleanliness, cost...
- **Is the service (station or stop, and vehicle) accessible for all?** Can disabled people use it? (Remember, disabilities come in many forms.) Can cyclists bring their bikes with them?
- **Is the bus driver aware of the destination?**
- **Can people get refreshments?** Look for cafés, pubs, shops, etc.
- **Is there information at the visitor centre, ticket booth or information point about green access options?**
- **Is there green access information in all property leaflets and on its web-site, and is this information accurate and up-to-date?**
- **Do your nearest Tourist Information Centres know how to reach you without a car?**



Where exactly does the bus stop? The Chilterns Rambler in Aldbury, Hertfordshire. Picture: Chris Wood.



This is far from an exhaustive list!

Put yourself in the shoes of your visitors. How would they react? Put aside your assumptions, as a land manager, conservationist or businessperson, and become a visitor in your thinking.

2 Making a Difference



Discussions

Having ascertained what facilities and services are supposed to be available and then tried them out for real, it is time to talk to people. Depending on who is carrying out the audit, some people on the list below will already have been approached. Key people to discuss findings with initially include the following.

- Key staff of the destination (and its county or regional office where relevant).
- Local authorities, *i.e.* county or unitary council officers (and, for tourism and rights-of-way issues, also district or borough councils):
 - Countryside and Rights of Way;
 - Cycling;
 - Passenger Transport (or Public Transport);
 - Community Transport (where relevant);
 - Rail Policy or Partnerships (where relevant);
 - Highways (who may have also have a sustainable transport remit);
 - Tourism;
 - Travel Plans (particularly where planning applications for new facilities are involved);
 - sometimes Economic Development officers are relevant.

- Any independent rural transport officer, either the Transport Officer of the county Rural Communities Council/Charity or branch of ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), or the county Rural Transport Partnership Officer, where such officers exist.
- If your destination is in a protected landscape, there will be a body responsible for its conservation and promotion, whether a National Park Authority (including the Broads Authority) or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty organisation, which could be described by a variety of titles, such as a unit, partnership, project or conservation board. In addition, some areas aspire to similar status, such as the Breckland of Norfolk and Suffolk, and, whilst not being well resourced, they may have organisations that are worth talking to.
- Bus operators, where the service is commercial; if it is supported by the local authority, then the Passenger Transport Unit is responsible.
- The Train Operating Company (where relevant) and any Community Rail Partnership.
- Other operators (ferry, community transport), where relevant.
- Sustrans and/or local cycling groups.
- British Waterways, where canal towpaths are relevant.
- The National Trail office for any such route nearby.
- Other, neighbouring attractions or landowners, where relevant.

There are other people worth talking to at a later stage, although there is no harm in making links early. Some will be useful for assisting with funding, some with promotion, some with guidance on design, and some with local politics. Examples include:

- other nearby attractions;
- local councillors, parish council(s) and possibly the MP;
- the Local Access Forum;
- walking, rambling, cycling and horse-riding groups;
- disability groups (who may even be able to help with disabled access design and audits);
- the regional tourism board;
- the local media;
- by no means least, visitors and potential visitors (see page 7).



*Talk to people - you can achieve more in partnership than alone.
North Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.*

Think of solutions

At this stage of the audit, the real green access situation should be evident, the directions from which people either come already or from which they could usefully be attracted should be understood, and the policy environment should be clear. Some links and facilities may be very good, others mediocre or poor; some may be non-existent. Where links are good, it is important to promote them. If people are not already using them, it is time to consider how they could be persuaded to do so. How can mediocre links be improved, or at least made more attractive? Who do you need to talk to in order to achieve this?

Where links and facilities are poor or non-existent, then more work is needed. It may be that work on site is all that is required. That is relatively simple for someone, or an organisation, managing a piece of countryside, even if planning permission is required.

Remember that changes to working practices may be necessary. Greening visitor access is not an add-on; it is a different way of working. It sometimes happens, for instance, that the walk from a public transport stop is unattractive or even dangerous and a perfectly adequate route on the destination's land already exists, and it is within the destination's power to make it available, but it chooses not to do so for political or historical reasons (as opposed to conservation reasons). This is awkward, especially as outside bodies, such as local authorities with which the property may wish to work on access, are likely to question the motivations of an organisation that chooses not to use a resource, before committing any of their own.

Where work off-site is required, a local authority is in a better position than an individual business or facility to take it forward. Whatever the best course of action, facilities off-site have to mesh with those on-site. This requires partnership working, even if it is simply between the local authority and the property. Outside partners will always expect some contribution to making schemes work.

Effective solutions require vision. A Footpath across a ploughed field may not be very long, but it can make an entire route vulnerable and therefore not promotable, as there are likely to be periods when the field is not passable, either because of ploughing or standing crops blocking the path. The latter is not supposed to happen, but does, and paths are supposed to be reinstated within fourteen days of ploughing, which still means periods of up to a fortnight when the path is not usable. Potential

solutions include diversion, upgrading to a Restricted Byway by negotiation or legal process, finding another route or even land purchase. All of these have different consequences and requirements for resources and political commitment, but the key thing is the whole route. A vision of a quality route allows greater commitment to finding a way around the difficulty.

At this stage in particular, conservatism is unhelpful. It is time to think outside the box. Solutions may be 'blue sky', but, having gone through the audit process, they will be anchored in reality. There may be no hope of getting a conventional bus service to the property, at least in the current climate, but that may not be the only answer. Other attractions in the area may well be in the same position. Perhaps a demand-responsive, flexible bus would work? Promoted to visitors and locals, such a scheme as CoastLink on the Suffolk coast can make even sparsely populated areas accessible at reasonable cost.

Looking to the long term, think about the balance of forms of transport your visitors will be using in the future. Can your greening efforts help you avoid investing in expanded car parking facilities, for instance?



Walks signed from car parks are often only convenient to drivers. Green access has to be thorough-going. Castle Acre, Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.

Agree and carry out actions

Having formulated potential solutions, the next stage is to agree a set of actions that work towards them. For the destination, there should be commitments to carry out on-site actions, whether infrastructure or publicity. Likewise, there should be commitments to seek the implementation of off-site objectives. A local authority, clearly, will want to word its actions somewhat differently, according to resource allocation, but there is little point to any plan of action if there is no commitment (practical and financial) to implementing it. Similarly, the actions have to be realistic and supported by those who will have to carry them out. Actions without ownership will not bear fruit. Ensure that the actions are supported by someone with authority to set work priorities!

There are two key kinds of actions, whoever carries them out. Good links need **promotion** and poor or non-existent links need **improvement**, so as to become good, promotable links.

Promotion should go across the media used by the organisation. If it uses the internet, leaflets, a members' handbook, press releases or any other media, all should carry the green travel information. However, this information must be correct and up-to-date. Bus services can change at short notice, so that it is imperative to confirm with the local authority (for supported services) or the operator (for commercial services) if and when the details are likely to change and include the appropriate level of detail for the expected shelf-life of the specific item of publicity. Internet web-sites can be changed frequently, if there is the will (although this seems to be an advantage rarely embraced!).

When seeking **improvements** or entire new links, it is important to be realistic, credible and flexible, but enthusiastic and tenacious at the same time. Even simple schemes can take considerable time to bring to fruition. Partnership working is often vital to success. Partnerships work best when the individual partners work together to achieve common goals, not just individual benefits, and are prepared for the long haul. In other words, don't ask: "Can you divert the bus up the access road to the visitor centre?" Ask instead: "How can we work together to improve and increase patronage on a bus serving our destination?"

Widen the Choice worked in partnership with National Express East Anglia, the RSPB and others to turn two small stations in East Anglia into 'Rail Gateways to the Countryside' (at weekends). One of these, Buckenham, is on a route with an active Community Rail Partnership, which promotes it. Picture: Chris Wood.

Working in partnership

Partnership working is not an easy ride, however. It has great benefits, but not all partners necessarily share your enthusiasm. A few things to watch for are given in Table 1.

All in all, be prepared to go the extra mile. It's better to co-operate and find win-win solutions, and occasionally be short-changed, than to shy away from co-operation for fear of problems and not achieve very much. But, be sure to recognise the problems early when they do occur, implement effective damage limitation, and learn for next time!

Realism and imagination

It is important to be imaginative in finding solutions and forging partnerships. However, it is also important to be realistic. The Green Access Audit gives you the foundation for sensible work and identifies opportunities, but always have in mind the limitations of other people's agendas and funding options. Most importantly, think about how your visitors (existing and potential) would react to a particular scheme. Would they use it?

Consistency

Make sure the green message is thorough-going and that internal processes match it. For instance, make sure events and where possible staff work schedules are timed to allow people to come by public transport.

Set a good example! Encourage staff to:

- use greener transport where feasible,
- walk rather than make short car trips,
- follow environment-conscious driving practices, etc.,



Table 1 Partnership problems and solutions

Problem	Potential solution
Reticence.	Be open and co-operative.
Being given a false sense of progress.	Persistence.
Conflicting agendas.	Find common ground.
Size and complexity of <i>e.g.</i> local authorities leads to communication and other problems.	Forge links with all relevant departments.
Experience puts partners off investing time, money or other resources.	If the experience relates to your organisation, examine past relations and see how you could do better, <i>e.g.</i> with promoting bus services provided by a local authority. If it relates to other people, show your willingness to co-operate.
Large organisations, such as local authorities, see you as a small player.	Make links with other destinations nearby or along a given green access route; develop a destination-based partnership and then approach the local authority.
The private sector (<i>e.g.</i> bus and train operators) does not see sufficient revenue potential.	Show how you could put more people on off-peak services, helping their financial sustainability.
Unreasonable expectations.	Be up-front about what you can do – and feel you should do – but be polite.

