



BY EMAIL

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9<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

Dear Peter,

### **Review of Trails and Routes**

Thank you for inviting the Conservation Board to respond to the above consultation. Attached is the Board's detailed response to the consultation, which was discussed at the Board's Executive Committee meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2009. There are a number of key points the Board wishes to highlight in addition to the responses to the individual questions.

However, there are a number of points the Board wishes to make in addition to the responses to the individual questions.

- Reviewing National Trails and recreational routes in isolation of a strategic review of access and access provision as a whole is not ideal. There is a danger that focussing on just these elements of the access network will overlook opportunities and distort resource allocation compared to a strategic review of the whole network.
- New issues have emerged to support spending on the paths network to encourage greater use, not least the recognition of the link between countryside access, exercise and health. This suggests that building on the review to date and looking at a wider strategic review of the value of access would be useful e.g. an updating of the Countryside Commission's Paths, Routes and Trails work.
- Q7. 'A new Management Model for National Trails' is aimed at highway authorities. However, other management model options exist as demonstrated with the Cotswold Way team being employed by the Cotswolds Conservation Board. Such a management model may work well with other trails that pass through or are contained largely within protected landscapes. The same approach could easily be applied to other recreational and strategic routes and trails. For example, the Cotswolds AONB contains or is crossed by at least 15 named routes and trails, many of which link with the Cotswold Way.

Conserving, enhancing, understanding and enjoying the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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This point is particularly borne out when the strategic roles of Protected Landscapes and National Trails are compared.

- Protected landscape bodies – National Park Authorities, Conservation Boards and AONB JACs/Partnerships, already look strategically at access within their areas. Natural England's review should recognise the role of the Protected Landscape organisations in strategic review and delivery of access.
- Local authorities are extremely unlikely to fund the work to develop and upgrade other routes without financial assistance, particularly in the current financial climate. There is already concern over the future funding of National Trails.

If you wish to clarify or discuss further any of the above comments, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or James.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Connelly  
Land Management Officer

James Blockley  
National Trail Officer

## NATURAL ENGLAND CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

### REVIEW OF TRAILS AND ROUTES

**The purpose of document is to encourage our stakeholders to give us their opinions on the recommendations arising from the review of Trails and Routes.**

#### **Introduction by The Chief Executive**

Hundreds of traffic-free trails and routes traverse the length and breadth of England; through cities, along valleys and across mountain tops. They provide many opportunities for people to make journeys, short or long; by foot, cycle or horse. Some people use trails and routes for just a few hours to enjoy outstanding natural environments. Others as a journey to complete gradually in stages over time. For some it can be a life-changing, long distance challenge to complete in one go.

This review is part of our work to inspire people to value and conserve the natural environment and it supports our draft access policy which is currently proceeding through its own consultation.

In April this year I wrote to highway authorities who manage National Trails, user groups and other interested organisations explaining our plans to carry out a review of all trails and routes across England. Our aim was to understand how many people use trails and routes, to find out how we can encourage greater use and to look for smarter ways of managing and promoting them.

We've spent the last few months gathering evidence, analysing data, talking and listening to a wide range of people. We have now produced recommendations and we invite you to respond to them before we decide what should be done and what our future role in relation to trails and routes will be.

Please read this consultation paper. Ask questions, take part in discussions, and think about the issues and opportunities we raise.

I look forward to receiving your views before the closing date of 6 February 2009.

Yours sincerely

Dr Helen Phillips  
Chief Executive  
Natural England

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## **Background**

There are around 600 named, mainly traffic-free trails and routes for walking, cycling or horse-riding across England. All can be enjoyed over a series of days as well as for short trips and are promoted as an attraction to visitors as well as local people. Standards and quality of experience vary widely. 38% of the population have used one of more of these trails or routes in the last 12 months.

Natural England has a special relationship with 13 of these routes – the National Trails which have a reputation as the ‘flagship’ for all trails and routes. Established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, they were selected for providing outstanding opportunities for people to enjoy extensive journeys in the finest countryside. Their creation, management and maintenance has always received a substantial contribution from Exchequer funds, through Natural England or its founding bodies.

Most other routes have been established by highway authorities and are managed as part of the rights of way network. User groups, such as the Long Distance Walkers Association, charities and enthusiasts have also developed and/or promoted routes.

