

# Community Paths Guide

A guide to improving or promoting your local paths



paths  
for all

FOR A HAPPIER,  
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND



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## 1. Introduction

This guide is for groups or individuals who are interested in improving or promoting their local paths. It contains information to help you plan and manage a path project.

There are many reasons why you might want to be involved in a path project. Perhaps you'd like to improve the drainage or surface on a local path. You may want to make a better route to the shops or other amenities, or you simply want to encourage more people to use a path. This guide contains information on the things you should consider when planning a path project.

Paths for All has worked with a range of community groups across Scotland. These groups have improved the places their communities use to walk, both for everyday journeys as well as for leisure. The volunteers involved in the projects have sometimes done all the work, and on other occasions they have used a contractor to carry out part of the work for them. Using our knowledge and expertise of working with groups, we have put together a guide that will help you to break your project down into easy, manageable steps. We will take you through what you need to consider when planning and managing your path project. So, no matter what type of path project you are planning, this guide will help you manage and achieve it.

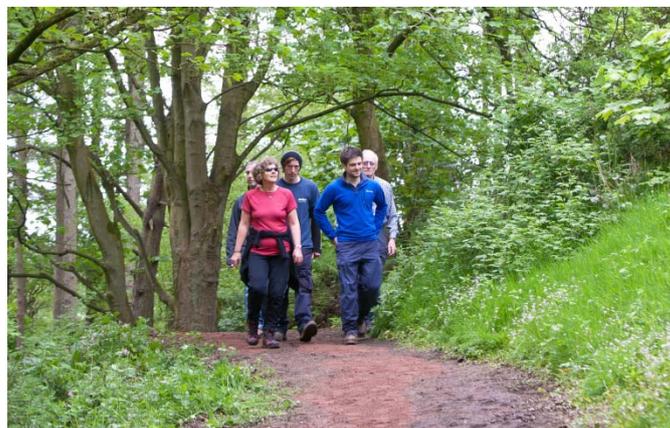
Good luck with your path project!

## 2. Your project idea

This section will take you through project ideas and how to form a group if you aren't already part of an established group.

Firstly, think about **why you are doing the project**. Path projects can start from a demand within the community for a better path. Perhaps people are asking for a safer or easier route to the shops, or for a well-used path which is worn and uneven to be improved. Or maybe you are interested in making improvements to where you walk and want to find out if there is support for your ideas within the community. If this is the case, you might need to form a group to take your idea forward.

Thinking of the end result, **how will the community benefit** from your project? This will depend on the type of project. A path improvement project could mean more people are able to use the path - perhaps people who wouldn't have felt confident to do so before. The path might then become useable all year round, without becoming wet and muddy. If the focus of your project is better promotion of your path, you might want more people to be aware of where the paths are in your community and provide sufficient information to help them decide if the path is suitable for them. This in turn could encourage more people to be active outdoors, improving their health and wellbeing.



It's important to think about **who will benefit** from your path project. If your path isn't particularly safe at present, will your project encourage new users who don't usually go for walks, or those who currently feel nervous about using the path? Do you want all types of users to be able to use the path? For example, do you want wheelchair users, buggies and bikes to be able to use the path? Is it just a small group of users who currently use the path or is it a well-used path? Will the community be supportive of the suggested improvements to the path you have in mind? We will come on to consulting the community shortly, but at this very early planning stage it is important to consider how your project can benefit a wide range of people.

If you are applying for funding for your project, then these are the types of question you are likely to be asked.

### Are you already part of a group?

You may already be part of an **established community group**, and as a group feel able to take on a path improvement or promotion project. You might have volunteers within the group who are willing to help out with a path project but if not, you might need to recruit more volunteers. You can find out more about recruiting volunteers in this guide.

### Do you need to set up a group?

If you are **not already part of a group**, but would like to take on a path project, it is worth seeing if there are any local established community groups, for example, the local community council, a development trust or a gardening group. Such a group might work on other projects, and could be interested in getting involved.