- not park on footways or obstruct foot/cycle/ wheelchair routes,
- arrange meetings to fit in with public transport services, in terms of times and venues.

And make sure everyone that needs to be is aware of green travel initiatives – from reception staff, to those engaged in path maintenance, to fundraisers (especially if they're doing promotion or fundraising at a railway station or in a town centre with a direct bus link!).

Don't contradict the message by unthinking policies, for instance:

- Folding bikes are meant to be carried on buses and into buildings – not left outside; they are like any other luggage.
- One well-known transport consultancy, involved in green travel projects, issued an edict banning its staff from cycling on business on spurious health and safety grounds (it reversed the policy after it became the laughing stock of the transport press).
- Similarly, cycle helmets are not particularly useful when a cyclist is hit by a motor vehicle and wearing them can even make such incidents more likely, yet helmet wearing has become an article of faith for many 'safety experts' (see page 26).

Thinking ahead

Are you buying land for a new facility? Do a basic audit beforehand – you may find it useful to buy a further parcel of land (if available) to facilitate safe and convenient access on foot or by pedal cycle.

Funding

This is always an issue. Small destinations, in particular, may not be able to afford some of the measures that would be useful. However, grants are available for certain things, in certain places and at certain times. Talk to relevant local authority officers, protected landscape organisations (if you're in one) or your county Rural Community Council/ Charity or branch of ACRE. They may be able to help. Some things may even be fundable within your local authority's Highways or Public Rights of Way budget, or there may be another partner who can help. The key thing is communication.



Promotion & information

However good the facility, if people are going to use it, they need information. There are a number of stages at which information is required. Repetition of information in different places is important for reinforcement and confidence: leaflet, web-site, way-marking, at the destination, *etc.* This is presented in Table 2.

What information to give

Start with information and images of the destination, not the means of getting to it. This may seem obvious, but leaflets aimed at bus users don't need a picture of a bus on the front!

When giving access information, first of all, people need to know where you are. Location, as ever, is key. But, it's no good giving your location solely in terms of driving directions. So, whilst *e.g.* "between Dalford and Brington on the B1352" is part of the location (it helps people find you on a map), "signed from the A14" is useless to people coming by bus, train, pedal cycle, foot or horseback. It is worth giving a map reference (see page 39) and the Ordnance Survey map that covers your area (preferably Explorer series, as these are more useful to walkers and cyclists than the Landranger series). Your post code is useful for finding you on map web-sites, not just satellite navigation, but only if it then points to a sensible access point.

Next, people need to know how they can get to your location. If you have more than one entrance, including possibly a new entrance developed for easy access from the bus or Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network, direct people to the most appropriate one. Yes, you want cars and coaches to use the vehicle entrance, but direct bus users, walkers and cyclists to more convenient entrances where they exist.

People like to know how far they will have to walk and how long it will take them. However, people walk at different speeds, so giving times can be misleading, unless the destination is close, so that a vague '5 minutes' is close enough. In general, it is better to give distances (metric *and* imperial for preference), as this is solid information.

Use maps to show people how to get to you from bus stops, railway stations or key PRoW. A map can be expensive if you're paying a designer, but it's worth its weight in gold if well presented, conveying information clearly in a more attractive and space-efficient way than lengthy directions. (However, make sure that, when using maps on the internet, they are easily downloadable and legible when printed off.) Remember that printed and on-line maps are copyright images - you need permission before reproducing them. Larger organisations may already have a licence to reproduce Ordnance Survey maps.

Think about the order in which you present information and the impression it gives. Put the

Table 2 Stages at which information is needed

Stage	How the information can be provided
When people are deciding where to go and how to get there (at home, at work or at places like libraries, stations and Tourism Information Centres).	Leaflets (including timetables and maps), web-sites, advertisements, listings, word of mouth, and memory of past visits or seeing you in passing.
On the journey.	Leaflets (as above); timetables, maps and other information at bus stops, stations and on information panels; advertisements; way-marking (signs); legibility (<i>i.e.</i> being able to see clearly where to go).
On arrival (confirming that the facility is there for the return journey and showing people who have arrived by car that other options are available).	Leaflets (as above), signs and way-marking, timetables, clearly visible facilities (bus stop, cycle parking, good-quality path, <i>etc.</i>), verbal information from staff, and perhaps entry fees (a discount for green travel is attractive!).
On departure (reinforcing the message and giving people confidence when embarking on their return journey).	As above.

greenest forms of transport first to encourage their use. The excuse, that most people come by car and therefore by putting car directions first most people get the information they need quickly, only serves to perpetuate the dominance of car use.

Remember that people using greener forms of transport need better information than drivers. All too often, extremely detailed driving directions are followed by brief, vague, useless and, worse, incorrect information for other means. You can even find leaflets that state the nearest railway station and usefully tell you how long it takes to drive from it!

Don't, however, simply list all the bus services that exist. Visitors need to know about the services that operate regularly, not the once-a-week market bus! Think about how useful a service is. Equally, if you have a train service within striking distance, give the nearest *useful* station. If the nearest station as the crow flies only has a limited service and is along a straight, busy road with no bus link, cycle route or even taxi rank, but one slightly further away has a better service and safe, convenient green links, then promote the latter.



*Good information is key (although this way of writing fractions, omitting the division line, is potentially confusing).
Picture: Chris Wood.*

Check with public transport operators or local authorities (for supported bus services) that services are not likely to change in the foreseeable future, before giving detailed information in leaflets. If changes are expected, this will limit the information you can give. Remember to ensure that sensible visits can be had within the framework of public transport times. If a public transport service is



*Some of the leaflets for National Trust and RSPB destinations in the East of England published by Widen the Choice.
Design by Shorthose Russell. Picture: Chris Wood.*

only available on certain days of the week (e.g. just weekends or not Sundays) or in certain months of the year, then it is important to make this clear as well.

However, remember that a limited service can actually be designed to provide access. The stations at Lakenheath in Suffolk and Buckenham in Norfolk have a service at weekends only, timed to allow reasonable visits to the nature reserves and wider countryside nearby (a partnership between National Express East Anglia, Widen the Choice and the RSPB). In this case, promoting the weekend service is much more useful than saying that there is only a limited service. The glass is half full! Similarly there are bus services that provide access to parts of the countryside in the summer and or on Sundays only, again timed to give sensible visits and provide for walkers.

Don't forget to give sources of more information too, particularly Traveline (<http://www.traveline.org.uk>, 0871 200 22 33) and National Rail Enquiries (<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk>, 08457 48 49 50). It can also be reassuring for people to have a back up, so it's useful to mention the TrainTaxi web-site, that gives details of taxi firms serving railway stations (<http://www.traintaxi.co.uk>).

Signs and way-marking

The key principles of good signage and way-marking are as follows:

- legibility and clarity (size of letters, mixed rather than upper case, with good contrast);
- pointing in the right direction;
- provision at every point where a decision has to be made or where there is uncertainty;
- ideally with an indication of distance.

The leaflet opposite was produced by Widen the Choice, in partnership with National Express East Anglia, the RSPB and the Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership, to promote access to the countryside in the Yare valley, Norfolk, along the Norwich to Great Yarmouth railway line. It was specifically designed to be displayed in stations and promoted by a matching poster on local trains. It was awarded Third Place in the Marketing Publication category of the national Community Rail Awards 2008. Printing was funded by the Broads Authority's Sustainable Development Fund.

Other things to think about

- Identify places to obtain lunch and/or refreshments if possible. If they are not available, remind people to bring provisions with them.
- If places you suggest for food, drink, visits, shopping or staying are not on the access routes you promote, then include the additional directions to them.
- Make sure places you suggest for visits or as sources of refreshment are open at appropriate times, and that, where public transport is used to reach a destination, people are not left with long waits before the attraction opens or after it closes.
- Look out for places people can shelter when waiting for buses (bus shelters themselves are fairly rare in the countryside).
- It is important not to copy sections of text from other information sources such as leaflets or websites without asking permission beforehand.
- Another issue to watch out for is copyright on photographs, maps and other images. Do not use other people's pictures without asking permission, and when you have permission, remember to credit the photographer or copyright owner (as appropriate).



Use illustrations in your literature to show how inviting green access routes can be, such as this canal towpath at Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. Picture: Chris Wood.

Information and Other Attractions



Reedham Swing Bridge

RSPB Strumpshaw Fen, Buckenham & Cantley Marshes:
01603 715 191, www.rspb.org.uk.

RSPB Berney Marshes and Breydon Water:
01493 700 645, www.rspb.org.uk.

National Rail Enquiries: 08457 48 49 50, www.nationalrail.co.uk.

National Express: 0845 600 7245, national.express.co.uk.

Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership: www.wherrylines.org.uk.

Traveline - for buses: 0871 200 22 33, www.traveline.org.uk.

The Broads Authority - all you need to know about the
Broads: 01603 610 734, www.broads-authority.gov.uk.

Wherry Yacht Charter - summer starts the tours with historic
wherry yachts & a pleasure wherry: www.wherryyachtcharter.org.

Southern Belle - steams between Gt. Yarmouth, Berney and
Reedham; contact Gt. Yarmouth Tourist Info: 01493 842 195.

City Boats - boat tours from Norwich: www.cityboats.co.uk.