## **Review Aims**

Natural England commenced a review of trails and routes in April 2008. The aims were to identify:

- who uses trails and routes and what experiences they seek,
- ways of increasing and diversifying use,
- the differences in quality between National Trails and other routes,
- a new model for the future management and funding of National Trails.

## **How the Review was carried out**

The review collected evidence from a wide range of sources including a representative sample of adults across England, managers of trails and routes in highway authorities, national and international experts, commercial publishers of guides and maps, and national trail officers. Other sources of data were analysed including Rights of Way Improvement Plans, National Trail business plans, Natural England grants to National Trails and existing trail user surveys and condition surveys.

The public market research was conducted by TNS Travel and Tourism and the main review was carried out by The Access Company.

A selection of stakeholders were involved in steering the review, representing highway authorities, The National Trust, VisitBritain and National Trail Officers.

## **Findings**

Here is a summary of the evidence we found. The full findings will be available during the consultation period.

### Users of routes and trails

25 million people (61% of the adult population) are aware that trails and routes exist in England. Awareness is highest with residents of rural areas, people in older age groups and the AB socio-economic groups.

16 million (38%) use these routes at least once annually. 30% use routes in their local area, 8% use routes on full day trips in other areas, and 13% use them while on holiday. Many people use them for both local and holiday use.

There are 6.5 million (15%) frequent users who use a trail or route at least once a week, and a further 9.5 million (23%) who use them less often. A further 15 million people (36%) are potential users who actively walk, cycle or ride but have little awareness of where trails and routes are but are interested in using them. This group come from all ages, income levels and backgrounds.

Trails and routes provide a range of experiences to suit everyone from the ambler who seeks just an hour or two in a high quality natural environment to the scrambler seeking a challenge for a day or more. While many local routes are mainly used for short trips by local people, the 2007 National Trail user survey revealed that 50% of National Trail users are out for a full day, with 33% of them aiming to complete the whole trail either in one trip, or over a series of days or weekend breaks.

People give different reasons for choosing where to walk, the most important reasons include attractive views and scenery, being away from traffic, feeling safe and relaxing and unwinding. Also important are a well maintained path or track, places to sit and rest, discovering somewhere new, being able to walk there from home, not costing much money and ease of parking..

### Information about trails and routes

Provision of more, high quality, information on trails and routes would increase awareness and use.

The kind of information people want varies. All users want more printed and on-line information about where they can go. Local users want better maps, downloadable guides and often seek reassurance that other people will be using the route. People considering using routes while on holiday or when visiting another area need to know where they can go and what they can see, but are also interested in knowing what other users think, and to have information on accommodation and services.

Currently, most route information and promotional activity is aimed at existing users.

Users rate National Trails much higher for ease of access to information than other routes. All National Trails have a published guidebook, accommodation guide, website and the majority have published circular walks and public transport information.

### The Quality of Trails and routes

The level and quality of maintenance of a route affects how many people use it. Highway authorities are committed to meeting National Trail Quality Standards. There are no agreed standards for other routes.

Improvements which are most effective in increasing use of a path include cutting vegetation, improving drainage and surfacing, improving signposting, and providing seating and resting places.

Other improvements which encourage particular groups include removing barriers and making routes more pushchair/wheelchair-friendly and providing more on-site information.

The quality of trails and routes is likely to improve in advance of the rest of the network as highway authorities concentrate their investment on them in response to users' needs, the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and Rights of Way Improvement Plans. National Trails are managed to higher standards than other routes, scoring higher for quality on the ground with both highway authorities and users.

### The Supply of Trails and Routes

Two thirds of highway authorities think there are enough or too many routes. 275 routes were named by authorities across England as being of strategic importance, compared to the 600 that exist. Three quarters of highway authorities named 3 or more routes in their area.

One third of highway authorities think there are too few routes. In rural areas this reflects a desire for more cycle and equestrian provision. In urban areas (71% of the authorities responding 'too few' are unitary) this reflects the need to create links from existing routes closer to where people live.

The majority of existing users, and most potential users, want more short circular routes and more routes connecting interesting places.

There are many more trails and routes than people think there are.

By their very nature, trails and routes can be remote. Many users depend on using a car to get there and back, some sections are difficult to reach by any form of transport, which is part of their appeal. Already 85% of the principal starting, stopping and access points on National Trails are accessible by public transport. There are opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint associated with the use of all trails and routes through, for example, better connections between trails and urban areas and/or priority given to public transport users.

