INTRODUCTION

Although Northern Ireland offers many opportunities for outdoor recreation within its urban and rural environments, opportunities on people's 'doorstep', close to where they live, are often limited.

This toolkit is designed to help local communities provide new outdoor recreation opportunities through the development of Community Trails and Networks.

The process will also help communities identify further outdoor recreational opportunities in the area, for example pump tracks, BMX, skate parks etc, which together with the creation of Community Trails can lead to the creation of a local 'recreational hub'.

Creating a Community Trail Network requires time, energy and commitment. For some projects, gaining the support of the relevant Council is recommended before proceeding. This is not always necessary, for example, when there is direct support from the landowner e.g. DARD Forest Service, National Trust etc.

TOOLKIT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY TRAIL NETWORKS

In 2014, Sport NI, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Tourism NI (TNI) and Inland Waterways of the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure published ‘Our Great Outdoors - The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland’.

Within the plan one of the targets under theme 3, Making the Outdoors More Accessible, is to produce a systematic toolkit for Community Path Network development across Northern Ireland. This is regarded as a convenient and simple way of connecting towns, villages and communities.

Following consultation of the Plan, the term ‘Community Path Network’ has been updated to ‘Community Trail Network’. This broader definition allows for a range of elements from gravel paths, unsurfaced desire lines, concrete lanes, beaches and tarmac footpaths.

Please note that using the Toolkit is not a guarantee that a Community Trail or Community Trail Network will be achieved. The aim of this Toolkit is to provide advice and useful information on the process of developing a Community Trail or Community Trail Network.
What is a Community Trail or Community Trail Network?

A Community Trail or Community Trail Network is defined as one which:

- Connects communities to local outdoor spaces and may also connect different communities together e.g. connects two villages.

A Community Trail or Network:

- Has a written/legal agreement in place outlining identified management, maintenance and liability responsibilities.
- Has a trailhead with information for the trail user, particularly where the trail is promoted for visitors/tourists.
- Is clearly defined on the ground and may have waymarking and appropriate signage.
- Provides opportunities for outdoor recreation close to where people live and work.
- Can be used for exercise, shopping, commuting or enjoying leisure time.
- Can cater for different specified users including walkers and cyclists of a range of abilities.
- Provides for those with accessibility issues where appropriate.
- Includes areas of ‘green space’.
- Connects people to places of interest e.g. natural or built heritage.
- Can be located in both an urban or rural setting.
- Feels safe - the presence of others on the trail provides a perception of safety and security.
- Should be at least 70% off-road.
- Can be accessed in a range of ways by a range of people from a range of different places.
- Can be looped or linear.
- May extend or join existing routes.
- May utilise historic linear routes such as canal towpaths, river bank walks or disused railways.
- May require existing trails to be upgraded.
- May require new trail to be created.
- Has additional information for the trail user – this may be online, in a leaflet etc.

In addition, a Community Trail Network:

- Can include different types of trails for specific activities e.g. walking, cycling, horse riding.
- Consists of a series of interconnecting or looped Community Trails of various lengths
- May be developed around a single Community Trail which may serve as a ‘spine’ for the network

Benefits of Community Trails and Networks:

These include social, economic and environmental benefits.

- Social benefits:
  - Improvement to the quality of life of the local community by creating a positive impact on the mental and physical health and well-being of the trail users
  - Community development that helps to connect previously divided communities or improve community relationships through increased community involvement, ownership and cohesion

- Economic benefits:
  - Improving links between people and services
  - Increased support of local services such as pubs, shops and cafes as well as access to new markets (e.g. accommodation providers, tourism markets etc.)
  - Urban / rural regeneration through improved facilities and opportunities

- Environmental benefits:
  - Improvement or enhancement of the local environment
  - Increased awareness of the local natural and built environment

Developing a Community Trail or Network involves 8 stages, as follows:

Stage 1: Preparation
Stage 2: Information Gathering
Stage 3: Fieldwork
Stage 4: Trail Design
Stage 5: Funding
Stage 6: Trail Construction
Stage 7: Trail Management and Maintenance
Stage 8: Marketing

Although there are 8 stages to developing a Community Trail or Network, this toolkit is designed to cover stages 1 to 3 in detail. The toolkit does introduce stages 4 to 8, though you are kindly asked to refer to a separate document entitled ‘Principles and Standards for Trail Development in Northern Ireland’ for more detailed information. The latter document is available from Outdoor Recreation NI.

(www.outdoorrecreationni.com)
STAGE 1 - PREPARATION

Stage one of the process involves setting up a Project Steering Group and developing a Frame of Reference. Both of these are essential foundations to any successful trail development.

