



Breaking Down Barriers Enhancing Accessibility on the TPT

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of making outdoor spaces accessible to everyone, regardless of their mobility.

The Disabled Ramblers have recently launched an updated document in September 2024, "Man-made Barriers & Least Restrictive Access", providing valuable insights and guidelines for local authorities looking to redesign and remove barriers along the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) and other rights of way. This document, in conjunction with the efforts of the Disabled Ramblers, offers a comprehensive approach to creating a more inclusive and accessible countryside. You can read it on our website [here](#).

Understanding the Challenges

Access to the countryside has long been a challenge for people with limited mobility. The Disabled Ramblers, a charity working across England and Wales since the 1990s, has been at the forefront of advocating for better access. Their mission is to ensure that everyone, regardless of their physical ability, can enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside. They raise awareness of the needs of people with limited mobility and organise a national programme of rambles for those who use mobility scooters.

In addition to advocacy, the Disabled Ramblers provide practical support and advice to local authorities and landowners. They campaign for the installation of new structures that comply with accessibility standards and conduct audits of existing barriers to identify areas for improvement. Their efforts have led to significant changes in many areas, making the countryside more accessible to everyone.

Principles of Least Restrictive Access

The "Man-made Barriers & Least Restrictive Access" document emphasises the principle of "Least Restrictive Access," which prioritises the removal of barriers to create the most accessible routes possible. For example, a gap is considered less restrictive than a chicane or bollard, which in turn is less restrictive than a self-closing gate. This hierarchy ensures that when barriers are removed or redesigned, the new structures provide the least restrictive access possible, complying with the British Standard for Gaps, Gates, and Stiles (BS 5709:2018).

The document also provides detailed specifications for various types of barriers and structures, including gaps, bollards, chicanes, gates, and footbridges. For instance, gaps should have a clear width of 1.5 meters to accommodate large mobility vehicles and ensure easy passage for all users. Similarly, accessible gates should be operable by unaccompanied individuals seated on their mobility vehicles and should have sufficient manoeuvring space.

Partnership with the Disabled Ramblers

The TPT partnership has been actively collaborating with the Disabled Ramblers to ensure that the Trans Pennine Trail is accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical ability. This collaboration involves regular consultations with representatives from the Disabled Ramblers to identify and address any barriers that might hinder accessibility. The partnership has also been instrumental in implementing various Trail improvements, such as installing accessible chicanes, creating smoother pathways, and providing detailed accessibility information on the TPT website. These efforts not only enhance the Trail experience for disabled ramblers but also promote inclusivity and encourage more people to enjoy the natural beauty of the Trans Pennine Trail.

Examples of schemes the TPT Partnership has worked on along with Sustrans are Five Weirs Walk in Sheffield, Bentley to A1 in Doncaster, and a second phase in Lymm, Warrington. These initiatives have led to significant improvements in accessibility by redesigning previously inaccessible barriers and ensuring that a variety of users can use the path all year-round.

Additionally, the work of the TPT National office has contributed to making the TPT more accessible by engaging and encouraging greater use of the route by under-represented groups.

These initiatives demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing accessibility on the TPT, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their mobility, can enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities the Trail has to offer.

Creating an inclusive and accessible countryside is not just a legal requirement but also the right thing to do. The "Man-made Barriers & Least Restrictive Access" document, along with the advocacy and support of the Disabled Ramblers, provides a clear roadmap for everyone to follow. By removing barriers and implementing the principles of least restrictive access, we can ensure that everyone, regardless of their mobility, can enjoy the natural beauty and serenity of the Trans Pennine Trail and other rights of way.

For more information on the Disabled Ramblers and their work, visit their [website](#) or follow them on [Facebook](#).



Hannah Beaumont
Senior Development Officer

Date: 20th September 2024