### Visitor Services

Availability of information, and the choice and quality of route, are the most important factors to the public when deciding where to go., However, the services available on, or close to the route are also important. People considering using routes in their local area are concerned about places to eat or drink and toilets. People planning longer trips of several days have extra needs including more information as they are less familiar with the area, as well as baggage handling and accommodation booking services.

The private sector is best placed to provide most services, but require sufficient numbers of users to make services viable. Commercial operators currently provide more services for National Trails than on other routes. For example 54% of National Trails have both baggage carrying and booking services; these operate on only 2%

of other routes. Lower levels of use mean such services are rarely viable on other routes. Closer working with the tourism sector, more integrated promotion and awareness raising with businesses could lead to a wider range and a better quality of services

### Trails and Routes Management

Past and current exchequer funding has resulted in the creation of a family of excellent National Trails which are well managed, well known, and popular with the public. National Trails stand out from other routes in every way, especially in the quality of environment, user experiences, the way they are managed and promoted and their iconic status. National Trail alignments have been selected to provide the best user experiences not the cheapest routes to maintain, and so are often located in environments such as peat areas and cliff edges where management and maintenance costs are higher than other rights of way.

Visitor spending supports local suppliers and services as well as contributing to exchequer funding through VAT, fuel duty and excise duty, in the same way as does visitor spending in AONB's, National Parks and popular National Nature Reserves.

National Trails are seen as a national asset, set apart in quality and status from the rest of the rights of way network. Because most of them cross local authority boundaries there is a need for national co-ordination and leadership to ensure their continuing management.

National Trails cost on average around 20 pence per user – comparable figures are not available for the majority of other routes as very few authorities collect data on levels of use, user satisfaction or cost.

However, there is currently little strategic direction for the management and promotion of National Trails. There is inconsistency in what is supported, and no guidance on where national priorities lie. There is no central marketing or promotion, or clear guidance on regional or local promotion, and no national coordination of other key roles.

There is no national direction for management and promotion of the wider family of routes either.

Natural England's grant system for National Trails causes inefficiencies due to short-term funding, late grant allocations and a lack of ability to forward-plan resulting in missed opportunities to attract external funding.

### **Review Recommendations**

There are seven recommendations.

1. The Best Trails and Routes. Define a new category of high quality recreational routes that are of lower quality than National Trails but higher than most rights of way. Set standards for their creation and management. Implement an accreditation process to identify them. This could be achieved through a high profile public-led campaign using feedback from users as well as technical input from highway authorities and user groups.

*Outcomes:* The public will know what standards to expect from routes. Highway Authorities will be encouraged to sustain the quality of the newly recognised routes



and may be motivated to invest in other routes with the potential for national recognition. The consistency and quality of routes will improve, leading to improved user confidence and increased levels of use.

2. Visitor Information. Develop a new dynamic website providing easy access to information on all the best trails and routes in England. This would offer downloadable maps and guides, information on circular routes, opportunities to share experiences through personal reviews, recommendations, blogs and photographs. It could be possible for people to generate personal itineraries. A built-in problem reporting system would automatically alert route managers. It could evolve into a top quality, nationally and internationally recognised information source, which supports existing local and regional sources. It could be related to the current National Trails web-site or be a separate entity.

*Outcomes:* Meeting the identified needs of the public for better information will result in increased awareness and use. This offers a simple way to promote the best trails and routes identified in recommendation 1. Issues raised by users will be responded to more rapidly, raising awareness of user concerns amongst authorities and managers.

3. Management Information. Establish a national toolkit of methodologies for collecting and sharing evidence of levels of use, user satisfaction, costs and economic impact for trails and routes.

*Outcomes:* Managers will have evidence to demonstrate the value of routes, helping them bid for external funds. There will be a national bank of evidence on walking, cycling and riding. Authorities will be able to respond for requests for new routes with greater understanding of potential use and demand.

4. Natural England Grants. Modernise Natural England's grant system to provide funding packages covering several years, enabling partners to plan ahead and make better long term decisions, including leveraging more external funding and getting better value from contractors. Grants to be aligned to activities in the New Management Model, see 7 below. Prioritise the current National Trail Quality Standards to ensure that grants reflect what users want and are closely linked to agreed outcomes.

*Outcomes:* Better long term planning, allowing National Trails to work up major improvements within existing budget levels.

5. Volunteering. Support the recruitment and support of more volunteers to assist with the management and promotion of trails and routes. Encourage trail staff to seek and encourage volunteer input. Identify barriers to increased participation and share good practice. Work more closely with established groups such as Friends of groups for specific trails.