During Stage 1, it is useful to use maps of the area in which your Community Trail Network is proposed. For this, you should obtain at least 2 enlarged Ordnance Survey sheet 1:50,000 scale maps (A1 size if possible) of the area. Keep 1 clean copy for reference and the other(s) as working copies.

Copies of these maps can be obtained from Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland (a charge may apply).

Part 1: Set up a Project Steering Group

Setting up a Project Steering Group of interested people from within the local community will focus ideas and ensure that everyone is working collectively towards achieving a common goal. It also allows for the workload and responsibilities to be shared. This helps sustain community enthusiasm and motivation as the project develops.

Ideally, the Project Steering Group should have up to ten members (above ten is generally unmanageable) with a:

- **Leader/Chair** – to lead, co-ordinate and manage the trail development process and a
- **Record Keeper** – to keep project records including notes of meetings and minutes

It is important that on the Project Steering Group there is representation from a range of local key interests e.g. heritage, walking clubs, landowners and that those involved have a sound knowledge of the area.

If appropriate, getting support from the local Council or Councillors at this stage is helpful. It is likely that the local Council will be required to provide financial support or take on a role in managing, maintaining and covering liability of the Community Trail. If possible, a suitable person from within Council should be asked to sit on the Project Steering Group. Local Council support may not be necessary if the Trails are to be developed over private land and have the approval of the land owner e.g. Northern Ireland Environment Agency, National Trust, private individual. In this case, the landowner should be invited to sit on the Project Steering Group.

To give members an idea of their level of commitment to the Group, it is important to set out clearly from the outset what it is you want to achieve and the timeline for achieving this. It is useful to set key dates for completing different stages. This gives members of the Group goals to work towards.

Part 2: Developing a Frame of Reference

Creating and agreeing a clear Frame of Reference should be the first task of the Project Steering Group. This is essential to allow all partners / stakeholders to understand and agree from the start –

- The parameters of the project
- How it will be delivered
- Clarity on key project issues

This will ensure that the trail development stays on the right track throughout the project.

**The Frame of Reference may need to be modified as the project progresses – but that’s OK.**

Developing a Frame of Reference is a simple exercise that includes:

- Consultation - ideally in the form of face-to-face meetings and discussions with partners and stakeholders through the Project Steering Group and through public consultations¹
- Development of a formal document, agreed and signed by all relevant stakeholders and partners.

¹ See Stage 2, Consultation
A Frame of Reference should identify the following:

- **Scope and Scale**
- **Aim and Objectives**
- **Trail Model**
- **Trail Users**
- **Method of Delivery**

### i. Scope and Scale

Establishing the intended scope and scale of the Community Trail or Network means agreeing the following:

- **Who is the target market?** i.e. is the Trail/Network for local people, day visitors or tourists?
- **What is the significance of the Trail/Network within the area in terms of existing or other planned provision?** i.e. is this the only Trail/Network or is it one of many in the area?
- **What is the desired economic and social impact?** i.e. is it to create jobs, lead to increased visitor spend, provide places for local people to get active outdoors leading to health benefits, to increase participation etc?
- **Is the project of local, regional, national or international significance?**
- **How many people and communities is the project likely to affect / impact upon?**

### ii. Aim and Objectives

Having a clearly defined aim and objectives for the project is important to ensure all partners are in agreement about what it will achieve.

The aim and objectives will be shaped by the scope and scale and can be extremely varied and can relate to the following:

- Creating a community recreation resource
- Creating a tourism facility of regional, national or international importance
- Managing the impact of current recreation on land use
- Managing the impacts of recreation on a landscape or habitat
- Managing safety and liability
- Managing user conflict
- Having clearly defined on the ground and may have waymarking and appropriate signage.

### iii. Trail Model

Community Trails or Networks are classed as ‘Formal’ trails / networks. As such, these will:

- Have a legal status, with identified management, maintenance and liability responsibilities.
- Have a trail head where the trail starts and finishes with information for the trail user.
- Be clearly defined on the ground and may have waymarking and appropriate signage.

As users will be invited to use them, there is an increased duty of care to trail users. This means there is a requirement to ensure each is managed and maintained at a consistent standard with associated paperwork to support this.

Therefore, it is essential to identify from the outset, the intended trail model. This includes identifying the:

- **Trail Owner:** The Trail Owner(s) is the entity that owns the land on which a Community Trail is to be developed. This may be one or several landowners and include public landowners e.g. Local Council, Forest Service Northern Ireland (FSNI) and private landowners. It is essential that the Trail Owner(s) is /are in agreement with the Frame of Reference from the outset, as not having their support will be a major barrier in later stages.

