

Design and Access Statement, Dalby Forest

Location

Dalby Forest lies on the southern slopes of the North York Moors National Park, and is both a popular visitor attraction and important habitat for wildlife. A £4.3 million investment (2003-2007) has resulted in the remarkable transformation of Dalby forest into a Regional Centre of Excellence for sustainable economic activity. With an attractively refurbished courtyard, a sustainably constructed Visitor Centre, and a vast network of cycle trails, Dalby Forest is proving to be a valuable asset in the region, giving the local economy a much needed boost by drawing in tourists from far and wide.

Proposed Development

Building on this investment, this planning application proposes to install create a multi-user trail, to accommodate 10% of the 400,000 annual visitors with mobility issues and people with a range of disabilities.

The objectives of this project are to:

- Provide a new trail for visitors of Dalby Forest, which can be used by wheelchair and pushchair users, by people borrowing our mobility scooters, as well as our disabled bicycles.
- Allow these visitors to get a feel for the landscape and the sensory elements within it.

The trail will run along the following route:

1. The first section will be from the Courtyard in Low Dalby along the village road onto the forest road. This section is already used for general forestry purposes as well as by walkers and cyclists.
2. The trail leaves the forest road after a few meters down towards the beck. A bridge will take visitors across the beck.
3. The next section more or less follows the Ellerburn Beck, through fields that are currently leased by local residents for grazing. Tenants have been consulted and notified. They are on an annually renewable contract, which will be altered once the trail has been completed. Grazing will continue once the trail is installed, however, on a much reduced scale and with consideration to the trail users. A new line of fences will be erected along the route.
4. South of Dalby Meadow Farm is a particularly wet area and the route curves to the west. This is a small wooded area covered in Alder with specific heritage and conservation value, which will be interpreted. The trail will become a boardwalk for approximately 150 meters.
5. At Dalby Beck Farm, the trail continues across the field towards the existing footpath. This section is not DDA compliant but will be designed still to be accessible by less able users.



6. Also, at this point, the trail will provide a return loop using a similar bridge to the first one, back up to the forest road, through a block of Sitka Spruce plantation (4238 B on the stock map and attributes table). This is the extent of the DDA trail which continues over the bridge back to the courtyard.

Design

It is our intention to create a footpath that blends into the landscape and micro topography to give a flowing non linear trail.

The trail will be 2.5m wide and constructed of mainly locally available materials; limestone for the sub base and surface. This with possibly road planning's or 10mm to dust hard stone chips for the section that will be DDA compliant. The section that is not to DDA standard, will be surfaced with a slightly coarser stone possible limestone at 20mm to dust, but will still be geometrically accessible to less mobile users.

The two bridges will be timber decked with gabion basket abutments. These are designed to current flood studies for 1:100 year storms and to be DDA compliant in terms of access ramps and deck gradients

Culverts required will be twin wall plastic.

The timber bridge decks and the decking to the board walk will contain an antislip surface, for safety reasons.

Access

During the construction phase, new access will be created from the road before it enters Dalby village. This will be removed once construction is completed.

Legislation

Part of the trail will meet DDA regulations. The second part is intended for the more adventurous wheelchair user.

Conclusions

This trail will open up the forest to a wider range of users and will allow those visitors to experience the forest to the full. Even though the trail will part-meet DDA requirements, thus be wide, relatively flat and smooth, it is designed to still blend into the landscape, along the line of our mountain bike trails.