If there aren't any established groups in your area, you'll need to think about getting people involved to form a group. This could be through meeting people already using the path who might be interested in joining such a group and helping out. You could advertise in local shops and newspapers, or talk to people at local events or meetings. You only need a few people to get started.

Once you've got some volunteers on board, you should think about how your group is organised. If you are a formally constituted group, or plan to become one, you'll need a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. You will then need to consider what will be in your constitution and what your aims and objectives will be. Bear in mind that to apply for funding you will need to be a constituted group.



### 3. Getting support for your project

You want your project to be valued and supported within your community, so it's important to consult with a range of people. That might be because you need them to provide funding, or so you can secure any necessary permissions to carry out the work you plan. It will also help determine the need for your proposed project within the local community. It's important to take the views of your local community into consideration and to actively raise awareness of what you're planning.

#### Who should you consult?



##### **LOCAL COMMUNITY**

You will want to know who uses the path, or could potentially use it. What demand is there for the path you intend to improve or promote? Are the community supportive of your plans?



##### **LANDOWNER**

Before doing any work you will need the landowner's permission. Are they happy with what you have planned? Do they have other priorities or different ideas of their own?



##### **ACCESS OFFICER**

Let your local access officer know about your plans. They might be able to offer ideas for your project or even financial or practical support.

## What's the best way to consult the community?

There are different ways you can consult with your local community, depending on the type of information you are looking for. You'll probably have a good feeling for what will work well in your area.

### Some possible approaches are:

- Putting a questionnaire in your local shop/pub/community centre to ask for people's views
- Asking (and recording) people's views at a local event
- Holding a formal consultation event where you ask people to discuss and prioritise ideas
- Evidence such as a user count. This doesn't have to be anything onerous. Simply recording the number of people you see out using the path at different times of the week, maybe for an hour or two at a time.

By consulting the community you can build a strong case for developing your project, and if you are looking for funding you will probably have to demonstrate that there is a need for your project.

## 4. Design and costings

There are a number of factors that will influence the design and cost of your path:

- **The needs of the people who will use the path**

Knowing who is going to use the path, what they will use it for and how often, will help you determine how wide your path should be and what materials and infrastructure you need to put in place.

- **The location**

Think about the landscape character of where you want the path to go and use materials that will fit best with it.

- **Maintenance**

Always choose materials and infrastructure that will be easy to maintain. Making the right decisions now will save you time and money in the future.

## Carrying out a survey

Survey your path to record what condition it is in now and to identify what work is needed to bring it up to the standard you want. Using this information you will be able to:

### Break down

- Break down what work you will need to carry out

### Itemise

- Itemise the materials and infrastructure you need

### Work out

- Work out how much your project is likely to cost

## Costing your project

Once you've identified what work you need to do, use our [Estimating Price Guide](#) to help you cost your project. The prices in this guide are based on the price that a contractor would charge you to supply items or materials and carry out the work. The prices also include VAT.

If you need to employ a contractor to carry out the work, you should always send your project out to tender, and use the pricing guide to compare the costs in any tenders you receive.

Always build in some contingency costs to your project, just in case you have some unexpected costs once work starts on the ground.

## Tendering

You can produce tender documents yourself, or you can employ a professional such as a quantity surveyor or landscape architect to produce these for you.

Tenders usually include:

- A covering letter – inviting the submission of tenders and setting the closing date for these
- A bill of quantities – describing the location of the works and itemising the quantity of work required
- A design scheme – comprising a location plan, detailed construction and installation plans, and materials to be used
- Terms and conditions of contract
- Pre-construction information – which sets out health and safety information in relation to the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

Ask your local access officer for advice about planning permission and any designations or consents that you might need to apply for, or conform to.

## 5. Funding

For whatever type of path project you're planning, you'll probably need some funding to help you do it. There are various funding options available to the voluntary sector. Funding options are always changing in terms of what funds are available and what type of projects funders want to support. Information on all aspects of applying for funding can be found on the [Funding Scotland](#) website.

Here are a few tips to help you when applying for funding:

### 1. Know what you want to do

Know what you want to achieve before you start applying for funding. Funders generally look for specific outcomes.