Winter Boat trips on Breydon Water - from Goodchild Marina,
Burgh Castle; contact RSPB Strumpshaw Fen: 01603 715 191.

Berney Arms Windmill - currently closed for conservation;
English Heritage: www.english-heritage.org.uk.

Pettits Animal Adventure Park - family fun near Reedham:
01493 700 094, www.pettitsadventurepark.co.uk.

Strumpshaw Steam Museum: 01603 714 535,
www.strumpshawsteamuseum.co.uk.

Wherryman's Way - long-distance footpath and the Yare Valley
Cycle Route: www.wherryman'sway.net.

Weavers' Way - long-distance footpath from Gt. Yarmouth to
Cromer: www.countrysideaccess.norfolk.gov.uk.

Train Times (Sundays)

Norwich	07:36	09:36	11:36	13:36	15:36	16:57
Brundall	07:44	09:44	11:44	13:44	15:44	17:05
Buckenham	07:50	09:48	11:48	13:48	15:48	17:09
Cantley	07:50	09:52	11:52	13:50	15:52	17:13
Reedham	07:55	09:56	11:56	13:55	15:56	17:17
Berney Arms	08:01	10:03	12:03	14:01	16:03	---
Gt. Yarmouth	08:11	10:13	12:13	14:11	16:11	17:41
Gt. Yarmouth	08:20	10:20	12:18	14:20	16:20	---
Berney Arms	08:27	10:25	12:25	14:27	16:25	---
Reedham	08:34	10:32	12:32	14:34	16:32	---
Cantley	08:38	10:36	12:36	14:38	16:36	---
Buckenham	08:45	10:40	12:40	14:45	16:40	---
Brundall	08:45	10:44	12:44	14:45	16:44	---
Norwich	08:55	10:55	12:55	14:55	16:55	---

X: Trains call at Buckenham and Berney Arms by request - tell the conductor you want to get off and give a clear signal to an approaching train to get on.

L: These trains start/finish at Lowestoft, not Yarmouth.

□: 18th May - 7th September only (no service outside this period).

*: leaves at 15:18, 18th May - 7th September.

Bank Holidays: check with National Express that it's a Sunday service. Other

days of the week: There is a train a day at Berney Arms (two May-Sept.) Mon-Sat, and one at Buckenham Saturday; see the full timetable. NB: in the event of engineering works, replacement buses do not call at Buckenham or Berney Arms.

This is not a complete timetable - other trains, that do not stop at Buckenham or Berney Arms, can form part of your day out; see the National Express timetable or the Wherry Lines Line Guide. Times will change from 14th September 2008.

Produced by the Widen the Choice Rural Transport Partnership

working with National Express and the Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership, and supported by National Express and the Broads Authority Sustainable Development Fund with grant provided by DEFRA.

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Widen the Choice can be contacted on 01603 697 515.

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Explore the Yare Valley Sunday Trains



Pleasure Wherry Hatter



Yellow Flag Iris



Little Egret



national express

The stations on the Wherry Lines are like pearls on a string - explore the treasures of the Yare valley by train!

The Yare valley is a wonderful landscape, and an under-appreciated part of the Broads! On Sundays, the railway is a perfect way to explore - and using the small stations, you can be straight off the train into the countryside!

Footpaths and quiet lanes mean you can discover the whole valley: river, marshes, estuary, villages and wildlife. Berney Arms, Cantley and Reedham have places to eat and drink too. So whether your interest is birdwatching, rambling, cycling, churches, boats or Broadland heritage, ask for a Wherry Lines Rover ticket and explore!

RSPB Strumpshaw Fen is in the heart of the Norfolk Broads. The complex of reedbeds, fens, wet meadows, grazing marshes, scrub and wet woodland, connected by a maze of rivers, dykes and open pools, is characteristic of Broadland and supports an outstanding diversity of wildlife. Nature trails lead you through the varied habitats, including reedbeds and woodland. In the summer, there is a special trail in the flower-filled meadow, and you may hear a bearded tit or see a swallowtail butterfly near the reedbeds. Strumpshaw Fen is just a mile from Buckenham station and you get free admission if you show your train ticket!

RSPB Buckenham and Cantley Marshes are traditionally managed grazing marshes, supporting important numbers of breeding waders and wintering ducks and geese. Buckenham Marshes are right outside Buckenham station, while Cantley Marshes are easily reached from Cantley railway station. (N.B. the footpath across Cantley Marshes can be flooded at times.)

Experience the wide-open spaces of grazing marshes at RSPB Berney Marshes and mudflats at RSPB Breydon Water. Long-distance footpaths follow Breydon Water between Reedham, Berney and Great Yarmouth, where there is a hide (not RSPB), a short walk from Yarmouth station. At Berney Marshes, there is a nature trail and a viewing screen overlooking the marshes. Berney Marshes is a reserve you cannot get to by car - a short walk from Berney Arms station!



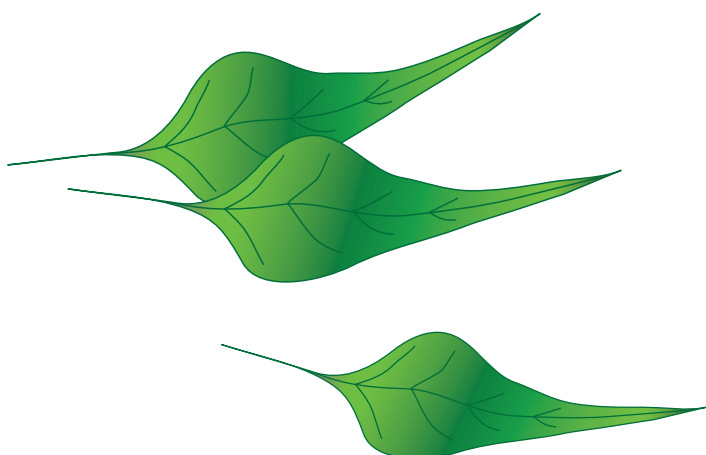
Opening

Strumpshaw Fen is open daily from dawn to dusk. There is a small visitor centre with toilet. Bring your own refreshments. Admission: RSPB members free. Non-members £2.50 (child 50p, concessions £1.50, families £5.00) - or free with a valid train or bus ticket!

Buckenham, Cantley and Berney Marshes and Breydon Water can be viewed from footpaths at any time.

Check

- Are all your directions robust?
- Check distances (e.g. $\frac{1}{2}$ km is not the same as $\frac{1}{2}$ mile).
- Use standard fraction notation ($\frac{1}{2}$, not $\frac{1}{2}$).
- Don't confuse units of measurement (e.g. 'm' stands for 'metre', not 'mile' or 'minute', and is always lower case; 'M' stands for 'mega', or a million, used in the same way as 'kilo', a thousand, as in 'kilometre', or 'km').
- Never make unit notation plural (e.g. '5 km', not '5 kms').
- Explain any abbreviations.
- Write in sentences rather than notes or a stream of consciousness.
- Check the accuracy and consistency of spellings, punctuation and grammar.
- Check spellings of the names of villages, farms, houses, roads, *etc.*, as misspellings can get people lost!
- Use standard English and avoid 'business speak' (e.g. 'access' and 'source' are not verbs; 'ask' is not a noun), otherwise the text can be confusing or come over as jargon.
- Don't write all in capitals, it's more difficult to read.
- Choose the font (typeface) you use carefully. *Sans serif* fonts are clearer for titles (and some people find them easier to read in general), whereas *serif* fonts have little 'feet', *etc.*, which guide the eye and so are easier to read for more people, so that more people will read your text. (If it's your text you can always print it off in a different font or print size if someone requests it.)
- Get someone else to proof-read your text.



Good information, reinforced by clear signage along the way, gives people the freedom to visit you without relying on cars. This in turn means your visitor base is broader and therefore more robust. A Bittern Line Community Rail Partnership guided walk near Sheringham, Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.



Important

- Keep your information up-to-date (e.g. bus times) and listen to feedback from people making use of it.
- Make sure your front-line staff are knowledgeable about and promote the green links that are available.
- Make sure on-line information (web-pages and downloadable files) is still legible when printed off in black and white.
- Make sure your welcome signs are found at all ways in, not just on the vehicular access road.

3 Action Plans & Visitor Travel Plans



Planning to make green visitor travel a reality

It is important to make the actions or recommendations that emerge from your audit official – formulate an official plan for how you're going to make your visitors' travel greener. There are many ways of doing this. You could, for example, have a separate Action Plan, or put the actions in your Management Plan, Audience Development Plan or Business Plan. You may well need a Visitor Travel Plan if applying for planning permission or large grants for new visitor facilities. This can be fairly simple, depending on the requesting authority's specifications, but larger destinations are likely to want to develop a more detailed and robust Visitor Travel Plan.

(Green) Travel Plans have been developed for many years for workplaces and schools, and there is plenty of guidance and experience available for these applications. Visitor Travel Plans are less well developed and have a major difference: the people whose behaviour the plan seeks to alter are not in daily attendance at the destination, as are employees or pupils. A Visitor Travel Plan cannot therefore be focussed on individual contact, especially as it seeks to increase the number of visitors by non-car means, most of whom currently are not visitors at all. Natural England has published guidance on producing Visitor Travel Plans¹ which emphasises working with other bodies in a "stakeholder partnership" in a way that is not generally seen with workplace and school Travel Plans.



Prior Park, a National Trust property on the edge of Bath with no car parking, as a condition of planning consent. Picture: Chris Wood.