- **Trail Provider:** The Trail Provider is the entity that has overall responsibility for the trails and therefore liability for the health and safety of Trail Users. When considering who will be the Trail Provider, it is important to establish what resources might be available for trail management and maintenance:
  - Management will include formal and informal inspections and recording of these.
  - Maintenance may include clearing vegetation from the edge of the trail, repairing the trail surface, fixing bridges/ stiles or replacing waymarker disks.

*In some cases the Trail Provider may not carry the liability insurance – Outdoor Recreation NI holds a Public Liability Policy for all Quality Walks. This cover extends to cover private landowners over whose land the Quality Walks pass.*
In some cases the Trail Owner and Trail Provider can be the same entity e.g. a Local Council. In other cases, the Trail Owner and Trail Provider may be different entities e.g. the Trail Owner may be a private landowner and the Trail Provider a Local Council. In this case some form of access arrangement will be required to ensure that each Community Trail remains open for the purpose for which it was developed. This is explained further in Stage 2.

In addition, it is worth remembering that Outdoor Recreation NI holds a Public Liability Insurance Policy for all ‘Quality Walks’.

A Community Trail can be assessed to become a Quality Walk.

- **Trail Promoter**: The Trail Promoter can be -
  - The entity that is responsible for developing a Community Trail: This includes managing the development process, securing funding (submitting funding applications) and project delivery. All this will take place through consultation with the project partners;
  and/or -
  - The entity that is responsible for ongoing marketing of a Community Trail: This ensures that the trail is promoted to the right people in the right way. There is no point in developing a Community Trail if no one knows about it and therefore, it is not used.

**Example 1:**
Outdoor Recreation NI is an example of a Trail Promoter that is responsible for developing trails including –

The Waymarked Ways (long distance walks throughout Northern Ireland)

Multi-use trails projects at – Castle Ward Demesne, Co. Down
- Beech Hill Country House Hotel, Co. Londonderry
- Tobair Mhuire, Co. Down
- Bunkers Hill, Co. Down
- Divis Mountain, Co. Antrim

**Example 2:**
Outdoor Recreation NI is an example of a Trail Promoter that is responsible for marketing trails in a range of ways including websites, social media and print.

**iv. Trail Users**
A Community Trail can cater for a variety of users and ability including walkers, off-road cyclists, runners, those with limited mobility etc. The type and ability of user will inform the Trail Grade that is going to be developed. Trail Grade is defined in ‘Principles and Standards for Trail Development in Northern Ireland’. This document can be obtained from Outdoor Recreation NI.

For Multi-use Community Trails i.e. trails used by more than one type of user at once, the following Trail Grades apply –

- **Category 1** – all-ability and can therefore be used by anyone
- **Category 2** – accessible to a wide range of users and abilities but not all users, due to issues relating to gradients, trail surface and trail features
- **Category 3** – less accessible than Category 1 and Category 2 trails and are therefore more suited to specific users

**v. Method of Delivery**
Community Trails and Networks can be delivered in a number of ways:

- **Capital funded projects** with a fixed budget and fixed timescale for completion.
- Projects delivered entirely by volunteers with no capital funding.
- **Part capital funded/part volunteer or other contributions in kind.**

Establishing at an early stage how the project is to be delivered will directly impact on its Scope and Scale and how and when development takes place.

Failing to clarify how delivery is to take place can lead to resources being wasted or not used to their fullest capacity e.g. volunteer enthusiasm wasted, deadlines not being met or funding opportunities being missed.

**Summary of Stage 1 – Preparation**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steering Group</strong></td>
<td>Established</td>
<td>Five to ten members identified that represent a range of local key interests and have sound knowledge of the area</td>
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<td>Chair and Secretariat identified</td>
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<td>Council support obtained</td>
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<td>Key dates set</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Frame(s) of Reference</strong></td>
<td>Agreed and signed off by project partners</td>
<td>Frame(s) of Reference defines –</td>
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<td>Scope &amp; Scale</td>
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<td>Aim &amp; Objectives</td>
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<td>Trail Model</td>
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<td>Trail Users</td>
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<td>Method of Delivery</td>
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</table>

Once ALL details are complete proceed to Stage 2.

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2 In some cases the Trail Provider may not carry the liability insurance – Outdoor Recreation NI holds a Public Liability Policy for all Quality Walks. This cover extends to cover private landowners over whose land the Quality Walks pass.
STAGE 2 – INFORMATION GATHERING: DESK RESEARCH, CONSULTATION and MAPPING

Information gathering takes place in a range of ways and includes:

Part 1: Desk Research and Mapping

Part 2: Consultation

Part 1: Desk Research and Mapping

Obtain 2 further copies of an enlarged Ordnance Survey sheet 1:50,000 scale (A1 size if possible) of the area in which the Community Trail Network is proposed.