### 2. Know who to ask

There's no point wasting time and energy applying to the wrong people. Have a look in detail at what the fund's aims and objectives are in order to make sure that your project will fit with their requirements.

### 3. Know what to say

When making an application, you need to show your funder that your project will deliver for them. So think about their aims and objectives and show how your project will deliver those aims. For example, if the funding organisation says that they want to support actions that help people develop healthier lifestyles, you need to

really push the health aspects of your project. Show how many people your project will help to get out walking and cycling, so that the funder can see how your work will help to achieve their goals.

## 6. Doing the work

### Who will do the work?

As part of your project planning, you will need to think about who is going to do the work. Depending on the size and scale of your project, you may be able to do this through volunteers. If you are a community group you may already have a group of volunteers who are keen to help, or you might want to recruit volunteers.

### Volunteers

Your group may already have the skills to do some path work, whether it is drainage, cutting back vegetation or other maintenance jobs. If it is a promotion project and you wish to produce a leaflet, you might have volunteers in your group that can do this, or are willing to try. Paths for All runs various courses for community group volunteers to learn skills such as path promotion, maintenance and path design. You can find out more about these courses on our website.

## Recruiting volunteers

You may need extra volunteers to help out with relatively easy tasks such as clearing vegetation or clearing drains. Word of mouth, posters and social media are good ways of promoting your project and encouraging people to get involved. Another way is to offer a community get-together day or afternoon, with time spent carrying out path work and some time set aside for a picnic to encourage people along. It's a good way of getting people in the community together and interested in what you are doing.

## Contractors

You might not have the skills within your group to do all of the work yourself - in which case you will need to hire a contractor. You may be familiar with some contractors in your area from other projects or by word-of-mouth recommendations. Paths for All also have a list of contractors on our website. Some points to consider when working with contractors are:

- Visit the site regularly to view progress and arrange regular update meetings
- Key things to discuss:
  - Progress – weather conditions may delay works
  - Standards – quality, tidiness, materials and finishing
  - Health and safety issues.
- Keep records of site meetings and conversations
- Once completed, check the path with the contractor. If there are any issues, agree how these will be rectified
- Don't pay the contractor in full until you are happy with the work

## 7. Promotion

Whether you are working on a path improvement or path promotion project, you will want to think about letting people know about your path. You will want people to know where the path is and provide enough information so they can decide if it is suitable for them, as well as help them find their way to the start and follow the route.

Before you start, think about your target audience and which media is most likely to reach them. Why might they be interested in your path? Do they need any special information, such as what they might see, availability of seating along the route or the path condition at certain times of the year?

How do you let people know? Depending on your audience, there's a variety of media to choose from. Word of mouth, newspaper articles, leaflets, signage, on-site displays, website or social media are all ways you can reach your target audience.

Plan an event. You might want to plan an official opening of the path, or some other event, to let people know about it, and invite any local media along. This can be a great way to celebrate the completion of a project and thank the volunteers who have been involved. It's also a useful way of gaining extra publicity.

## 8. Project evaluation

It's useful to evaluate your project, especially if you have received funding. Funders will be interested in knowing how their money was spent and what impact it has had. This section looks at some of the points you should consider when evaluating your project.