If you plan to develop your Green Access Audit into a full-scale Visitor Travel Plan, the Natural England document is the best starting point. County and unitary authorities also have Travel Plan Advisors who can help with the process, but major Visitor Travel Plan work is likely to involve consultants, with concomitant costs. There is also the need to choose carefully between consultants, not all of whom have significant experience with genuinely sustainable transport planning.

Making it happen

- Make it part of a vision.
- Write it down as a commitment, in your Management Plan or in a Visitor Travel Plan.
- Make sure it is someone's responsibility to implement the plan.
- Give it top-level support.
- Work in partnership with others!
- Build on existing initiatives where possible.
- Co-ordinate the work with other processes, such as audience development plans, planning permission application processes and funding bids, so that there are no contradictions.
- Every little helps.
- Make a noise about your successes – and don't let failures put you off.

Events

It is important to include events in your Action Plan or Visitor Travel Plan. Unless they take place during the normal visitor day, events need careful and special work. There is no reason why they should be seen as outside the remit of green travel planning, although evening events can be more problematic to cater for, as public transport tends to be poorer and darkness limits foot and cycle access. It is important that events are timed to fit in with public transport timetables and sensible access times by other means. It is no good setting event start and end times for internal reasons without reference to green access options, as you are then excluding a significant potential audience.

Notes

¹ Speakman, Colin (2008) *Visitor Travel Plans for Countryside Leisure Destinations* NERR022, Natural England, Sheffield, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.

4 Background Information



The Chilterns Rambler bus is a summer Sunday service linking key visitor destinations in the northern Chilterns, here waiting in Tring, Hertfordshire. It is promoted by the Hertfordshire Sustainable Transport Partnership, which brings together a variety of organisations interested in greening countryside access, including the service's sponsor, Hertfordshire County Council. Picture: Chris Wood.

Transport & travel basics

Impacts of travel

Whilst cars allow great freedom in travel, they also create congestion (even in rural areas) and need land on which to be parked. Motor traffic makes roads dangerous for walking and cycling, and makes it more difficult for people to move around the countryside and even cross the road in villages.

Motorised travel leads to environmental impact, particularly in the forms of visual intrusion, noise and air pollution, including the emission of carbon dioxide, which is driving climate change. Whilst there are differences in the pollutants produced by different engines, cars are generally more polluting, per person, than buses and trains. Public transport also makes up a network, especially when linked to walking and cycling, so that leaving the car at home, or at the visitor's holiday accommodation, and using buses, trains, bikes and feet for the duration of a stay, makes a more sustainable – and often more enjoyable – visit.

The environmental impact per person depends on how many people are in the vehicle, so that families travelling together are arguably less important to target than lone travellers and couples – conveniently, families are more difficult to persuade onto public transport anyway! However, the more people that use local buses, the more sustainable they are, both environmentally and financially. Public transport also provides essential links for locals and visitors who do not have the choice of driving, so that greater usage ensures the survival of an essential social service and makes the environmental case for public transport stronger.

Motorcycles and mopeds are sometimes believed to be greener than cars, but their energy and emissions performance, *per person at typical occupancy levels*, is comparable to smaller cars. Overall, their performance in terms of noise is worse and, as their use increases, their smaller size allows greater illicit use and parking of motor vehicles in places where they are unwelcome, in turn creating conflict and an enforcement problem¹. Mopeds have a limited role in improving rural accessibility for some groups and powered two-wheelers obviously take up less space to park than cars, but a proportionate policy treats them no differently to small cars.

Taxis and minicabs are more polluting than cars, as they run empty between fares, but they are also an essential link in the non-car access chain.

Shared taxis, taxibuses and small flexible buses are a developing solution in a number of rural areas around the country. Some of these, like Suffolk's CoastLink service around Dunwich and Minsmere, are designed for visitors as well as locals, and play an important role locally.

There is also an economic difference between car-borne and more sustainable visitor travel. Visitors who come by car tend to carry more of what they need with them, whereas those coming by greener means, who cannot carry much with them, are more likely to buy food and drink in local shops, cafés, pubs and restaurants, so that more of their spending stays longer in the local economy.

A lot of people live without cars!

According to the 2001 census (<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>), 26.8% of households across England had no access to a car. This varies across the country, and the lowest rates are in rural areas (although this masks significant rural 'access deprivation'), but rates in urban areas – from where many visitors come – can be much lower. As an example, in the East of England, 19.8% of households across the region had no access to a car. However, the Cities of Norwich and Cambridge had 31.8% and 35.5% respectively of their households without cars. Central and inner urban areas, close to railway stations, showed rates approaching 50% (e.g. 48.2% in Harbour ward, Lowestoft).

Note

1 British Waterways has produced guidance on features used to exclude or discourage illicit motorcycle use: British Waterways (2006) *Motorcycles on Towpaths: Guidance on managing the problem and improving access for all* British Waterways, Rugby, available from: http://www.green-space.org.uk/downloads/publications/Guidance_For_Motorcycles_On_Towpaths.pdf.



*Traffic and parking get in the way of people's enjoyment of the countryside. Salthouse, Norfolk.
Picture: Chris Wood.*

Traffic calming

Traffic calming is about reducing traffic speed, dominance and nuisance, and may also result in some reduction in traffic. It is as applicable in rural areas as in towns, although the techniques may vary. The main kinds of traffic calming measures include:

- vertical deflections
- horizontal deflections
- changes to priorities
- visual and psychological measures
- changed speed limits
- road closures.

Vertical deflections, such as road humps and speed tables, if well designed, can have a marked impact on speeds, but can also cause problems for wheelchair users, cyclists, buses and emergency service vehicles, as well as some disabled drivers.

Horizontal deflections, such as road narrowings, build-outs, traffic islands and chicanes, can also reduce speeds significantly (especially if combined with visual measures), but can cause problems for walkers and cyclists, who may be forced into positions of conflict with motor vehicles. Cycle bypasses of the horizontal deflection can work, but are prone to obstructions and may in any case be less convenient to use.



*Above: a Norfolk vernacular village gateway feature.
Picture: David Hurdle.*

Below: a gateway feature at the start of a Quiet Lane near Ayot St. Peter, Hertfordshire. Note the different road surface as well as the pillars. Picture: Chris Wood.



Changed priorities are ways of breaking a long, straight right-of-way, making drivers slow down to give way at junctions. These work best when there is something more than white lines to indicate the change, usually an altered junction configuration (or, more often in towns, a mini-roundabout).

Other forms of traffic calming work by **visual and psychological means**. A visual narrowing of the carriageway can reduce speeds. A 'gateway feature', as now frequently encountered at the edges of villages, hints that drivers are entering an area where slightly different rules apply. Similar is true of Quiet Lanes, employed in some areas, where greater respect between road users is encouraged, but here significantly more outreach work with local communities is involved. Signs can reduce speeds, but, conversely, the removal of signage, white



*A Quiet Lane sign near Cromer, Norfolk.
Picture: Chris Wood.*



A speed limit repeater in the New Forest, near Brockenhurst, Hampshire. Picture: Chris Wood.

centre lines and other road 'furniture' can make a road seem slower, especially if this is done between gateway features and with a lowered speed limit.

The most effective measures involve a reduction in the driver's line of sight; people tend to drive more slowly when they can't see as far ahead. The corollary is also true: the further you can see, the faster you feel safe driving. It is important not to confuse sight line reduction with blind bends, as these are found as one-off features on otherwise fast roads. The reduction of drivers' line of sight is a measure that is implemented consistently throughout a traffic-calmed area and is linked to reduced speed limits.

Speed limits can be reduced to back up physical and visual traffic calming. Sometimes they work on their own, but they are much less effective if nothing else in the roadscape changes. Similarly, even successful speed reduction relying on limits will not solve other problems, such as footway obstruction by parked cars, without other measures. Indeed, a 20 m.p.h. limit is usually only allowed where traffic calming is already installed. *N.B.* one-way systems can increase speeds, as drivers tend to think they will not meet anyone coming the other way - even walkers. They are also a real problem for cyclists.

Road closures limit the usefulness of a road to vehicles, so reducing their numbers, and often their speeds if the road is seen as a 'dead end'. It is important the road is only closed for motor vehicles and that the closure does not impede walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. It may also be appropriate to include a bus gate as well.

Further reading

Department for Transport (2007) *Traffic Calming* Local Transport Note 1/07, TSO, London, available from: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/ltnotes/pdf/ltn0107trafficalm.pdf>.

Hass-Klau, Carmen, Inge Nold, Geert Böcker & Graham Crampton (1992) *Civilised Streets: a guide to traffic calming* Environmental & Transport Planning, Brighton.



Restricted access for vehicles at Bodham, Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.



A perfectly traffic-calmed Norfolk lane - it goes to few places (for cars) and access is limited by railway level crossings. Few cars use it. Picture: Chris Wood.

Danger, safety & convenience

It is important that people are safe, but it is also important that safety measures do not make sustainable travel less attractive or convenient – that would defeat the object!

There are two conflicting views:

‘Road Safety’ sees all road users as equal and uses simple measures to segregate or protect them from statistical dangers, without considering their responses or issues of equity, convenience and sustainability, and puts the onus on potential victims to protect themselves.

‘Road Danger Reduction’ recognises that, in terms of risk, all road users are not equal, and that they will respond to stand-alone measures in ways that may not be the best for sustainable travel, or even road safety. Risk is not a shared thing, it is imposed by those in bigger, faster vehicles on others, particularly those ‘vulnerable road users’ outside such vehicles, and the responsibility for not harming them lies with the risk-causers, not the potential victims.