Plot the proposed route of the Community Trails on the map and then map/record the following information:

i. Existing outdoor recreation e.g. walk trails, cycle route or green spaces

ii. The key settlements of population close to trail

iii. The key access points along each Community Trail

iv. Amenities / facilities on or by the route(s)

v. Natural and built designations

vi. Areas along the route which you think would be of interest

vii. Land use and management (if known)

viii. Landownershhip along the routes (if known)

ix. Any other useful information

Table 1 at the end of this section summarises some useful data sources to help you undertake this exercise.

i. Existing Outdoor Recreation Provision

This should take account of existing outdoor recreation activity already carried out on and within the vicinity of your proposed Community Trails. It is vital that existing recreational use of an area is not displaced or negatively impacted by the development of new Community Trails. You should record:

• The type of activity taking place e.g. walking, cycling, running, horse riding, angling etc.

• Is it carried out on a formal or informal basis?

• What is the intensity and frequency of use? e.g. daily or at weekends and by how many?

• Do any events take place associated with the existing recreational use?

• What are the patterns of use e.g. how is the area accessed?

• Issues relating to existing use e.g. conflicts between management and use, erosion of habitats or landscapes, conflicts between different user groups

ii. Key Settlements of Population along the Trail

Record key settlements (e.g. towns and villages) in the vicinity of the proposed Trails and the wider Trail corridor. Ideally, any Community Trails should not only connect one community to outdoor spaces but also connect neighbouring communities. Consult with neighbouring communities to find out if they are considering a similar Community Trail Network or are interested in being involved in the proposed project

iii. Access Points

Access points facilitate both users and those carrying out trail management and maintenance. There may be one main access point to a trail or a number of locations where access can be gained along the route. Consider:

1. The current and potential physical access points to the trails for users, land managers and those involved with trail management and maintenance.

2. The type of current and potential access at each location e.g. on foot, by horse, bike or vehicle.

3. How the trails can be accessed by potential markets e.g. nearby towns, villages, road networks etc.
iv. Amenities / Facilities on or by the Trail
Record any amenities and / or facilities along or near each Trail. These may include cafes, car parks, toilets, shops, hotels, local bus routes etc. or any other facilities that may benefit users.

v. Natural and Built Designations
A designated site is one which is considered of local, national, european or worldwide significance due to its natural or built heritage features, e.g. Local Nature Reserve, Area of Special Scientific Interest, World Heritage Site. The development of a Community Trail within or adjacent to a designated site requires consultation with NIEA Natural Heritage or Built Heritage. Additional environmental, habitat or archaeological surveys may also be required – this will depend on the significance of the designation.

While designated areas or sites may be identified as a constraint they should not be seen as a barrier to developing a Community Trail. These can enhance the Trail and attract more users, provide opportunities for learning etc.

vi. Areas along the Trails which would be of Interest
Identify those areas along the Trails which would be appealing to users. These are called Positive Control Points and include for example, viewpoints, heritage features, designated habitats, rivers etc. Negative Control Points, that is, those specific places or features where it is not desirable to route Community Trails should also be recorded e.g. very wet or boggy ground, areas of known anti-social behaviour etc., areas that may pose a risk to users.

vii. Land Use and Management
Land use and management practices may vary from farming to forestry or recreation. They can impact a trail in a variety of ways, e.g. in the case of forestry, the trails may need to be closed when tree felling is taking place or, in the case of farming, a trail may need to be closed during the lambing season. A fence may be required where a trail passes through a field used for livestock or a stile may be needed to cross over a boundary wall. The following should be recorded:
- Formal landscapes e.g. gardens, arboretums and parkland.
- Farming patterns e.g. grazing of livestock and harvesting of arable crops.
- Forests and woodland and note whether it is managed for harvesting operations including felling, thinning or replanting and/or shooting (management of deer) etc.
- Boundaries e.g. fence lines, hedges and stone walls.
- Access tracks used for management e.g. forest roads, farm track, quarry track.

viii. Landownership along the Route
This may include private landowners, public landowners (e.g. Forest Service NI, Local Council) or other landowning bodies such as the National Trust, Woodland Trust etc. See Table 1 for further information on landownership. Permission from the landowner to use their land for recreation will make the difference between creating or not creating a Community Trail, so knowledge of landownership is crucial to the project.

ix. Any other Useful Information
Consideration should also be given to:

Ground Conditions
Changing ground conditions along a Community Trail can greatly affect the type of trail that can be sustainably built and the cost of building it. Although mainly determined at the field work stage, early consultation with landowners is valuable e.g. arable farmland may indicate good, free draining ground whereas rushes, reeds or willow indicate wet ground.