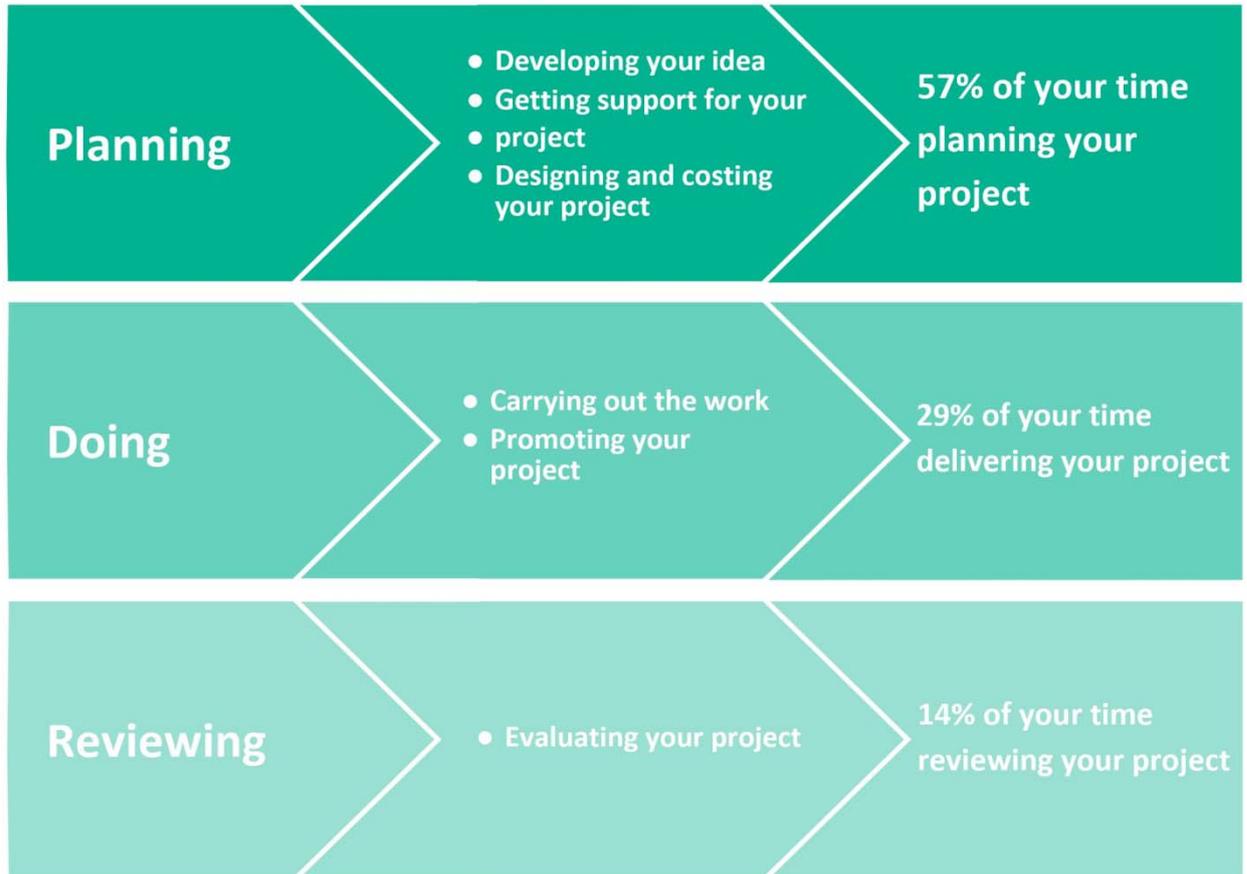
Knowing you have been successful is more than just accounting for the money you've spent, and far more than measuring the length of the path that is available to the public. There are various measures you can use to determine the success of your project: how many new people are using the path, the skills that volunteers have learnt, the types of users that are now using the path and the added opportunity for recreation or everyday journeys within the community that the path brings.

Evaluating your project doesn't have to be a time-consuming or difficult job to do. Here are some easy ways you can evaluate your project:

- Take 'before' and 'after' pictures of the path
- Carry out an informal footfall survey. If you do a footfall survey at the start of your project, you can follow this up with one at the end of the project. This can be as simple as recording the number of people using the path over an hour or two at certain times of the day, or over a number of days
- If your group has a Facebook page, any comments you receive on the completed project will count as evidence and contribute towards your evaluation
- General observations on the path
- Talk to people out on the path and record their comments
- If there was a path promotion element in your project, then record the increase in number of people using your path.

If you would like any further information on the topics covered in this guide, please get in touch with us. You can contact us at [communitypaths@pathsforall.org.uk](mailto:communitypaths@pathsforall.org.uk) or on **01259 218 888** or by visiting our website [www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

## 9. Timeline





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Paths for All is a partnership organisation,  
for a full list of our current partners please visit  
our website [www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

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