An example of the difference in perspective is the issue of cycle helmets. The ‘Road Safety’ view is that head injuries are common in crashes involving cyclists and therefore head protection should be worn to reduce the severity of impact, and that people should be legally obliged to wear such protection. The ‘Road Danger Reduction’ view is that head injuries are best reduced by making crashes less likely and, indeed, that helmets are of little use in most real-life crashes involving motor vehicles (due to the speed of impact). Furthermore, the wearing of ostensibly protective gear can make both cyclists and motorists who see them less careful, and legal compulsion actually puts people off cycling. People should also be aware of and resist a creeping compulsion imposed by misguided ‘health and safety’ rules in some companies, local authorities and bike-hire outlets, which even affects illustrations used in leaflets.

Mixing walkers and vehicles on-site

If vehicles are few and slow-moving, segregation of walkers is not needed. Even where segregation is provided (e.g. a road-side footway), it is often, particularly in rural areas, made useless by selfish car parking – the worst of both worlds. It is better to reduce vehicle speeds than segregate on grounds of safety. Indeed, the more people walking and cycling, the safer they become.

However, if vehicle numbers (or driver behaviour) are such that walkers are inconvenienced, it can be sensible to provide a path that is *fully separated* from the motor vehicle route, as long as this is as convenient and is an attractive route. Remember, though, that if the vehicle road is a Public Right of Way (PRoW), people still have the right to use it, and a convenient alternative path to your reception area may not be a convenient alternative to the PRoW for those just passing through. As landowner you still have a duty of care to the PRoW-users.

Further reading

Davis, Robert (1993) *Death on the Streets: Cars and the mythology of road safety* Leading Edge, Hawes.

Jacobsen, P. L. (2003) Safety in numbers: more walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling *Injury Prevention* 9: 205-9.

Bicycle Helmet Research Foundation: <http://www.cyclehelmets.org/>.



Country lanes are often safe and attractive routes for walkers and cyclists. Little Lane, Castle Acre, Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.

Disabled access: access for all

The countryside is rarely accessible for everybody, and making it so would alter its intrinsic attractiveness. However, it is ethical, and commercially prudent, to ensure the least restrictive access. It is also a legal requirement (under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) to follow appropriate codes of good practice, such as *By all reasonable means* (see Further Reading, below).

Don't forget, disabilities vary. Some are obvious, such as when a person uses a walking frame or wheelchair or has guide dog or white stick. Others are not so obvious, such as an inability to climb steps and stairs, lesser visual impairments, deafness or learning difficulties. Don't assume that disabled people will always come by car. As public transport becomes more accessible, more disabled people use it. Ambulant disabled people will use Footpaths, but may not manage stiles. Some disabled people cycle! Generally, access improvements for disabled people also help those with temporary disabilities (such as injuries) and those with buggies, for instance.

You will probably have already made sure your destination complies with the law and wish to



Berney Arms, Norfolk: quite good signs, but a restrictive barrier.
Picture: Chris Wood.



A path-side bench at RSPB The Lodge nature reserve, Sandy, Bedfordshire. Picture: Chris Wood.

expand this to include access routes. It is sensible to carry out specific disabled access audits of key routes, from car parks, public transport stops and accessible Public Rights of Way, and then ensure these routes are up to standard.

However, *all* routes should be considered in terms of providing least restrictive access. For instance, all signs should be designed for easy of reading, with good contrast and clear text or symbols. All paths of any length can benefit from having benches at intervals along them. Barriers should only be used where there is good reason (to keep stock or illicit vehicles out), and then be of the least restrictive kind.

Further reading

British Waterways (2006) *Motorcycles on Towpaths: Guidance on managing the problem and improving access for all* British Waterways, Rugby, available from: http://www.green-space.org.uk/downloads/publications/Guidance_For_Motorcycles_On_Towpaths.pdf.

The Countryside Agency (2005) *By all reasonable means: Inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people* CA, Cheltenham, available from Natural England (ref. CA 215), available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.

Oxley, Philip R. (2002) *Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure* Department for Transport, London, available from: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/access/peti/inclusivemobility>.

Social inclusion & diversity

We are a diverse nation, but visitors to the countryside do not reflect this. Most people getting out and about are families with children aged 10-15, older independent couples and car users. People in the lower socio-economic groups, single people over 35 without children, over 65s, disabled people and people from non-white ethnic backgrounds are poorly represented – and lack of transport is a common thread for these groups.

Factors restricting access to the countryside by under-represented groups include:

- cost and lack of transport;
- lack of knowledge and experience of the British countryside and its facilities;
- fear of discrimination;
- lack of provision for disabled and young people;
- feeling vulnerable in an unknown environment.



Free concessionary bus travel gives many older people freedom to travel. They can in turn be a valuable audience for countryside facilities.

Coggeshall, Essex. Picture: Chris Wood.



Everyone should be able to enjoy the countryside and feel welcome. St. Justinian's, near St. David's, Pembrokeshire. Picture: Chris Wood.

Things to think about

- The availability of access without a car.
- The availability of information in languages spoken by ethnic minorities.
- Are there any exclusive assumptions in your advertising messages?
- The needs of diverse audiences.
- Are there potential new markets for you amongst groups living in nearby towns (for instance) who are under-represented amongst your visitors currently?

Further Reading

Commission for Rural Communities (2008) *State of the Countryside 2008 CRC*, London, available from: <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/The%20State%20of%20the%20Countryside1.pdf>.

Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (2008) *Outdoors for All? An Action Plan to increase the number of people from under-represented groups who access the natural environment* DEFRA, London, available from: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/access/dap-ofa.pdf>.

Health & green places

Inactivity and lack of greenspace affect our society's health both physically and psychologically. Physical activity has direct physical health benefits as well as raising people's self-esteem. Green environments encourage physical activity, particularly active travel (especially walking and cycling), as well as having psychological benefits.

Whilst more conducive living environments are important to improving and maintaining physical and mental health, the countryside is vital to many people's access to greenspace and active travel. Even using public transport can increase physical activity, as well as being more environmentally sustainable.

Further Reading

Active Travel: <http://www.activetravel.org.uk>.

Besser, L. M. & A. L. Dannenberg (2005) Walking to Public Transit: Steps to Help Meet Physical Activity Recommendations *American Journal*

of Preventive Medicine 29(4) pp. 273-80: "Walking to and from public transportation can help physically inactive populations ... attain the recommended level of daily physical activity."

Bird, William (2004) *Natural Fit: Can Green Space and Biodiversity Increase Levels of Physical Activity?* RSPB, Sandy.

Bird, William (2007) *Natural Thinking: Investigating the links between the Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Mental Health* RSPB, Sandy.

Both Bird reports are available from <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/health/index.asp>.

Cope, A., S. Cairns, K. Fox, D. A. Lawlor, M. Lockie, L. Lumsdon, C. Riddoch & P. Rosen (2003) The UK National Cycle Network: an assessment of the benefits of a sustainable transport infrastructure *World Transport Policy and Practice* 9(1): 6-17, available from: <http://www.eco-logica.co.uk/pdf/wtpp09.1.pdf>.

Giles-Corti, B. (2006) People or Places: What should be the target? *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* 9: 357-366.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008) *Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity* NICE Public Health Guidance 8, available from: <http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH8>.

Pretty, J., M. Griffin, J. Peacock, R. Hine, M. Sellens, & N. South (2005) *A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise* Countryside Recreation Network, Sheffield. Summary available at: <http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk/pdf/CRN%20exec%20summary.pdf>.



Access to the countryside is beneficial to health.

Main picture: a guided walk organised by the Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership on Halvergate Marshes in the Norfolk Broads.
Inset: public transport is active travel! Boarding the train at Berney Arms halt after the Wherry Lines walk. Pictures: Chris Wood.

Transport & land-use planning ~ who does what

Parish and Town Councils

These have limited roles in transport and planning, but can make or break a local project by supporting or opposing it. They also sometimes provide bus shelters, which can be very useful!

Local government

The structure of local authorities or councils has become complex in recent years. Some counties still have the two-tier system of district or borough and county councils, whilst others have unitary authorities based on former districts or boroughs, the county, or some other restructuring. Some even have a mixture of the two systems.

Where the two-tier system exists, there is a division of roles. Land-use planning has become more focussed on the lower tier (see below), but county councils still have responsibility for transport matters: highways, public rights of way, public transport and producing a statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP). However, they may have agency agreements with district-level councils for some highways matters. Unitary councils also produce LTPs. So, Local Planning Authorities may or may not also be Highway Authorities. LTPs set out transport strategies for the coming five years and any project looking for highway authority support should fit within its LTP policies.



*Linton Falls on the river Wharfe, Yorkshire Dales National Park. The National Park Authority also encourages visitors to use public transport and runs the nearby Grassington Interchange, bringing buses, car parking, walking and cycling together with a National Park information centre.
Picture: Chris Wood.*

In metropolitan areas, strategic matters are generally dealt with by joint committees, particularly the Passenger Transport Authorities, which work through Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) to co-ordinate public transport. In Greater London, Transport for London is responsible for strategic transport matters and most public transport (except non-local trains).

For land-use planning, a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs), making up a Local Development Framework (LDF), are prepared by Local Planning Authorities – usually district-level and unitary councils – in consultation with county councils where they exist.

Local Area Agreements are a form of co-operation between local authorities and other ‘stakeholders’ in the community, through Local Strategic Partnerships, involving public, private and voluntary or charity sectors. They are meant to make local government more flexible and cohesive.