Sporting Rights
Sporting Rights may exist on land crossed by a Community Trail. Sporting Rights include fishing, hunting and shooting (deer or wildfowl) and may be owned by the landowner, or can be leased or sold to other individuals or Clubs. Sporting Rights and recreation can co-exist as long as both parties know when recreation and sporting rights are being exercised.

Planning Permission
Generally, new Community Trails built on land maintained by a Local Council do not require planning permission. However, confirmation of this should be sought from the relevant Planning Authority.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1: Useful sources of information</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Useful Data Sources</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Existing Outdoor recreation provision</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key settlements of population</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Key Access points</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Amenities and nearby market opportunities</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Natural and built heritage designations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Points of interest</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Land use and management</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Public and Private landownership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sporting Rights</strong></td>
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Table 2: Types of Access Arrangements in Northern Ireland

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Access Agreement</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Right of Way (PRoW)</strong></td>
<td>A PRoW is a public right of passage over private land which any member of the public may use as a right, but may be limited to certain users e.g. walkers only, walkers and horse riders only. Access is not a privilege granted by the landowner, but is created specifically or through 'deemed dedication', i.e. open use of a path by the public for a period of time (in some cases, for as little as a few years), with the knowledge of the landowner. A PRoW will remain in existence unless closed or diverted by legal process. It must be respected by the occupier and landowner who should not obstruct the right of way or prevent or intimidate anyone from exercising their rights of passage. The ‘Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983’ (also known as the Access Order) provides a District Council with a statutory duty to assert and protect all PRoWs, and discretionary powers to create, help manage and maintain if it chooses to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Path Creation Agreements</strong></td>
<td>Under Article 11 of the Access Order a Council can enter into an agreement with any person who has the necessary power and permission to create a public path. Under article 12 of the access order a Council has compulsory powers for public path creation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Permissive Path Agreement (PPA)</strong></td>
<td>A PPA is where the landowner gives formal consent to access their land along a prescribed route. It can be ‘custom made’ to suit the landowner’s and Council’s specific terms and conditions. It will normally run for a set number of years (e.g. 20 years) with an option to extend, although there is no further obligation to renew.</td>
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<td><strong>Licence Agreement</strong></td>
<td>A Licence Agreement is simply a permission to use land. It may be entered into as a formal access agreement where a trail is on public land owned and / or maintained by Government Departments (e.g. Forest Service NI, NIEA). It allows someone access to the land of another for an agreed purpose, to justify what would otherwise be a trespass. It does not confer any interest in land. In recent years, Forest Service NI has entered into Licence Agreements with Local Councils to enable effective management of recreation within their forests.</td>
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<td><strong>Leasing Land</strong></td>
<td>Leasing land is an option to give formal consent to access land along a prescribed route but where there are a number of legal conditions of development that need to be met (e.g. as set down by NIEA). In most cases, financial compensation (based on the market value of the land) would be required for the loss of land for that period of time.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Land Purchase</strong></td>
<td>Land purchase is an option for private landowners where the land is sold to the entity (at the market value of the land) wishing to develop it for recreation. It is an appealing option as it removes liability from the private landowner and ensures permanent, long term access for the purchaser.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vesting of land or compulsory acquisition schemes</strong></td>
<td>Legislation in Northern Ireland allows many government departments and authorised bodies the power to make a compulsory acquisition of land where the landowner or occupier is not willing to sell by agreement. When dealing with land for which there is a general market or demand, compensation is based on the market value of the land.</td>
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Part 2: Consultation

Going hand-in-hand with the desk research and mapping, is consultation with the local community in order to gain their views, comments, ideas and ultimately support. The most effective way of doing this is to hold a series of public consultation meetings. These meetings will enable additional information to be gathered, but also increase community ownership of the project.

i. Public Consultation

Depending on the length and number of settlements along the Community Trails it may be necessary to hold several public consultation meetings. These meetings should be advertised as widely as possible to ensure good community representation e.g. through local papers, posters in shops, community groups etc.

The public consultation should:
- Provide a summary of the project and aims of the consultation.
- Obtain public opinion and gather information relating to the proposed Community Trails.
- Be carried out in a neutral community space to ensure full community involvement.

ii. One-to-one Consultation

The project organiser may also wish or be asked to hold one-to-one consultations to discuss the project with members of the community, stakeholders and partners. A similar process to that set out above at the public consultation meetings should be deployed.

iii. Meeting with Landowners

Trail development may succeed or fail depending on landowner permission. It is essential that the group has a general understanding of the issues surrounding ‘access’ in Northern Ireland and the options available to obtain access.