*Outcomes:* Increased engagement with trails and routes, more people actively participating in monitoring, maintenance and promotion of routes.

6. Trails and Routes Staff. Re-assess the role of Natural England funded Trail Officers. Develop a more flexible approach including a wider sharing of skills and more team working. Introduce more strategic management to the development of new ideas. Increase opportunities for all staff working on trails and routes to share experience and improve their effectiveness.

*Outcomes:* By matching expertise to tasks within the team, and sharing experience nationally, efficiency is increased. Higher quality decisions are taken by all trail and route staff based on better evidence and knowledge.

7. A New Management Model for National Trails. Introduce a ‘progression model’ (see below) to focus resources on management activities relevant to each stage in the life of individual National Trails. When a trail is in its early years priority is given to raising awareness of the trail and developing effective maintenance and management systems. When mature, with all systems in place, day to day management requires less effort, and emphasis can turn to ‘adding value’ within the corridor of land around of the trail. This could deliver environmental improvements, better access to communities and places of interest, improved integration, joint promotion with other routes and attractions as well as stronger links to centres of population.

*Outcomes:* A more structured progressive management providing a better focus for development and funding which in turn will provide better access to places of interest and settlements, more environmental improvements, wider promotion leading to greater and more diverse use.

### **Proposed New Management Model for National Trails**

The purpose of this model is to identify changes in the priorities for managing National Trails as they evolve and to help Natural England focus its resources where it can add most value.

<b>Construction</b>	<b>Early Years</b>	<b>Maturity</b>	<b>Adding Value</b>
There is a plan and resources to construct a trail	The trail is open, signed and promoted	The trail is consistently managed to a high standard	The trail corridor improves, other trails are promoted
<b>Priorities</b>			<b>More strategic role</b>
Creating the product  Delivery partnerships  Management agreements  Practical Improvements  Launch	Improving the trail quality  Marketing plans  Maintenance and monitoring systems	Maintenance systems in place  Most improvements completed  Information delivery in place  Audits and monitoring	Corridor & environmental improvements  Stronger links to urban centres through public transport and physical connections with other routes  Promotion of other routes  Enhanced volunteer networks  Visitor services

			Regional partnerships with tourism  Test bed for Innovative projects
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### Consultation Questions

We want to hear your views. We are particularly interested in the extent to which you support the seven recommendations and how you could get involved in implementing them.

Please respond by answering the consultation questions below.

Natural England is holding a series of regional and national events during November, December and January where stakeholders will be invited to challenge the findings and discuss any aspect of the review.

We are also willing to talk to organisations individually. If you would like to discuss how your organisation may wish to engage in the review, or you have any questions, please contact the Review Project Manager ([peter.ashcroft@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:peter.ashcroft@naturalengland.org.uk)).

#### Q1. The Best Trails and Routes

The findings of the review suggest that national standards should be set for routes other than National Trails.

- a. How useful do you think highway authorities would find this?

Very Useful/ Quite useful/ Not useful

Make any comments to explain your answer here ...

Subject to agreed criteria implemented on a national basis, HAs could benefit from accreditation in terms of quality benchmarking and allocation of resources. It could however lead to extra strain on already stretched rights of way budgets, and Natural England's current pledge of zero funding for recreational routes will therefore have to be re-examined.

There will need to be a clear distinction between the selected routes and National trails to avoid confusion and raising the expectations of users too far.

- b. How useful do you think the public, both users and potential users, would find this?

Very useful/Quite useful / Not useful

Make any comments to explain your answer here ...

Recognised standards make it easier for users and potential users to assess a trail's suitability to their own personal confidence and abilities. It could therefore increase access to and enjoyment of the countryside. It would ensure the most popular routes are managed to a higher standard

However, it could potentially lead routes of lower accreditation falling into disuse and disrepair as HAs become obligated to divert limited resources to the higher 'ranked' routes. With this in mind, extra funding should be made available to HAs or other responsible authorities for maintenance and promotion of all recreational routes to ensure the viability of the scheme.

- c. If national standards were set, what criteria do you think should be used to help define the 'best' routes?