Regional governance

Government Offices (GOs) are the regional representatives of central government and its policies, and are the main way that local authorities communicate with central government. In particular, they approve LTPs. Each region – as defined by the government – has a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), which is an over-arching planning document and LDDs must conform to it. The RSS in turn includes a Regional Transport Strategy, with which LTPs should conform. These are currently produced by the Regional Assembly (or equivalent), made up of representatives of the region’s local authorities, in consultation with the Government Office, the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and others. Under new legislation, however, the responsibility for producing the RSS and RTS is moving to the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), which already produce Regional Economic Strategies (RES).

RDAs and government agencies (Natural England, the Forestry Commission, *etc.*) are also agents for the dissemination of European funding streams, some of which are available to assist rural business and service development and diversification.

Protected landscapes

Some of the most attractive and/or sensitive parts of the countryside are designated as protected landscapes of one kind or another. The top of the hierarchy is the National Parks, a family which includes the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. Each



Protected landscape bodies have a key role in recreational access to their areas. For instance, the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit promotes the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path. The county council, however, is responsible for signing Public Rights of Way from the highway. Picture: Chris Wood.

National Park has a National Park Authority (NPA) which is in itself a Local Planning Authority responsible for a LDF and may take some role in stimulating green travel facilities. The next level is the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), which do not have the planning role of National Parks, but do have a body seeking to conserve and promote the AONB in a sustainable fashion. These bodies may be formal conservation boards (e.g. the Chilterns) or partnerships of various organisations (e.g. the Norfolk Coast). Both NPAs and to a lesser extent AONBs have access to specific government funds. Both produce management plans. Some other areas, such as the Breckland of central East Anglia, have conservation designations and partnerships which seek to promote and conserve them, but do not have the status of AONBs or National Parks.

Further Reading

Department for Communities and Local Government:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk>.

Department for Transport:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgf/regional/>.

National Parks:
<http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk/livingin/planning.htm>.

The Planning Portal:
<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>.

Public Rights of Way & Highway designations

Public Highways

Most public roads are Public Highways, ranging from small country lanes to motorways. Their maintenance and signage, together with that of any footway, is the responsibility of the local Highways Authority, which is normally the county or unitary council (although counties sometimes have highways agency arrangements with district-level councils), except for motorways and trunk roads, which fall under the government Highways Agency.

The Highways department is usually separate from the Countryside department, which deals with Public Rights of Way.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

PRoW consist of:

- Footpaths (access solely on foot)
- Bridleways (access on foot, horseback or pedal cycle, although the latter must give way to the former two)
- Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs)
- Restricted Byways (no motor vehicles), a new designation, replacing the old Roads Used as Public Paths and providing an alternative to BOAT designation.
- Designated cycle routes, on which horse-riding is not permitted.

Access restrictions do not apply to landowners, and PRoWs may well be on farm or other private access roads.

Permissive routes

Agreement can also be reached with the landowner to provide a formal Permissive Footpath or Bridleway, which may be withdrawn at any time or be closed on certain days. Many informal permissive routes also exist.

In particular, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs gives grants for sensitive farming ('stewardship') which include access to farmland, usually on field-edge paths. The quality of these varies from farm to farm, but some provide valuable additions to the PRoW network. However, these schemes are time limited. Full details can be found at <http://cwr.naturalengland.org.uk/>.

Status and local authorities

It is not wise to promote access by means of a path or road that is private and has no designated Public Right of Way or permissive arrangement, even if locals use it without hindrance. The status of all Rights of Way should be checked against the Definitive Map, held by the county or unitary council. Particular care should be exercised in relation to the uncoloured minor roads on the Ordnance Survey map. Some of these are Public Highways; others are private and may or may not have permissive access agreements on them. Local authority Countryside officers will have knowledge of more formal permissive arrangements and can



*A pleasant Restricted Byway at Kelling, Norfolk.
Picture: Chris Wood.*

advise on the history of any negotiations with landowners. They are also in general responsible for Rights of Way signs and surfaces.

Highway authorities and National Park Authorities in England have statutory Local Access Fora, made up of walking, cycling, conservation and landowning interests, which advise on improvements to recreational access in their areas. However, your main point of contact regarding detailed issues on the ground is likely to be the Rights of Way officers of your local authority, which also has a duty to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Other routes

The National Cycle Network and long-distance paths (including National Trails) are not in themselves rights of way. They use Highways, PRowS and permissive routes as appropriate.

Access Land

Access Land is designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as land over which the public has a right of access. It may offer suitable routes to your destination, but may not have direct paths. Access Land is shown on Ordnance Survey maps and on http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/things_to_do/open_access. It may be closed at certain times for reasons such as conservation.

Towpaths

Canal towpaths are not Public Rights of Way, but British Waterways grants free access on foot, and on pedal cycle if in possession of a permit, available free from: <http://www.waterscape.com/things-to-do/cycling/permit>.

Further Reading

Agate, Elizabeth (2004) *Footpaths: a practical handbook* Revised Edition, BTCV, Doncaster.

The Institute of Public Rights of Way and Access Management: <http://www.iprow.co.uk/>.



Footpaths and Bridleways can be ploughed. They should be reinstated within a fortnight, but this does not always happen. Paths across fields are not always kept free of overhanging crops either.

Above: Canewdon, Essex.

Below: Cockthorpe, Norfolk.

Pictures: Chris Wood.



Permissive paths can be of high quality. Norfolk Wildlife Trust's path to its reserve at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. Picture: Chris Wood.



Long-distance paths like the Icknield Way are not in themselves PRowS, but use PRowS and permissive paths. Picture: Chris Wood.

Design for walking & cycling

People on foot or riding bicycles need a few basic things

- Convenient, attractive and safe routes.
- Legibility.
- A good surface to walk or ride on.
- Security for bikes and bags.

Convenience

Remember that people on foot, in particular, need greater flexibility in access than those in cars – simply because they can't travel as far. Don't automatically funnel everybody through the car entrance. This is probably located to cause the least traffic impact and may well be in completely the wrong location for other means of access. Make sure there are attractive and convenient routes from public transport stops and Public Rights of Way.

Access barriers may be necessary to keep livestock in or out, or to deter illicit use, usually by motorcyclists and quad-bikers. These can make access difficult for legitimate users and so a careful balance has to be struck, involving the minimum practicable restriction on legitimate access – which, depending on the status of the path, can include walkers, wheelchair-users, people who cannot climb stiles, people with buggies, pedal cyclists on standard bikes, and those with tandems, three-wheelers or trailers, horses and, on Restricted Byways, even horse-drawn vehicles. Barriers vary from fences with stiles, through standard farm gates (which can be difficult to use), pedestrian and cycle gates and kissing gates, to gaps with bollards, low barriers (that horses and *most* walkers can step over), chicanes or cattle-grids. Where there is a vertical barrier or a cattle-grid, it is important that a



Hard and unsealed surfaces on the National Cycle Network in Bedfordshire. Pictures: Chris Wood.

level-access option is available, such as a properly designed path gate alongside.

Legibility

People on foot and bicycle need better information than car drivers, as it is not so easy to retrace your steps and go around. This information can be in the form of maps and route descriptions, but most importantly, the route needs to be *legible* – that is, easily followed on the ground. Where there is any doubt, or where decisions have to be made, signs should be used to indicate the way – this *way-marking* does not have to mean a plethora of signs, merely that the route should be *well* signed. These signs do need to be maintained – weather, clumsy tractor-drivers and vandals can take their toll.

Remember, when carrying out essential works that close off a path, warn people at a place before the closure where they can choose to go another way! And, make sure there is another way to go! Where necessary, you may need to install a temporary path diversion.

Surfacing

It is not essential to have a hard surface, as long as it is appropriate to its purpose. It must not erode quickly, but equally should be rural in character. Remember that horses, if they also use the route, tend to churn up soft surfaces. Surfaces around gates on farmland are also critical, as cattle (in particular) tend to cause poaching (a deeply pitted, muddy area). Remember that hard surfaces can also sink and retain water; drainage is important whatever surfacing is employed.

Don't assume that cyclists will be on mountain bikes. It should be possible to reach your destination on an ordinary road bike.



Clear signage in Exeter (left) and, on recycled plastic finger-posts, near Tring, Hertfordshire (right). N.B. the latter has good contrast, but would be better in mixed-case type. Pictures: Chris Wood.

Cycle parking

Even if cycle theft does not appear to be an issue in your area, your visitors will not know this. By providing secure cycle parking, you give people confidence in cycling to your destination. Cycle stands should be metal – or at least have a metal core – and firmly fixed to the ground. They should support the bicycle's frame and allow the frame and both wheels to be locked. The inverted 'U' design, known as a 'Sheffield' stand (invented by Sheffield City Council) is a simple and convenient design, that is easily fabricated from steel tubing and readily bought 'off the peg' from several suppliers. For most countryside applications, the kind of stand designed to be embedded in concrete (rather than fixed to a hard surface with bolts, which is in any case less secure) is probably appropriate. However, you may wish to weld a steel bar or plate at right angles to the end of the tube, to aid fixing in the concrete, if your stands are not already fitted with one.

Metal railings make good cycle stands, but this may result in obstruction – if locking bikes to railings is OK on your property, it is as well to indicate this with obvious cycle parking signs. Whilst rings attached to walls can be acceptable, never use front-wheel-only, 'butterfly' stands, or slotted paving slabs, as these are not secure and can result in buckled wheels. If you want something more 'rustic' than Sheffield stands (such as metal-cored, wood-covered stands), you will probably need to get them made up specially.