The Department of the Environment issues the legislation\(^3\) relating to access in Northern Ireland, and it is the responsibility of the Local Councils to implement it.

The legislation means that access for recreation is typically through the formal arrangements listed in Table 2.

Note that where a trail uses an existing public road or footpath no access agreement is required.

\(^3\) Access in Northern Ireland is governed by the ‘Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983’
Consultation with landowners is essential. In most cases, they will need to understand how they will not be negatively impacted upon by a Community Trail as well as the benefits to the Community. These benefits may include an opportunity to manage existing informal access, reduced liability, increased community awareness of land management operations and the local environment, increased presence of users reducing the impact of, for example, anti-social behaviour and an opportunity to give something back to the community.

Once discussions have taken place with the various landowners and the preferred option has been identified for access, then this option should be discussed with Council, as this is a complex process and will involve costs e.g. administrative costs, management, maintenance and insurance costs, legal fees, compensation etc.

| Summary of Stage 2 – Information Gathering  
Part 1 – Desk Research and Mapping | Part 2 - Consultation |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ITEM</strong></td>
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</table>
| Proposed Community Trail(s) identified | Information gathering through:  
• Desk Research  
• Consultation | Information considered / identified / recorded through desk research and consultation:  
• Existing outdoor recreation provision  
• The key settlements of population along the route  
• The key access points along each Community Trail  
• Amenities / facilities on or by the route(s)  
• Natural and built designations  
• Areas along the route which you think would be of interest  
• Land use and management  
• Landownership along the routes  
• Other Considerations |
| Information recorded through:  
• Mapping  
• Written record |  
| Frame(s) of Reference refined as required | Consultations held and options identified |
| Options for Access Agreements identified | Consultation with landowners along potential route to identify most appropriate options |

Once ALL details are complete proceed to Stage 3
STAGE 3 – INFORMATION GATHERING: FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is the final stage of the information gathering process. This involves carrying out a detailed trail assessment to further identify issues and costs associated with constructing each proposed Community Trail. The process of trail assessment is divided into two parts: a physical audit followed by collation and interpretation of findings.

Part 1: Audit

All the information required to complete the physical audit of a Community Trail is provided in Appendix 2. This outlines how to carry out an audit:

- Assess the condition of the existing trail surface.
- Identify and assess the condition of existing trail furniture (stiles, bridges, gates etc.) and determine the need for new items where none exist.
- Identify access points along the route.

Before the trail assessment is carried out, ensure that any necessary permission to access private and public land along the route of each Community Trail has been obtained.

The information gained from the audit will be used to quantify approximate development costs during this stage, so every effort should be made to collect accurate data.

Once the audit is completed move onto Part 2 to collate and interpret its findings.

The Trail Assessment will shape or influence the Frame of Reference and so this may need to be changed once the Trail Assessment has been completed. Ultimately, the Site Assessment and Frame of Reference must be compatible.

Part 2: Collating and Interpreting the Findings

Following the completion of the audit, collate and interpret the results to help identify the trail construction requirements and associated costs for each proposed trail.

It is best to present the findings in maps and tables to help visualise all requirements and assist in the calculation of the approximate capital costs of each Community Trail. If possible, collating the results using GIS software to provide accurate maps is really useful, although not essential. This service can be offered by most Local Councils or at a cost by Outdoor Recreation NI. If this is not an option, obtain copies of an enlarged Ordnance Survey sheet 1:50,000 scale of each Community Trail (s) to manually draw on the findings, as explained below (depending on the length of each trail and the number of subsections identified through the audit, an individual map for each Section):

i. Trail Surface

First priority will be to show where the existing trail surface condition changes – i.e. where a new surface is required, where upgrade works are required or where no work is required. To do this, the data collected through the Subsection audit sheets will be required.

Using the identified grid references, the start and finish points of each Subsection should be plotted using a different coloured line to represent each change in trail surface condition (see Map 1 as an example).

Once completed, measure the total length of each surface condition option to determine the length of the Community Trail that requires a new trail surface and the length that requires upgrading work. Using the costs detailed in Table 3, it will be possible to calculate an approximate capital cost associated with these surface requirements for the Community Trail.