The route is :	Priority		
	High	medium	low
Promoted and managed by the local authority		X	
Way marked throughout its length	X		
Promoted on dedicated webpage/leaflets	X		
Maintained to a high standard	X		
Stile free	X		
Available to all users (multi-use)		X	
Managed by a dedicated trail officer (ft or pt)	X		
The route :			
Passes through landscapes of high scenic quality	X		
Passes places of interest	X		
Passes places to eat or drink		X	
Starts and finishes in urban settlements		X	
Has main access points served by public transport	X		
Others, please specify			

Make any comments to explain your answers here ...

- Routes do not necessarily have to be managed by highway authorities; i.e it could be achieved in partnership with other bodies such as National Trail teams, Friends groups etc. Either way, enhanced levels of management could not be achieved without enhanced funding.
- If routes are made available to all users, conflicts could arise between different user groups and erode the quality of the experience. Most National Trails for example are managed solely as walking routes; more useful therefore would be routes dedicated to certain groups, e.g bridleway and off road cycle trails.
- The current standards set for National Trails would be a useful benchmark and could set a 'gold standard' for other recreational routes.

d. Should the public be involved in selecting the best routes?

Yes / No

e. Is Natural England the right organisation to lead on this?

Yes / No

f. Who else should be involved?

Local authorities, LAFs, AONBs, National Parks, National Trail teams, Countryside Services, user groups, friends groups, tourism services, NFU, CLA etc and other landowners such as The National Trust

Make any comments to explain your answers here ...

d) The public should be consulted via specific groups such as local walking groups and access fora to identify and quantify all routes in an area.

e) NE *could* be the right lead organisation as it has a countrywide remit and currently oversee and fund the family of National Trails. This is essential in order to consistently achieve a nationally recognised standard, and would avoid complications where routes cross HA boundaries

## Q2. Visitor Information

The findings suggest that information about the best trails and routes in England should be available in one place.

a. Do you think this would be useful to highway authorities?

Very useful                      quite useful                      not useful

b. Do you think this would be useful to the public, existing users and other groups?

Very useful                      quite useful                      not useful

Make any comments to explain your answers here ...

This would have a resource implication on individual HAs or the national accrediting body (NE?) and should be funded appropriately.

The various users would find it extremely useful in order to build a comparison tailored to their requirements.

c. It is likely that this central source of information will be on-line. Which of the following features do you think would be useful to customers?

	Priority		
	High	medium	Low
Detailed maps showing where the trails and routes are	X		
Birds eye views of routes (eg Google earth)			X
Free downloadable route maps/directions	X		
Reviews from other users		X	
Audio route guides			X
Ability to design personal itineraries		X	
Maps/directions for short circular walks from trails and routes	X		
Place to leave comments/complaints	X		
Pictures of trails and routes		X	
Public transport information	X		
Information on places to eat or drink	X		
Information on guided walks & events	X		
Information on accommodation	X		
Information on cycle hire		X	
Others – please say which			
Provision for disabled users where practical	X		

- d. Please indicate how your organisation would be willing to contribute to a central source of information:

Contribution	yes	No	Possibly
Data	X		
Funding		X	
Staff time			X (If funded)
Volunteer time			X
Other			

- e. What roles do you think the private sector could have in either managing or sponsoring such an information source?

Contribution	yes	No	Possibly
Hosting			X
Funding			X
Staff time			X
Data collection/sharing time			X
Sponsorship	X		

Make any comments to explain your answers here ...

For the private sector to engage, there has to be something to gain. This could include income, promotion etc

### Q3. Management Information

The review found that little data is collected on how routes, other than National Trails, are managed and used, or on their financial costs and benefits.

- a. How useful would you find national advice on how to collect and share such data?

Very useful                  useful                  not very useful

- b. What information would you like access to nationally consistent data on, and what could you use this data for?

The same criteria as used for assessment of National Trail quality standards. As mentioned above, the National Trails could act as a benchmark against which other routes could be assessed and managed.

### Q4. Natural England Grants for National Trails

The review found that the current grant system for National Trails leads to inefficiencies and missed funding opportunities.

- a. If your authority currently receives a grant from Natural England for the management of a National Trail please tell us if you think changes to the system could be made to improve effectiveness and value.

Yes – it could be greatly improved

Yes – but it could be a bit better

No – there is no need, the system works fine

- b. If some aspects of spending could be scheduled over several years would this increase efficiency?

A great increase                  a slight increase                  no difference

Please give examples of potential increased efficiencies here

Certain projects, for example end markers and circular walks on the Cotswold Way will take more than a year to complete, but the funding has to be spent within

the year. If this timescale could be extended, efficiencies could be made, inappropriate spending avoided, and greater quality of finished product ensured. Longer, better value, contracts could be agreed for example for vegetation cutting

c. What other changes could be made to improve the current system ?