It is important that cycle stands are clearly visible, close to your door and installed well: the Sustrans guidelines should be followed. Some form of weather-protection is useful, but should not be allowed to hide the stands. Some maintenance is also needed, mostly vegetation clearance and occasional repainting (best done when you are closed to visitors or at the least popular times).

Bags

People travelling on foot and by bicycle have no mobile lockers (cars) to leave their valuables in. A useful service is the provision of secure storage for cycle panniers, rucksacks and the like, whilst people are visiting, whether in a staffed area or by means of baggage lockers (keys for which could be kept at reception or the system could be coin-operated, depending on your situation).



Well-used cycle stands at the National Trust's visitor centre at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, which is on the National Cycle Network. Everyone walks past them on their way into the visitor centre. They are also well spaced for ease of use. Picture: Giles Merritt.

Further Reading

Agate, Elizabeth (2004) *Footpaths: a practical handbook* Revised Edition, BTCV, Doncaster.

British Waterways (2006) *Motorcycles on Towpaths: Guidance on managing the problem and improving access for all* British Waterways, Rugby, available from: http://www.green-space.org.uk/downloads/publications/Guidance_For_Motorcycles_On_Towpaths.pdf.

Department for Transport, Scottish Executive & Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Cycle Infrastructure Design* Local Transport Note 2/08, TSO, London, available from: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/ltnotes/lt208.pdf>.

Natural England (2008) *Waymarking public rights of way* NE68, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.

Sustrans (1994) *Making Ways for the Bicycle* Sustrans, Bristol.

Sustrans & Ove Arup & Partners (1997) *The National Cycle Network: Guidelines and Practical Details* Issue 2, Sustrans, Bristol.

Sustrans (1998) *Cycle Parking in Rural Areas* Information Sheet FF17, Sustrans, Bristol.

Sustrans (1998) *Access Controls* Information Sheet FF22, Sustrans, Bristol.

Sustrans (2004) *Cycle Parking* Information Sheet FF37, Sustrans, Bristol.

Sustrans material is available from <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/> (click on 'Info & resources', then 'Technical guidelines').



Baggage lockers at the National Trust's visitor centre at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk. Keys are kept at the reception desk. Picture: Chris Wood.



How public transport works

Bus

Bus services in England are 'deregulated', in that any operator can run commercial routes where they like, as long as they register them with regional Traffic Commissioners with 56 days' notice of their start, end or any timetable or route alteration. Local authorities, generally county and unitary councils in the shire counties, are able, within the limits of their budgets, to support other services they consider socially necessary, where they are not being provided commercially. These supported services may not compete with commercial operations. In the metropolitan areas, it is the Passenger Transport Executives (funded jointly by the constituent borough councils) who have responsibility for supporting non-commercial services. The situation is different in Greater London, where Transport for London plans routes and purchases their operation from private companies. Local authorities also often have their own fleets of vehicles for social needs and sometimes schools services.

District, borough and unitary councils carry the responsibility of reimbursing bus operators for the national concessionary travel scheme, and may give enhanced availability within their areas, for their residents.

Bus operators vary in size from small firms with one or two vehicles, to subsidiaries of multinational corporations. Their interest in local markets can vary accordingly. *N.B.* some bus operators have an exact-fare-only policy, where drivers do not give change, yet they may not promote their fares very well. If promoting one of these services to your visitors, try to establish how much the fares are from the main origin points, so that you can pass this information on.



Avebury henge monument, Wiltshire, has a frequent bus service from Swindon and Devizes. Picture: Chris Wood.

Stops and timetables

Generally, bus companies produce their own timetables, although many local authorities are the main local source for printed copies. Rural bus stops can be simple affairs, with a post and sign (known as a 'flag'), sometimes a single post indicating stops on both sides of the road. Local authorities are responsible for bus stops and their maintenance, although other people also have a say in the placing of new stops, particularly the Police. Many counties have a policy of promoting 'hail and ride' for rural services, outside villages, whereby the driver is authorised to stop anywhere it is safe to do so, not just at marked stops.

Community Transport

An increasingly important kind of operator in rural areas is the Community Transport (CT) sector. Here, not-for-profit companies, using a mixture of paid and volunteer staff, provide services for the community where commercial and supported services have left a gap. Many local authorities now use CT as a supplier of transport services, from meals on wheels to mainstream bus services, and an increasing number of CT operators are taking on innovative services that would not be viable for commercial operators. Your local authority will be able to direct you to any local Community Transport operator.



North Norfolk's Coasthopper bus carries locals and visitors, and has grown from Norfolk County Council support to a commercial service. Picture: Chris Wood.

Flexible buses

A particularly interesting area is that of pre-booked, flexible buses, whether run under Public Service Vehicle (PSV), CT or taxi regulations. Generically, these services are known as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). They may use cars, 'people-carriers' or minibuses and be run by minicab, taxi, CT or bus companies, although usually as part of local authorities' supported networks. The key features are that passengers book their journeys in advance (how far in advance depends on the nature of the operation), that the service only runs if there are bookings, and that it generally covers an area rather than being restricted to a set route.

Coach

Long-distance coach services operate across the country, run by private operators. They provide links to various towns and cities, but are unlikely to be the final form of transport used to reach your destination; visitors will generally need to change to a local bus service. Private hire and charter coaches are found all over the country and are a way of getting large numbers of people to your door in one vehicle, but if you wish to encourage this form of transport by promoting yourself to coach companies and tourism agencies you will need to think about how coaches can reach you (if you are along narrow lanes, for instance) and where they can wait (is your car park big enough?).

Rail

Train services on the National Rail network are run by private Train Operating Companies (TOCs) under time-limited, regional or route-based franchises, awarded by the government. Any significant changes to timetables, or other 'franchise commitments' have to be approved by the Department for Transport. The railway itself (infrastructure) is the responsibility of Network Rail, which does not deal directly with passengers.

Some parts of the country are better served by the rail network than others, but rail is far easier to persuade people to use than buses. So, if you have a rail connection nearby, it is worth developing it. This may involve a bus link – and the PlusBus add-on ticket allows people to get around beyond the station in a large and increasing number of towns around the country. Some places have PlusBus zones that extend well beyond the built-up area (check at <http://www.plusbus.info>). If your destination lies within a PlusBus zone, it is worth promoting to your visitors as it is much easier, and usually cheaper, than buying a separate ticket on the bus. Sometimes, even outside a PlusBus area, an all-in ticket for train and bus travel is available, such as



Suffolk County Council's CoastLink flexible bus, here at the National Trust's Dunwich Heath, makes a sparsely populated part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB accessible for locals and visitors alike. Picture: Chris Wood.

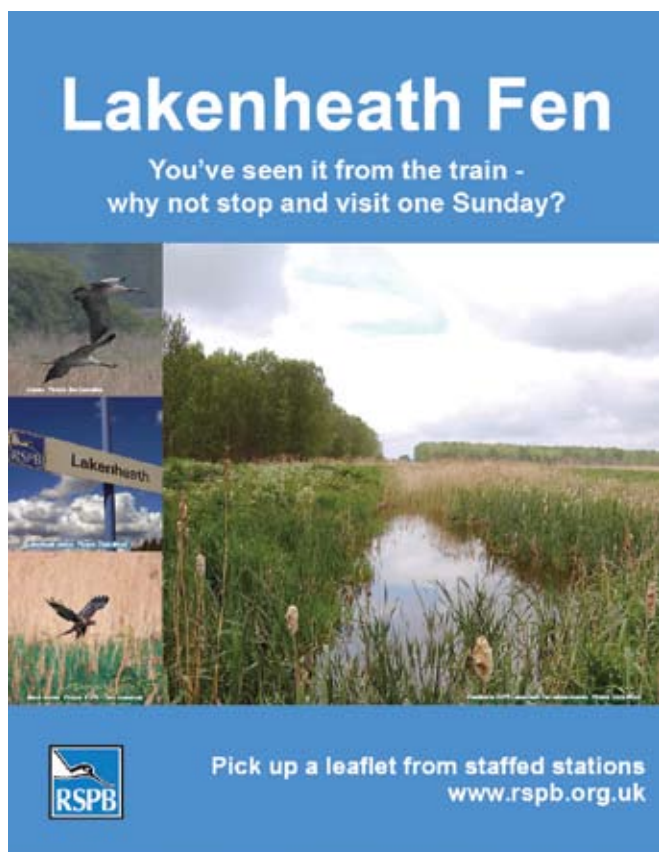
the Bittern Line Rover, for the National Express East Anglia Norwich-Sheringham line, which also gives unlimited travel on the Norfolk Green Coasthopper bus along the Norfolk coast.

Small stations with a decent service are particularly useful for access to the countryside, as you can be in your recreational destination just a few steps from the platform. Most TOCs have someone responsible for community liaison, who is likely to be the best person to talk to initially. They may be able to work with you to mutual benefit. Widen the Choice and the RSPB have worked with National Express East Anglia to develop links at smaller stations, which has involved the TOC, with DfT approval, altering the timetable at two small stations with a one-a-day service to give a usable weekend service. Ticket sales to Lakenheath (Suffolk; *poster overleaf*) went up by 500% in the first year¹.

A number of more lightly used, but often scenic, railway routes have Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), whose remit is to engage the community, and promote and enhance the railway. Tourism is



The Swanage Railway at Corfe Castle, Dorset. Heritage lines can make useful links too. Picture: Chris Wood.