Table 3: Approximate trail surface construction costs (including VAT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New surface is required</td>
<td>Per metre</td>
<td>£75-£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade works are required</td>
<td>Per metre</td>
<td>£50 - £75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Capital costs are those costs associated with trail surface and trail furniture and installation
8 GIS Software is designed to allow the user to show many different kinds of data on one map
9 Approximate costs are based on experience to date for similar projects carried out by Outdoor Recreation NI
ii. Trail Furniture

Plot the trail surface information and use the data collected through the Trail Furniture items audit sheets to plot the location of any existing items of trail furniture and any items that may be required. In a similar format to that shown in Map 2, use the grid reference of each item and a representative symbol to plot:

a. existing trail furniture items that are fit for purpose and do not require work
b. existing trail furniture items that require maintenance
c. existing trail furniture items that need to be replaced
d. any new trail furniture items required

In addition to the map, it’s useful to create an inventory similar to Table 4 to show the types and conditions of furniture along the trail.

Map 1: Example of identified Community Trails and trail surface requirements

Map 2: Example of a map showing trail furniture items along one Section
Table 4: Example of trail furniture inventory for one Section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Furniture Item</th>
<th>Fit for purpose</th>
<th>Requiring Maintenance</th>
<th>Needs Replaced</th>
<th>New Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metal Bridge</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete Bridge</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden Steps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-frame stile</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepover stile</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fram gate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden bench</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Example of a final costs table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAIL REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>COST PER METRE (£)</th>
<th>QUANTITY REQUIRED</th>
<th>ESTIMATED COST (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Trail</td>
<td>75 - 100</td>
<td>560m</td>
<td>42,000 to 56,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade Trail</td>
<td>50 - 75</td>
<td>440m</td>
<td>22,000 to 33,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FURNITURE ITEMS</th>
<th>COST (£)</th>
<th>QUANTITY REQUIRED</th>
<th>ESTIMATED COST (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New concrete bridge</td>
<td>*Engineer required to design &amp; cost</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New farm gate</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepover stile</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance to Stepover stile</td>
<td>Estimated at 150 to repair step</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-frame stile</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once maps and table for items have been created, begin to calculate the approximate costs for the supply and installation of the trail furniture required along each Community Trail. To do this, refer to approximate costs provided in Appendix 3.

Note that costs for existing trail furniture items requiring maintenance or those that are not listed, may require specialist advice. Additionally, structural elements such as steps and bridges will require an assessment by a suitably qualified engineer – there may be a cost associated with obtaining accurate prices for these items.

Having collated all the trail surface and trail furniture requirements, producing a table for each section of each trail, similar to Table 5, will be a useful way to summarise the requirements and approximate development costs for each Section. This information can then be used alongside the information collected through desk research and consultation.

Table 5: Example of a final costs table
iii. Access Points
It is useful to record the location of all access points along the Trail. These should be shown on a map similar to that shown in Map 3.

Map 3: Example of a Map showing access points

Part 3: Assessing the feasibility of each community trail
Having gathered all the information through desk research, consultation and fieldwork, assessment of all the identified issues, constraints, opportunities and costs in line with the Frame of Reference can begin to determine if each Community Trail is achievable. To do this the following questions which are explained in further detail below should be considered. The feasibility assessment should be carried out alongside the Local Council representative or project partner where appropriate.

It may be necessary to further modify the Frame of Reference throughout this stage, as the works required to meet the original Frame of Reference may be no longer feasible. However, in some cases the issues and constraints may prove too big or costly to overcome rendering a Community Trail unfeasible to be taken forward to the design and construction phases.

Can the necessary arrangements be put in place in their current format?
Consider if the roles of Trail Owner, Trail Promoter and Trail Provider which were identified through desk research and trail assessment have been confirmed. This is vital as, if they are not, then the necessary arrangements cannot be put in place, thus impacting the likelihood of a Community Trail being developed in its current format. For this, consideration should be given to:

A. Are the landowners in support of the proposal?
Landownership issues have the potential to be the most significant barriers to Community Trail development. If landownership support is missing, then work towards gaining support before moving onto the next stage is required otherwise it will be necessary to modify the route by, for example, creating a diversion, following an alternative route or shortening the route to avoid any property without a landowner’s support. Note that any changes to the route will involve further desk research, consultation and/or fieldwork. If access is a particular issue with one Community Trail, it may be appropriate to choose an alternative, more feasible Community Trail to develop first. Once completed, it can be used to show the benefits of Community Trails to the local community and the landowner. This may work to ease any concerns felt by the landowner and encourage them to become involved in the process in the future.

B. Is the Council in support of the proposal?
If the Council does not support the proposal, consider its issues and work to resolve them. Issues raised are likely to include management and maintenance requirements of a Community Trail i.e. upkeep of trail furniture items, trail clearance, litter collection, trail surface repair etc. each of which has an associated cost. In some cases, these costs and the time needed to complete these tasks can be quite high, therefore the Council will need to consider the practicalities involved in providing such a resource.

