

Access For All

The Gold Standard for Access

Introduction

Historically, access to the countryside has always been difficult for disabled persons. To make matters worse the preoccupation by many organisations, both public and private, with preventing unlawful or unwanted vehicular access, has resulted in the mass installation of barriers across many paths and Public Rights of Way (PROW) across the UK. The installation of barriers such as “A frame” and “K” barriers, together with the installation and locking of gates, has denied access to a large section of the population of the UK. In particular these barriers adversely affect Disabled Persons, Wheelchair Users, Wheelers of all types, Cyclists, Parents Pushing Prams/Double Buggies, Grandparents trying to take grandchildren on cycle rides, as well as many older and less able persons trying to enjoy the countryside. In total the number of people adversely affected by these barriers accounts for more than 50% of the population of the UK !

Despite legislation, in the form of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2010, easy access to the countryside is still *actively* being prevented. To exacerbate this problem many organisations, both public and private, are still very reluctant to remove those barriers which prevent Access For All to the countryside

Previous Actions to Improve Access

The Mass Trespass of Kinder Scout in 1932 led to The Ramblers winning the Right to Roam. This was a tremendous coup for fit, healthy and able bodied persons, but led to little change for those persons described above.

Over 25 years ago British Telecom and the Fieldfare Trust published their guide entitled “BT Countryside for All: a good practice guide to disabled people's access in the countryside”. Despite the excellent guidance and advice provided by this document universal acceptance and implementation of those standards defined in the guide is still a long way off.

Reasons for Publishing “Access For All – The Gold Standard”

Since 1990 Open Country has been striving to encourage organisations to provide better access to the countryside for people with disabilities. Despite all our efforts many organisations are still reluctant to remove barriers and allow Access For All. In order to more actively encourage change, to stimulate action and to provide recognition of any efforts to improve Access For All, Open Country has decided to set out a Gold Standard for Access.

The reasons for production of Access For All - the Gold Standard for Access are to:

1. Highlight the bare essentials that people require in order for them to access the countryside,
2. Focus attention on what individuals and organisations need to do to in order provide such access.
3. Provide recognition to those organisations and individuals that make the effort to achieve the Gold Standard.

The Access For All Gold Standard for Access has been developed using the principles of least restrictive access i.e.:-

- **Directness** – Access to be straight, unobstructed and without sharp deviations or sharp corners
- **Gap** – A gap shall be the preferred option for accessing a route.
- **Bollards** – Bollards to be used to prevent motor vehicle access and deter to illegal motorcycle riding
- **Staggered barrier** – Where bollards do not slow traffic, staggered barriers may be used as long as the spacing between them does not impede use of the route by wheelers of any type, cycles, recumbent cycles, cargo bikes, cycles with child trailers, mobility tandems, mobility scooters etc.
- **Cohesion** – Paths and PROW shall be linked in a cohesive way and be adequately signed and way-marked.
- **Signs** – Signs should confirm that motor vehicles are not permitted and inform users how to log a complaint.
- **Quality** – The route must meet the standards for tunnel width and height, surface, gradient, cross gradient etc.
- **Stock Control** – Barriers of any type are not seen as helpful. However, should there be no other way of controlling stock a two-way self-closing gate, with an easy-latch, is the preferred option. Stiles and Kissing Gates etc are not considered appropriate.

Access For All – The Gold Standard

Following the principles of least restrictive access the Gold Standard requires the following criteria to be met:

- **Directness** – Initial access onto the path / route shall be in a straight line and not obstructed.
Progress along the route shall be unobstructed and contain no unnecessary deviations
Sharp corners shall be avoided throughout the route
- **Gap** – A gap of no less than 1500mm in width shall be the preferred option for both accessing the route and also through any hedges, fences, walls, bollards etc along the length of the route.
Routes through gaps to be direct, in a straight line and not uneven or contain steps between levels.
Any gradients should not exceed 1:10 (10%) linear gradient (along the path) and 1:40 (2.5%) cross gradient (across the track).
Any gap must not present any restriction or inconvenience to legitimate path users.
- **Bollards** – Where there is a desire to prevent or slow the flow of traffic on a route, the installation of bollards shall be the preferred option. Spaced with a 1500mm gap either side of them, they should prevent access by the majority of motor vehicles and act as a deterrent to illegal motorcyclists, making the route less attractive to them whilst not excluding legitimate path users.
- **Staggered Barriers** – Where bollards do not slow the flow of traffic sufficiently, two staggered barriers may be used as long as the spacing between the barriers does not impede use of the route by double buggies, mobility scooters, wheelers of any type including wheelchairs, recumbent cycles, mobility tandems, tandems, cargo bikes and cycles with child trailers etc.
- **Cohesion** – Paths and PROW shall be linked in a cohesive way and be adequately way-marked.
- **Signs** – Signs should be in place confirming that motor vehicles are not permitted on this route.
The signs should inform legitimate users of the route how they may lodge a complaint should they experience problems with the route or other users.
- **Quality** – The route must be at least 1500mm wide throughout.
The tunnel height must be 2100mm throughout the route.
The linear surface gradient should not exceed 1:10 (10%).
The cross surface gradient should not exceed 1:25 (4%)
The surface should hard and firm.
The presence of some loose stones and chippings is acceptable but the stones should not be bigger than 10mm and not cover the whole surface.
Uncovered cross channels are unacceptable. Gaps in any covers over cross channels must be no more than 12mm in width.
- **Stock Control** – Barriers of any type are not seen as helpful. However, should there be no other way of controlling stock a two-way self-closing gate, with an easy-latch, is the preferred option. The gate should be of a design that will allow easy access by wheelchairs, wheelers of any type including recumbent cycles, mobility tandems, mobility scooters etc.
Stiles and Kissing Gates etc are not acceptable.

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The Checklist – To Enable Access for All

Star Rating	- To achieve any star rating, the route must meet all of the conditions of those categories below that star rating as well as the conditions of the star rating itself. i.e. to achieve a 5 star rating a route must meet all of the conditions listed for star ratings 1-5			x ✓
1★	Directness	Entry in Straight Line	Is the initial access on to the route in a straight line and unobstructed?	
		Unobstructed	Is access all along the route unobstructed and at least 1500mm in width?	
		No Unnecessary Deviations	Are there no unnecessary deviations along the full length of the route?	
		No Sharp Corners	Are sharp corners avoided along the full length of the route?	
2★	Gaps	1500mm in width	Are all gaps onto/along the route 1500mm in width with no restriction or inconvenience?	
	Bollards	1500mm separation	Is there 1500mm between any bollard and any other obstruction over full length of the route?	
	Staggered Barriers	Staggered Separated	Do all staggered barriers allow unobstructed use of the route by wheelchairs, double buggies, mobility scooters, recumbent cycles, mobility tandems, tandems, cargo bikes and cycles with child trailers etc.?	
3★	Cohesion	Routes to be linked in a cohesive way and adequately way-marked.	Is the entire route linked in a cohesive way? Is the entire route clearly way-marked?	
		Signs	Signs shall confirm that motor vehicles are not permitted and how users can lodge a complaint	Are there signs posted confirming that motor vehicles are not permitted? Are there signs posted confirming how users can lodge a complaint?
4★	Quality	Path Surface - hard and firm.	Is the surface of the route hard and firm throughout?	
		Loose stones and chippings:- - less than 10mm	Are all stones or chippings smaller than 10mm?	
		- not cover the whole surface.	Do any loose stones only partly cover the surface?	
		No uncovered cross-channels	Are all cross-channels covered?	
		Gaps in Covers	Are all gaps in any covers, less than 12mm in width?	
		Path Width	Is the Path Width 1500mm or more over the full length of the route?	
		Tunnel Height	Is the Tunnel Height 2100mm or more over the full length of the route?	
		Linear gradient 1:10 (<10%) Cross gradient 1:25 (<4%)	Is the linear surface gradient less than 1:10 (10%) over the full length of the route? Is the cross surface gradient less than 1:25 (4%) over the full length of the route?	
Lose 2★s	Stock Control	Gates are a last resort and if used must be an "Easy latch" type	Are all gates used for stock control two-way self-closing and of an easy-latch type?	