In a nutshell, longer term funding arrangements would facilitate longer term planning and therefore longer term successes, higher quality project work and better value.

### Q5. Volunteering

The review found that volunteers are actively involved in the management and monitoring of some routes and trails.

a. Do opportunities exist to engage more effectively with volunteers on trails in your area?

Many opportunities

Few opportunities

No opportunities

b. What do you think are the main volunteering opportunities

	High	Medium	Low
Wardening and reporting problems	X		
Practical volunteering tasks in organised groups	X		
Lengthsmen involved in maintenance work	X		
Working with the public, eg guided walks and talks	X		

c. What do you think is required to encourage more people to volunteer their time and expertise to contribute to the management and promotion of trails and routes?

A clear and unequivocal guarantee that their input is central to the trail's management accompanied by testimonials from existing volunteers.

A wide range of volunteer opportunities to attract a wide range of volunteers – i.e moving away from the traditional image of a volunteer as scrub-bashing.

Perhaps more important however, is how volunteers can be retained once recruited, for example by regular feedback and support from HAs and trail offices.



Money – volunteer co-ordination and management takes time and consequently costs money.  
Money is also needed for volunteer expenses and to ensure they have appropriate tools, equipment and training.

#### Q6. Trails and Routes Staff

The review found that the expertise held within National Trail teams and local authority staff is not being shared. Natural England is keen to ensure that expertise is shared between all people managing routes.

- a. Do you agree with this finding?

Yes / no

- b. Do you have ideas on how to improving sharing of knowledge and expertise between professionals?

Information *is* being shared, for example the trail officers' staff forum, but this could be expanded along similar lines to embrace highway authorities etc. This could be achieved on an initial level by setting up a bulletin board on a password protected section of the 'family' website where officers can share experiences and arrive at group solutions to common problems.

Encourage National Trail Staff and local authority staff (and NE staff) to link up beyond the Forum. This could potentially be through the CMA and involve other staff involved in managing access, particularly if other routes are to be promoted.

#### Q7. A New Management Model for National Trails

***This question is aimed at highway authorities who currently contribute to the management and funding of National Trails***

- a. As individual National Trails reach maturity there are more opportunities to work with health, education, agriculture and other sectors to improve the delivery of appropriate local and national targets. This could help attract more funding. Would you be willing to work to increase funding both from local authorities and elsewhere to provide a better customer focussed product?

Yes

Maybe

no

- b. What else could be done to encourage highway authorities and other organisations to contribute a larger share of the costs of managing and promoting National Trails?

A clearer indication that National Trails meet HA obligations and targets in terms of access management, and proof of what they would stand to gain from increased contributions. This would have to be pitched at a level higher than access teams however, and would be better aimed at department heads and elected members.

Successful applications for external funding would also encourage highway authorities and others to contribute more.

- c. Which aspects of the current spending on national trails provide the best opportunities for gaining better value/reducing costs

	High	Medium	Low	Please say why
Trail Staff			X	
Support Costs			X	
Trail maintenance			X	
Trail improvements			X	
Marketing		X		

Please make any comments to support your answers here

These are all equally important factors in the management of National Trails, so any limited scope for cost savings that could be identified would have an equally negative impact on trail quality.

- d. The review findings suggest that there are opportunities to improve trail corridors though new ways of working with stakeholders. Examples include development and promotion of link routes, circular walks, and improved environmental quality through better targeting of agri-environment schemes.

Do you agree with this finding?

Yes            In part            No

Please make any comments to explain your answer here

One example would be that there is untapped potential for using National Trails as a unifying factor in joint bids to funds such as RDPE and BLF.

This is currently happening on the Cotswold Way National Trail, however, there are further opportunities to work with stakeholders along a National Trail corridor ranging from landowners (including the National Trust etc), parish councils, public transport providers, other departments within local authorities beyond rights of way, user groups including disability groups, tourist attractions etc etc. This is particularly relevant as a National Trail moves on from establishment into 'early years' and 'maturity'.

All of this enables a Trail to develop and spread its benefits and impact.

**Thank you for your time**

**Please email your response to [peter.ashcroft@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:peter.ashcroft@naturalengland.org.uk)**

**or post to  
Natural England**

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**The closing date is 6 February 2009**