

Improving Public Access – 2022 – Scoring Criteria

Criterion 1 - Connectivity

This criteria is designed to recognise how well the project will contribute to the improvement of strategically important paths and connectivity to the wider path network, features and destinations of significant interest and importance.

1A – Improves a Core Path

Does the proposal include improvements to a **designated core path**?

Individual core paths are identified in each access authorities adopted [core paths plan](#) (note: aspirational core paths do not score points).

Consideration	Points to award
No works on a designated core path	0
Yes - project includes improvement work to a core path	3

1B – Improves Links to Core Paths

Does the proposal include improvements to a path which links directly to a core path?

This includes works which create or upgrade a path (including boardwalks and bridges) which is not a core path but connects directly to or between designated core paths. The project will make it easier or possible to link **directly** with one or more core paths. (See hyperlink in 1A above to identify individual core paths, as Geoview shows the lines of core paths only).

Consideration	Points to award
No connection to a designated core path	0
Yes - project includes works to create or upgrade a path which links directly to one core path	1
Yes - project includes works to create or upgrade a path which links between two separate core paths	2

1C – Forms part of a SGT or NCN route

Does the proposal include an improvement to Scotland's Great Trails or the National Cycling Network?

These nationally designated routes are -

'[Scotland's Great Trails](#)' recognised by NatureScot (check Great Trails on Geoview)

'[National Cycling Network](#)' routes designated by Sustrans (check Sustrans on Geoview).

Consideration	Points to award
No works on a SGT or NCN route	0
Yes - project includes improvement work to a SGT or NCN route	2

1D - Links to or between wider path networks at the landholding boundary

Does the proposal include improving path links to wider local path networks?

To gain this score the project would create new or improved path links to other paths at the boundary of the landholding unit, forming **effective connections** to another path or the wider path network. It would not score if the paths merely made a route or circuit within the holding with no connections.

Consideration	Points to award
No - works do not make any wider connections or links	0
Yes – project creates or upgrades a path that links to 1 other path at the land-holding boundary	2
Yes - project creates or upgrades paths linking effectively to the wider path network, (more than 1 path) at the boundary	3

1E – Link to points of interest or a specific destination

Does the project create or upgrade a path giving access to a point of interest or an important specific destination?

The point of interest must be a specific and recognisable place or feature, which would act as an obvious attraction or an important destination for users of the path. The feature could include:

- a significant viewpoint
- a local landmark or feature like a cliff, or a tower, or a cave
- an historic or cultural feature or site, such as a standing stone or an interesting old building or bridge

A general area, e.g. a designed landscape, does not qualify as a point of interest for this criteria but a specific focal point within it might do so.

Destinations could include:

- play parks
- schools/shop/medical centre
- country park/nature reserve

Consideration	Points to award
No link to a specific feature of public interest or destination	0
Yes - project provides a link to one specific feature or destination of public interest	1
Yes - project provides links to two specific features/destinations of public interest	2
Yes – project provides links to three or more specific features/destinations of public interest	3

Criterion 2 – Benefits and Value

This criteria recognises the range of benefits and value that a proposal would provide focusing on its location, levels of support for the project, how well it addresses issues and its fit with delivering strategic access objectives relevant to the area.

2F – Proximity to Path Users

Investment in rural paths is likely to be more beneficial where they are closer to where people live and can access them easily.

Settlements of 500 and above – check Geoview “NRS Population estimates 2016 Settlements boundaries” which shows the settlements and a 1km buffer.

Settlements of 2000 and above - Use the Scottish Forestry Map Viewer <https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/scottish-forestry-map-viewer>. Click the Scottish Forestry Map Viewer link:

- tick FGS target and Eligibility Areas
- tick FGS Eligibility WIAT Area
- left click for the explanation on the map (pink area is settlements with population of 2,000 and above and a 1km buffer around this).

Consideration	Points to award
Some of the path is within 1km of a settlement of 500 people	2
Some of the path is within 1 km of a settlement of at least 2,000 people. (See Scottish Forestry Map Viewer above)	3

2G - Within scenic or recreational designated area

Does the project lie within a designated area of scenic or recreational value?

This measure recognises the contribution a project can make by being located within a designated area of scenic or recreational value. The relevant designations may be verified on Geoview and are:

- 1) National Scenic Area
- 2) National Park
- 3) Designed Landscape Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- 4) Local or National Nature Reserve
- 5) Regional Park
- 6) Country Park

Consideration	Points to award
No relevant designation	0
Yes - path is fully or partly within one or more relevant designated areas	2

2H - Potential to manage or address pressures and issues

How do the proposals help to address or accommodate current pressures and issues such as changing patterns of use, the effects of changeable weather patterns (such as those linked to climate change) noting that path drainage is dealt with in 4N. Examples include where an existing path is

- not coping with the current visitor use, e.g. it is unsurfaced or too narrow creating conflict between existing users or damage to the verges
- situated too close to a river or coastline, re-routing it to reduce instances of flooding or erosion

Examples for new paths include

- providing a safer off-road alternative to a public road
- providing path access linked to a new development that creates new demand e.g. a new housing scheme

Consideration	Points to award
No proposals are unlikely to manage or address existing pressures and issues	0
Yes – proposals are likely to manage or address some existing pressures and issues	1
Yes – proposals are likely to manage or address all existing pressures and issues	2

2I – Support for the project

What evidence of support is there for the project from the access authority, planning authority other organisations or interested groups?

This measure will assess any evidence of support or endorsement for the project from a range of other interests/organisations/groups, such as the access authority, planning authority, community development trust, walking/cycling/riding/path groups, heritage groups, local school, nursery etc.

