

## **1: Introduction**

People visit our landscape because it is exciting and beautiful. The role of trailwork is to help them to enjoy the experience and stay safe while protecting the landscape from damage they might cause by being there.

Natural forces also affect the landscape: rain and snow-melt can cause erosion. This is made worse when combined with visitor impact. For instance water running down a path erodes the surface and it collects in puddles which force walkers to find a way round, creating parallel paths ('braids') which merge into a bare and unstable mess.

### **Different areas require different sorts of paths:**

There are **paths in remote areas and in the mountains** which are used only by enthusiasts who are prepared to be challenged and who expect to enjoy a completely natural landscape. This kind of path requires the lightest possible intervention consistent with safety and with the good condition of the environment it passes through. We might leave some parts untouched, while more difficult or fragile parts can be improved by removal of stone and obstacles, drainage in wet places, waymarking and creation of sight lines.

At the other extreme are '**honeypots**': places visited by very many mainstream tourists usually wearing conventional clothes. These need a more formal path. In some cases there might be a need for wheelchair access. Still, the work should be as discreet as possible so as not to impose itself on the views the tourists expect.

In between these extremes there are **popular walking routes** which, while going through wild country, suffer the impact of many feet. In such cases a judgement call has to be made: strong protection, but with as little visual impact as possible. This kind of path needs a good surface and good drainage. It should follow a pleasing line, not dead straight but with curves. Ascents should use pitching, or strategically placed rocks, rather than steps. In some places it may be possible to keep water away from the path by diverting it through a natural looking grassy gulley before it gets to the path. Landscaping should be used along the sides of the path to blend it into its surroundings and also to discourage walkers from stepping off it.

*See Trailwork Basics 3 - Landscaping; Appendix 1 - Drainage; Appendix 2.2 - Stone Pitching.*

Very **fragile landscapes**, for instance boggy ground or moss, present another challenge. In recent years this has become a serious issue because sites can suddenly attract huge numbers of visitors due to publicity on social media.

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### **1: Introduction (Continued)**

Options here include boardwalks, strongly controlled and limited routes, restricting the number of visitors or banning them altogether. Boardwalks are sometimes criticised as being intrusive, but on fragile ground they can bring about spectacular improvements in the surrounding vegetation by preventing the churning effect of many feet.

*See Appendix 2.4 - Footbridge and Boardwalk.*

If access and budgets allow, machinery is worth considering. A long path might be built more quickly and with less disruption by a **machine and driver** than by a team with spades and wheelbarrows taking many days.

Away from the paths damage is caused by people **going off-road** in 4x4's or on bikes. The best remedy here is of course prevention - by education and information - and by placing barriers in the way. But there will always be a need for restoration where these measures have not worked. This kind of damage mostly occurs on the gravel in highland deserts. Tyre marks need to be obliterated by raking before they harden and become permanent, and to prevent them being seen as an invitation to others to do the same. Damage to moss is much more difficult to deal with: transplanting and reseedling are the only options.

*See Trailwork Basics 3e - Landscaping, Off-Roaders.*

A **desire line** - an informal path created by people following a convenient route - can often be adopted as an official route. It has the advantage that we already know walkers are happy to use it. However sometimes desire lines create ugly scars or cause damage to fragile ground and then walkers need to be redirected. In these cases a less obtrusive route should be provided which is still convenient and is as inviting as possible. Then the desire line should be obliterated and made uninviting to walk on. The sides of the new path should be landscaped to discourage stepping off. Sometimes it might be possible to provide additional attractions and routes so that visitors are spread around and not concentrated in one place.

*See Trailwork Basics 3 - Landscaping.*

In all cases **early intervention** prevents the need for heavier engineering later on. A good surface and good drainage will persuade people to stay on the path. Then, with inspection and maintenance from time to time, the need for reconstruction later can be avoided.

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### **1: Introduction (Continued)**

Our **work should be done without leaving signs of disturbance**. For instance, when going off the path to fetch stones or material from a soil mine be careful not to walk the same way every time so that you make a track. If possible walk on hard ground or stones to avoid leaving footprints in soil. Store spoil on bare ground or on a sheet, rather than on grass, so that it can be cleaned away. If you do not reuse it dispose of it discreetly, perhaps by filling holes or by spreading it over a wide area.

When getting stones and when mining soil repair or disguise the holes left behind with turf or stone. If the work involves cutting and chopping wood take care not to leave behind a mess of sawdust and chippings.

*See Trailwork Basics 4 - Further Information/Tips/Materials*

**Consider the public:** have a routine for alerting tourists and workers when people need to pass through your work site. Keep tools and building materials off the path as they are a trip hazard. Be courteous and ready to explain what you are doing.

With all trailwork, sites and materials differ from area to area. So it is **not always practical to slavishly follow these Guides in every detail**. For instance you may decide a slope needs fewer, or more, waterbars than specified because of local conditions. If, in some situations, effective alternatives or modifications to the current guidelines are developed, these can be reported back and included in later editions of the Handbook.

**After repair all paths need monitoring and maintenance to ensure that they remain in good condition. In this way the expense and effort of large scale rebuilding work in the future can be avoided.**

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