How to use it
As mentioned in the previous section the guide is split into three parts. The first part provides an introduction to the provision of access and the legal duties placed on us as a public body. It also includes a useful flow diagram (shown opposite) which sets out the process to follow when developing access proposals. The second part of the guide contains the design element sheets which provide technical information on common access features such as steps and ramps. These sheets contain a number of illustrations and photos to help demonstrate the recommendations. Also included is a ‘What should designers consider’ section which poses a number of key questions. Each of the sheets includes a ‘Further sources of information’ section which provide links to more detailed information such as British Standards and existing guidance. The final section of the guide discusses the internal and external consultation that needs to be undertaken and the future management of the access to ensure the standard is maintained.

How do I decide what the right level of access is?

The flow chart (shown opposite) indicates the process that should be followed in order to achieve an acceptable level of access. The principle of Least Restrictive Access (as described on page 9 of The Access for All Design Guide) should always be followed when undertaking improvement, maintenance or repair work. This will ensure that the highest possible access standards are achieved in all situations and where they are not; there is clear documented reasoning to justify why.

Who should use it?
All those involved in internal plans and projects, for example the National Environmental Assessment Service (NEAS), the National Capital Programme Management Service (ncpms), Flood Risk Management and other functions such as Development Control, Fisheries, Recreation, Biodiversity and Waterways. The Access for All Design Guide is also targeted at consultants working on our behalf and external organisations looking to improve access to the external environment.

Where can I find it?
The guide is available on our website and can be found at http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/library/publications/141756.aspx.

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Access for all design guide

...an introduction

September 2012
Access for all design guide

1 Purpose

Providing public access for a wide range of users to sites that we manage and maintain should be a core consideration for us and the project teams we work with. The creation of safe and inclusive access is something we are required to achieve under UK equality legislation. This Access for All Design Guide will help us to achieve this. It provides details of the specific access requirements we should be achieving as part of our FCRM activities and other duties.

As an organisation we have set ourselves a goal to become more sustainable in all areas of our work. The development of The Access for All Design Guide demonstrates our commitment towards this goal. By considering the need and implications of appropriate access solutions from the outset of a project and setting a common approach to its development we will become more efficient in the way we work. Common solutions to access requirements across our projects will result in more sustainable assets to manage and maintain in the future.

Statutory guidance on the development of appropriate access within the UK is chiefly concerned with the approach to and movement within buildings. Although there will be occasions when this is appropriate on our projects, the majority of our work is situated in the wider external environment. There is no statutory guidance covering access of this nature as a whole, however, there are a number of organisations that have developed access guides for specific elements. The British Disabled Angling Association’s Access Guidelines for Fisheries is one example. As a result, in order to achieve the required access provision there is a need to consult a number of different sources and guides, often providing conflicting advice. However, the creation of the Access for All Design Guide will help to overcome any uncertainty as it provides clear and concise information on common access elements which occur on our schemes. This will enable us and our partners to make an informed decision on the level of access that can be achieved.

The word ‘access’ is used in its broadest sense within The Access for All Design Guide. It is not solely a guide that concentrates on disabled access as it also considers non-disabled and operational access.

2 What does it include?

The Access for All Design Guide is split into three parts – background, design element sheets and management and maintenance. The first part covers our wider access responsibilities (including making reference to our current corporate strategy ‘Creating a Better Place’ and our responsibilities and legal position in the UK) and sets the context for the design element sheets in part 2. The design element sheets provide technical information on common access features, such as ramps or steps, to enable the reader to make an informed decision on the level of access that can be achieved. The final section considers management and maintenance and consultation. There is also a separate document of supporting information which includes copies of the documents, guidelines and technical information that have been consulted as part of the development of the guide.

The main objectives of the guide are:

- To comply with the duties placed on us by the Equality Act.
- To help us towards our corporate aim of promoting sustainable development.
- To illustrate how we influence access in the external environment both as a developer and as a development control organisation.
- To explain the recreational and access promotion duties placed on us under the Environment Act.
- To show that access is a recurring theme across many of our functions and that we can demonstrate that access has been thoroughly considered, an agreed standard achieved and the results promoted.
- Ensure that access is considered as an integral part of our developments and is promoted through ongoing good management practices.
- Make designers and managers think ‘Have we done all that we can reasonably do to promote access?’

The contents of the guide are:

1. Foreword
2. Creating a better place 2010-2015
3. Acknowledgements
4. Purpose of this Guide and Process
5. Our Responsibilities and Legal Position in the UK
6. Existing Guidance
7. Design Standards
8. Design Element Sheets
   a. Surfaces
   b. Ramps
   c. Steps and Step Ramps
   d. Handrails
   e. Gates
   f. Signage and Visitor Information
   g. Fishing Platforms
   h. Canoe Access
   i. Boat Access
   j. Dipping Platforms and Boardwalks
   k. Street Furniture
   l. Car Parks
   m. Equestrian Access
   n. Cycle Access
   o. Footbridges
9. Management and Maintenance
10. Consultation on Access Proposals
11. Design Liability
12. List of Sources
13. Glossary

Footpaths

Cycleways

Central delineator

Safety board preferred

Decking boards perpendicular to direction of travel. See Boardwalk Design Sheet for details.

Verge 1.0m minimum 1.0m minimum clearance preferred

Bridgpath 2.0m minimum, 2.5m preferred

Maximum access

Verge 1.0m minimum

Bridgpath 2.0m minimum, 2.5m preferred

Maximum access

Cyclepath/footpath

Cyclepath/footpath

Sealed surface

Grassed/gravel surface

900mm

1100mm

Recommended design sits flush with river bank.

Recommended design sits flush with river bank.

Minimum access 1200-1500mm

Footpath

Cycleway

Minimum access 1200-1500mm

Footpath

Cycleway

Safety board minimum height 150mm.

Safety board minimum height 150mm.