This could include scanned letters/e-mails of support, a copy of planning permission or other document. These will be provided by the applicant as a supporting document on RP&S. In addition any evidence of support from the access authority provided direct to the case officer by e-mail, following notification by the case officer.

Consideration	Points to award
No evidence of support for the project from interested organisations	0
Yes - evidence of support for the project from one relevant organisation with an interest	1
Yes - evidence of moderate support for the project from more than one organisation representing different interests	2
Yes – evidence of support from the access authority and/or planning authority	3
Yes – evidence of support from the access authority and/or planning authority and supporting interest groups	4

Criterion 3 – Accessible and barrier-free paths

All projects will aim to provide shared multi-use paths that are as barrier-free and, unobstructed as possible, giving access opportunities to most or all types of users such as walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, wheelchair users, adapted bikes and push-chairs. This criteria is designed to recognise that some proposals may deliver wider benefits than others in respect of improving accessibility and removing obstructions and barriers.

3J - Removal of barriers

Will this project make a significant improvement to existing access arrangements through the removal of barriers and obstructions to access?

This measure will assess the amount of improvement to be gained in comparison to any existing access provision. The existing barriers and obstacles may include:

- flights of steps, to be replaced with a smooth, constructed incline or re-alignment (max 1:10, ideally 1:12),
- steep or difficult sections of path which can be re-aligned to follow easier gradients (max 1:10, ideally 1:12),
- fencing, stiles or kissing gates removed or if not possible replaced by self-closing gates to allow full use,
- uneven/boggy path e.g. where livestock/water/excessive use has been damaging paths and deterring people from use, replaced with upgraded path, new path or boardwalk as appropriate.

Building a new path where none existed before will not score in this criteria, but will in criteria 3K.

Consideration	Points to award
None or insignificant improvement over existing provision	0
Moderate improvement - project removes a few or minor level of obstructions or barriers	1
Major improvement - project removes many or major obstructions or barriers	2

3K – Improves Accessibility

Will the new proposal be accessible to all including people with disabilities and activities such as horse-riding, cycling, walking and wheeling?

This measure will assess the extent to which improved or full multi-use is achieved through path design (note that criteria 3L covers signage and seating).

Accessibility will be based on what the path proposals achieve in respect to the following:

- Gradients no more than 1:10
- No steps
- 2m new or upgraded path width with no width reduction
- No gates

Consideration	Points to award
No accessibility requirements met	0
Fulfil 1 accessibility requirement	1
Fulfil 2 accessibility requirements	2
Fulfil 3 accessibility requirements.	3
Fulfil 4 accessibility requirements	4

3L - Improves signage and seating

How well do the proposals incorporate new seating and new signage to encourage and re-assure users of the paths?

This criteria scores the proposed improvements to signage and seating in conjunction with the new or upgraded path. For collaborative projects account can be taken of how the whole path functions from end to end in terms of signage and seating improvements.

There should be directional signage at the start of the new or upgraded path(s) (unless the path is a continuation of an existing sign-posted path e.g. phase 2 or a path extension) and appropriate signage proposed for any junctions with linking paths (existing or new). Information panels should be provided in appropriate locations based on the sites characteristics and use.

See [Signage Guidance for Outdoors Access](#) for advice on placing and spacing signage.

Seating placed at regular intervals along a path provides resting points for people who are less physically able. They also provide opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, views and being close to nature as well as for mental health benefits and social well-being.

The project proposals should have seats (benches or picnic tables) located along the path(s), no more than 200 metres apart in urban fringe locations and 300 metres apart in rural locations. [Outdoor Access Design Guide](#) (pages 114/115).

If signage and seating is already in place/on site and in line with the guidance then a score of "0" should be given.

Consideration	Points to award
No improvements to signage and seating	0
Project will deliver some improvements to signage and/or seating,	1
Project will deliver some improvements to both signage and seating bringing one up to the criteria standard	2
Project will deliver significant improvements to both signage and seating, e.g. from little or no provision to fully in line with the criteria standard	3

Criterion 4 – Design Quality

This criteria looks at how well the path proposals and any infrastructure have been designed in the context of the location, users experience and environmental factors.

The proposal should aim to provide a quality experience for path users, maximising opportunities to enjoy views, natural and cultural features alongside the path, as well as ensuring the experience of walking, cycling, riding or wheeling along the path is good. Building in appropriate drainage is key to the success of a path project and in particular as bigger rain/weather events impact as a result of climate change.

4M - Achievement of landscape fit

Does the project make good use of landscape features, along or as part of the route? This measure will assess how well the path fits into the landscape and how it incorporates any features of interest to add value to the users' experience. For example, this might see a path taking a route alongside an old drystone wall, through old gateways, along an established avenue of trees or hedgerow to a raised viewpoint.

Consideration	Points to award
No evidence of specific attention to incorporating landscape features in the route design	0
Yes - project provides moderate specific design provision for incorporating landscape features	1
Yes - project provides major specific design provision for incorporating landscape features	2

4N - Improves path drainage

Paths that are well drained and protected from water access and egress, provide good access in all weather conditions, improve visitor experience, and prevent path braiding and erosion beyond the path edges.

Use of ditching to intercept water before it reaches the path and suitably sized and placed pipe culverts to direct water under a path, is essential to keeping a path dry, free from erosion, easy to use and welcoming to users.

Consideration	Points to award
No effort made to improve path drainage problems OR no problems exist	0
Project will provide minor drainage improvements along the path-line addressing some issues	1
Project will provide significant improvements to drainage along the path-line addressing all existing or anticipated issues.	2