Poster promoting the successful weekend service at Lakenheath station, for access to RSPB Lakenheath Fen, used on the Norwich-Cambridge trains operated by National Express East Anglia. Design: Chris Wood.

vital to most community railways and if you are near one, a conversation with its co-ordinating officer may be fruitful. The Association of Community Rail Partnerships can put you in touch and has a list of member CRPs on its web-site: <http://www.acorp.uk.com/> (click on 'Membership').

A number of private, preserved or 'heritage' railways exist around the country, predominantly on stretches of formerly abandoned railway. These are tourist attractions in their own right, but some also provide a useful public transport service. However, their fares tend to be higher than the National Rail network and their days of operation generally fewer.

Ferries

Boats provide public transport links in some places, notably around the coast, across estuaries, but also on some inland rivers and lakes. Most of these are small ferries and pleasure-orientated river-buses, and are sometimes difficult to track down without local knowledge. There are year-round operations and those that only operate on summer weekends. Vessels range from small vehicle ferries that operate to a strict timetable down to rowing boats that come out when booked. All carry pedestrians and most carry cyclists.

Timetable information

Train and bus times can be found in a variety of places, from operator and council leaflets, via telephone call centres, to the internet. As well as operators' own web-sites, some councils have very good bus information on their sites, as do the Passenger Transport Executives and Transport for London. Three main public transport travel-planning sites exist:

National Rail Enquiries

<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk> 08457 48 49 50.

Traveline

<http://www.traveline.org.uk> 0871 200 22 33.

Transport Direct

<http://www.transportdirect.info> no call centre.

However, these do not include information on non-registered and non-timetabled (flexible) bus services, nor on railways that are not part of the National Rail network (for which latter their own web-pages are the readiest source of information). Most small ferries are also excluded from these sources.

Train timetables have two main change-over dates: mid-May and early December. Bus timetables, however, can be changed with 56 days' notice to the regional Traffic Commissioner. Sadly, printed timetables are rarely available long before they come in and end dates are rarely published.

Note

1 Wood, C., and Morris, C. (2008) *New Life for Small Railway Stations: Gateways to the Countryside Proceedings of the Sixth Transport Practitioners' Meeting*, London: PTRC, available from: <http://www.transplan.org>.



Lady Essex III: a summer ferry forms a valuable link to the developing RSPB reserve on Wallasea Island, Essex, from the train at Burnham-on-Crouch. Picture: Chris Wood.

Map reading basics

Ordnance Survey ¹ maps come in two main series: Landranger at a scale of 1:50,000 and Explorer at a scale of 1:25,000. The latter is most useful, as it shows more and makes it easier to identify features and kinds of path, for instance. The grids on Ordnance Survey maps are made up of one-kilometre squares, so that, at 1:25,000, one kilometre is represented in four centimetres. There is no mile-based grid, but the scale on the map shows both kilometres and miles. At 1:25,000, one mile is represented in just over two and a half inches.

Map references

It is often useful to be able to give the precise location of places, so that people can find them easily with a map. This is done using map grid co-ordinates, or grid references. The whole country is divided into squares, coded between 'NA' and 'TV'. Each of these is then divided into a 100km grid. Each Ordnance Survey map sheet has numbers along its edges, corresponding to this grid, such that each one-kilometre square is identified by its south-western corner, using the two-digit number from its southern edge (counting eastwards) and the two-digit number from its western edge (counting northwards). The map edges are also marked to divide each square by ten again (100m), so that a six-figure reference can be obtained.

Always give the number along the southern edge first ('eastings'), then that along the western edge ('northings'). When specifying the third digit of each of these, within the kilometre square, take the co-ordinates of the south-western corner of the hundred-metre square containing the point you are locating. For example, in the diagram on the right, the windmill has a grid reference of 485 026.

For most purposes, it is adequate to give the six-figure map reference and to cite the Ordnance Survey map the place is on, rather than the national letter code, for ease of location. However, for some purposes, the letters are important, as with the Public Rights of Way Definitive Map.

Map symbols

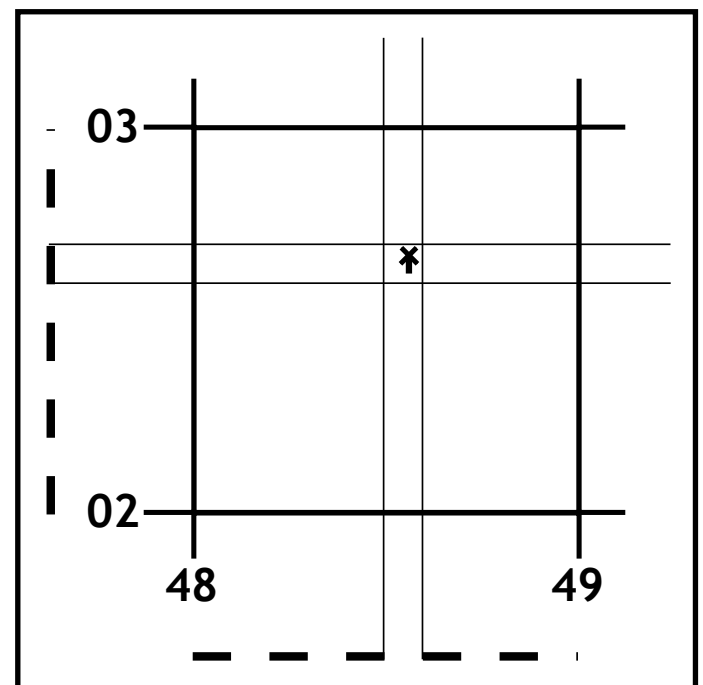
A map is made up of symbols of various kinds.

- Topographic, *e.g.* ground contours, rivers, coastlines, *etc.*
- Ground-cover, *e.g.* built structures, woodland, water, *etc.*
- Point features, *e.g.* places of worship, schools, historic features, *etc.*
- Transport and access, *e.g.* roads, railways, footpaths, Access Land, M.o.D. firing ranges, *etc.*
- Administrative, *e.g.* local authority and police constabulary boundaries.
- Places of tourist interest, *e.g.* viewpoints, National Trust properties, *etc.*

These are all detailed in the key (information panel) of every map. *N.B.* permissive paths are only indicated on the Ordnance Survey map if the landowner notifies the OS.

Note

- 1 <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>.



Useful organisations, publications & web-sites

Publications

Sparkes, Claire, and Chris Wood (2009) *Linking People to the Landscape: The Benefits of Sustainable Travel in Countryside Recreation and Tourism Widen the Choice*, Norwich, available from: <http://www.vistrav.org.uk> or <http://www.transplan.org>.

British Waterways (2004) *Water Ways: Inland waterways and sustainable rural transport* British Waterways, Warwick, available from: http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/media/documents/Water_Ways_Sustainable_Rural_Transport.pdf.

Clifford, Sarah, Davina Fereday, Anthony McLaughlin & Sofia Girnary (2008) *The Impacts of Leisure Travel* NERR014, Natural England, Sheffield, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.

Semlyen, Anna (2003) *Cutting Your Car Use* Green Books, Totnes.

Speakman, Colin (2008) *Good Practice in Sustainable Leisure Travel: Twenty Case Studies* NERR021, Natural England, Sheffield, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.

Speakman, Colin (2008) *Visitor Travel Plans for Countryside Leisure Destinations* NERR022, Natural England, Sheffield, available from: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications>.

Steer Davies Gleave (2008) *Transport Research Series: Exploring the links between transport and culture* Scottish Government Social Research, available from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/235020/0064488.pdf>.

Stern, Nicholas (2007) *The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review* Cambridge University Press.

Transport 2000 (2001) *Tourism without Traffic: A good practice guide* Transport 2000 Trust (now the Campaign for Better Transport), London.

World Transport Policy & Practice – free, on-line journal, available from: <http://www.eco-logica.co.uk/worldtransport.html>.

Organisations and Networks

Sustainable Leisure Travel Network
<http://www.vistrav.org.uk>

British Waterways
<http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk>

Campaign for Better Transport
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk>

Countryside Recreation Network
<http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk/>

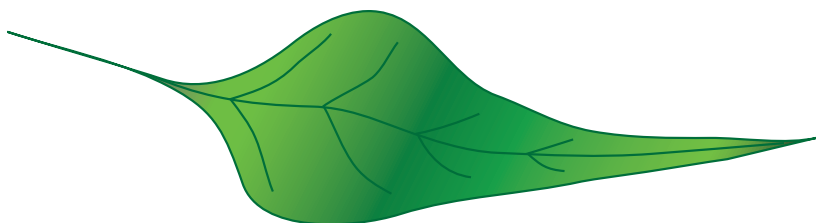
Natural England
<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk>

The National Trust
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk>

RSPB
<http://www.rspb.org.uk>

Sustrans
<http://www.sustrans.org.uk>, including:

The Evidence! links: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/default.asp?sID=1091694766555>



Space for your own notes





Widen the Choice
Linking People to the Landscape



Green Access for Countryside Recreation

This guide is essential reading for everybody whose work or business revolves around people visiting the countryside.

The Green Access Audit is the bedrock of sustainable access.

This guide takes the reader through the Green Access Audit process and provides useful summaries of key knowledge, on transport, planning and design, arranged to allow easy access to areas outside the reader's expertise.

"I have not seen anything as comprehensive before."

Jo Guiver, Institute of Transport and Tourism, University of Central Lancashire