

Improving Public Access

This is an old version of the page

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For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#).

Important note:

Improving Public Access (IPA) will be reopening for new applications on 1 March 2021 and the guidance will be updated ahead of the reopening. The application round will close on 30 June 2021.

In recognition of the increased demand in 2018 £3.5M has been allocated to deliver new and upgraded paths across Scotland's rural areas this year; but this success means that the programme budget is now fully committed.

Aim

The aim of this item is to support new and upgraded paths for public use, providing:

- improved links and connectivity
- improved path conditions
- barrier-free access for all

These new and improved paths – core paths, links to core paths, and paths connecting to wider local networks and longer paths – will encourage responsible public outdoor access for the full range of users, and help to integrate access and recreational use with good land management.

This will generate wide benefits

- health improvement and increased physical activity
- a sustainable resource for nearby communities, visitors and enterprises
- in fostering broad social and economic opportunities through enhanced outdoor access and recreation

Eligible applicants

This item is open to local authorities and administrations, public bodies, public-private partnerships, NGOs, private companies, organisations in charge of tourist and recreational development, as well as individual farmers, groups of farmers and other land managers.

Spatial targeting

This item is available across all rural areas of Scotland, which is defined as land other than settlements with a population of over 3000.

Application requirements

As part of the application you must prepare and include a map showing the relevant access context (existing core paths, other local paths, key access / arrival points, any long-distance paths, key features of interest, etc) both within the application unit and in the relevant surrounding areas.

The map must also show the locations of all the proposed access works. Note that as part of the application assessment process, this map will be copied to your local authority or national park authority access staff for information / verification.

You should describe and explain the benefits to connectivity and local objectives arising from your proposal, and how it will add value for the locality, for these factors to be considered in assessment and scoring.

Requirements

Connectivity

You must establish a new path, or carry out improvements to an existing path, in one of the following categories:

- a core path or a link to a core path, or
- a path providing access to a feature of interest (e.g. viewpoint, loch, riverside, cultural / historic feature etc), or
- a path which links to other paths at the boundaries of your land, to form effective and convenient parts of wider local path networks or of a long distance path

Barrier free

As far as practicably possible, the new or upgraded paths should be suitable for use by walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and wheelchairs / mobility scooters, and they should provide gentle gradients (up to 1:12) in place of steps (e.g. on bridge approaches).

Self-closing gates are to be provided (not stiles or kissing gates) for accommodating this range of users and to be DDA / Equality Act compliant and signs and seats also help to address less-physical barriers to use (such as lack of information or lack of fitness).

Technical specification

You must ensure the new or upgraded path is:

- well-drained
- surfaced either with an unbound and rolled surface (e.g. whinstone, granite dust) or with a semi-bound / semi-sealed surface; fully-bound or sealed surfaces (e.g. tarmac, concrete) are not eligible
- normally to be constructed at a standard 1.8 metre width; exceptionally, path widths may be applied for within a range from 1.2 to 2.5 metres if they can be satisfactorily justified by explicit reasons (e.g. a wider path justified by predicted heavier volume of use on a particular stretch)
- signposted
- not for motorised use; use as a vehicular, tractor or farm track is not eligible; note that the path construction specifications are not suitable to support vehicular use

Payment

You can claim the standard capital cost per unit for approved items, as stated in outline in the table below (with links to a detailed specification where relevant). These costs include labour (direct or contract) and materials.

Table of standard costs (with outline specification)

	Capital item	Outline specification (click on the name of each item to see the full specification)	Standard cost per unit for labour and materials
	Public path infrastructure		
1	New path – unbound surface	For the construction of a new path with unbound rolled surface (whinstone / granite dust), with full tray excavation, or half tray and geotextile.	£18.20 / square metre
2	New path – semi-bound surface	For the construction of a new path with semi-bound or semi-sealed surface, of semi-binding materials (e.g. recycled semi-binding materials like road planings, crushed concrete, Ultitrec or equivalent), with full tray excavation or half tray and geotextile.	£28.15 / square metre
3	Upgrade to an existing path	For the scraping of an existing constructed footpath and re-construction of a fresh sub-	£6.20 / square metre

		base, with path surfacing of rolled whinstone / granite dust.	
4	Self-closing two-way opening gate	To install a two-way opening, self-closing gate (galvanised steel or timber) of 1.5 metres width. A gate also performs as a vehicle barrier.	£440 / gate
5	Self-closing, one-way opening gate	For installing a one-way opening, self-closing gate (galvanised steel or timber) of 1.5 metres width. A gate also performs as a vehicle barrier.	£350 / gate
6	Path bridge	To provide a path bridge, in accordance with the 'Path Bridges' guide.	£1,100 / square metre of clear user deck
7	Gabion basket retaining wall for path	Construction of metal mesh stone-filled gabion baskets to create revetments for the purpose of stabilising new or upgraded paths.	£100 / cubic metre
8	Boardwalk	For a wooden or recycled plastic boardwalk with edge rails, giving a clear user width of at least 1.2 metres.	£91 / square metre of clear user deck
9	Timber board and aggregate steps	For the installation of steps, only in exceptional situations where the terrain naturally restricts access, and a ramped path cannot reasonably be provided without exceeding ramp gradient limits of 1:12.	£150 / metre
10	Drainage ditch	For drainage in conjunction with the path construction or upgrading, as an open machine-dug V or U ditch, 200 to 300 millimetres deep with stable angled sides.	£1.88 / metre
11	Piped culvert (300 millimetre pipe)	For a 300 millimetre twin-wall plastic culvert pipe with built stone headwalls that is required in conjunction with the path construction or upgrading.	£143 / each
12	Piped culvert (450 millimetre pipe)	For a 450 millimetre twin-wall plastic culvert pipe with built stone headwalls that is required in conjunction with the path construction or upgrading.	£395 / each
Seats and signs			
13	Perch seat	For a timber perch seat alongside a new or upgraded path.	£200 / each
14	Timber bench	For a bench without a backrest on a level and surfaced area close to a new or upgraded path.	£350 / each
15	Timber picnic table	For a wooden picnic table with easy-access bench seats without backrests, on a level and surfaced area close to a new or upgraded path.	£700 / each
16	Fingerpost	For a finger post to indicate the path direction / destination / distance, with hollow steel post and aluminium finger blades.	£150 / each

17	Waymarker post	For a treated and routed timber waymarker post, including disc / arrow as needed.	£29 / each
18	A3 on-site information panel	For a laminated A3 panel sign mounted on wooden post(s), to provide path grading and route information to national standard.	£262 / each
19	Entrance sign	For a timber roadside entrance sign, with painted background and routed and painted lettering.	£270 / each
20	Stock fence / stock gate	For a stock fence alongside a new or upgraded path, with a minimum of six line wires or two line wires with woven wire netting, and any barbed or electrified wire on the stock side protected by a plain wire on the path side. Stock gates three metres wide may be included in the stock fence where justified, but only if alongside (i.e. not across) the new or upgraded path.	£5.50 / metre £170 each
Tree safety			
21	Make safe hazardous mature trees	For the labour and machinery required for the removal of trees, deadwood and other dangerous tree features identified in the tree safety survey as posing a significant risk to users of the new or upgraded path.	£113 / tree
22	Manual brashing	For the works required to remove the lower branches of trees in areas of high use along both sides of new or upgraded paths.	£1.09 / metre

Table of standard costs (with outline specification)

[Recent changes](#)

Section	Change
Update	Update to guidance
Related Content	Link to AECS score sheet for Improving Public Access added

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