Are the development costs realistic?
Through the trail assessment, an approximate cost for the development of each Community Trail including the construction and installation of trail surface and trail furniture items should have been calculated. It will be necessary to judge if these costs are feasible, based on the availability of funding and/or volunteers (as determined by your method of delivery identified in Stage 1).

Although difficult to quantify, it should be considered if the benefits of developing each Community Trail outweighs the cost of construction. This may include its potential contribution to recreation opportunities in the area, benefits to local health and well-being and the local economy (as identified within the frame of reference).
**Summary of Stage 3 – Information gathering – fieldwork**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>DETAIL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of proposed Community Trail Network</td>
<td>Information gathering through</td>
<td>Audit carried out to identify:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Audit of each proposed route(s)</td>
<td>• Trail surface requirements recorded –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information recording through</td>
<td>• New trail surface, upgrade trail surface, no work required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mapping</td>
<td>• Trail furniture item requirements recorded –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Written record</td>
<td>• Existing items (fit for purpose and requiring maintenance, replacement item required), new item required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing the feasibility of each proposed Community Trail(s)</td>
<td>• Access points recorded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once ALL details are complete proceed to the final stages with assistance from the relevant local Council or landowner

**WHAT TO DO NEXT**

If the Community Trail is considered to be feasible then continue onto the development phase. This toolkit stops at the end of Stage 3 due to the expertise and support required to take forward stages 4 to 8. A brief summary of the next 4 stages is given for information purposes only. All of these stages should be led by the local Council or an organisation with experience in delivering similar projects e.g. Outdoor Recreation NI.

**STAGE 4 – TRAIL DESIGN**

This involves employing a suitably experienced trail designer to design the trails (upgrading and new build) and prepare detailed construction prescription documents all of which meet the standards set out in ‘Principles and Standards for Trail Development in Northern Ireland’ document, available from Outdoor Recreation NI. Trail design costs will vary greatly, depending on the trail’s location, length, classification, grading and level of consultation.

**STAGE 5 - FUNDING**

Funding requirements for trail design and trail construction will be determined by the method of delivery as identified in Stage 1. Applying for funding requires energy and commitment. It is important before applying to any funder to research to determine if they fund this type of work. Some funders are happy to discuss a project at an early stage to prevent wasting time. It is important to note that some funding programmes are open on an ongoing basis, however most are open for set periods with strict deadlines for application.

Potential funders of Community Paths include Northern Ireland Environment Link, TNI Funding, Rural Development Programme and European Funding.

**STAGE 6 – TRAIL CONSTRUCTION**

Once all the necessary access agreements and funding are in place, the project can move to the construction phase.

Where goods / services must be tendered for, it is recommended by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD)10 that a suitably qualified and experienced Consultant Project Management (CPM) Team is employed to oversee the tendering process. The CPM Team will be able to provide advice on the type and form of contract and prepare the necessary documentation etc.

When carrying out a volunteer delivered Community Trail project, work can be completed through volunteering or through donations.

**STAGE 7 – DEVELOPMENT OF A TRAIL MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PLAN**

This stage goes hand in hand with the construction phase to ensure that it is completed in time for the Community Trails to be opened. The Plan identifies the roles and responsibilities and ongoing resource requirements to manage and maintain the trails at a safe and consistent standard and includes:

- Management Policy – outlining legal duties of care towards trail users through ensuring clear, concise and up-to-date records of all management are kept, including frequency of inspections and a defined structure of responding to required actions and notifying users.
- Trail Product Inventory – establishing and maintaining a baseline standard inventory of all Community Trail components, including trail furniture items, trail surface, waymarking, signage, information, interpretation, product literature, counters etc.
- Maintenance Plan – keeping records when regular and emergency maintenance is carried out, including: the date, time, work completed and by whom.
- Risk Assessment – developing a risk assessment procedure for the Community Trails to identify and assess particular risk in relation to the trails and to identify measures to mitigate against these risks.

**STAGE 8 – DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKETING PLAN**

After all the hard work of developing the Trails, it is vital that they are effectively promoted. The extent of a marketing plan will be influenced by a range of factors including the objectives of the project as per the Frame of Reference (i.e. local focus, tourism product) and the marketing budget available. A marketing plan should:

- clearly identify the relevant target market(s) and highlight how they will be attracted to use the trails
- outline the method by which the marketing will be carried out (e.g. online, print, signage)
- outline clearly who is responsible for implementing the marketing plan
- identify how the marketing programme will be funded

The plan should be initiated prior to completion and launch of the trail projects.

10 Central Procurement Department (CPD) within the Department of Finance and Personnel