HOW TO CARRY OUT
A COMMUNITY TRAIL AUDIT

OUTDOOR
RECREATION
NORTHERN IRELAND

CHAPTER 1: WHY CARRY OUT A COMMUNITY TRAIL AUDIT?

The purpose of carrying out an audit is to systematically collect information about each proposed Community Trail within your proposed Community Trail Network.   This includes information relating to trail length, trail surface and trail infrastructure e.g. gates or stiles. This information can then be used to:

1. Identify and analyse potential issues
2. Identify and analyse potential development costs
3. Decide if the Community Trail is feasible

The audit must be completed within the context of the Frame of Reference (set out in Stage 1.2 of the toolkit)

HOW TO COMPLETE A COMMUNITY TRAIL AUDIT
There are 5 types of audit sheets that should be completed and these are contained in Chapter 2 of this document. These relate to:

• Overview
• Sections
• Subsections
• Items
• Access

1. Overview
The overview represents the full length of the Community Trail from start to finish. This will have been identified during Stage 1 – Desk Research and Consultation.

2. Sections
Depending on the total length of the Community Trail, divide the route into manageable Sections to audit. A Section represents a specific length of the route that is denoted by a natural or logical division e.g. a natural division may be between 2 field boundaries and a logical division may be along a set distance of the route.
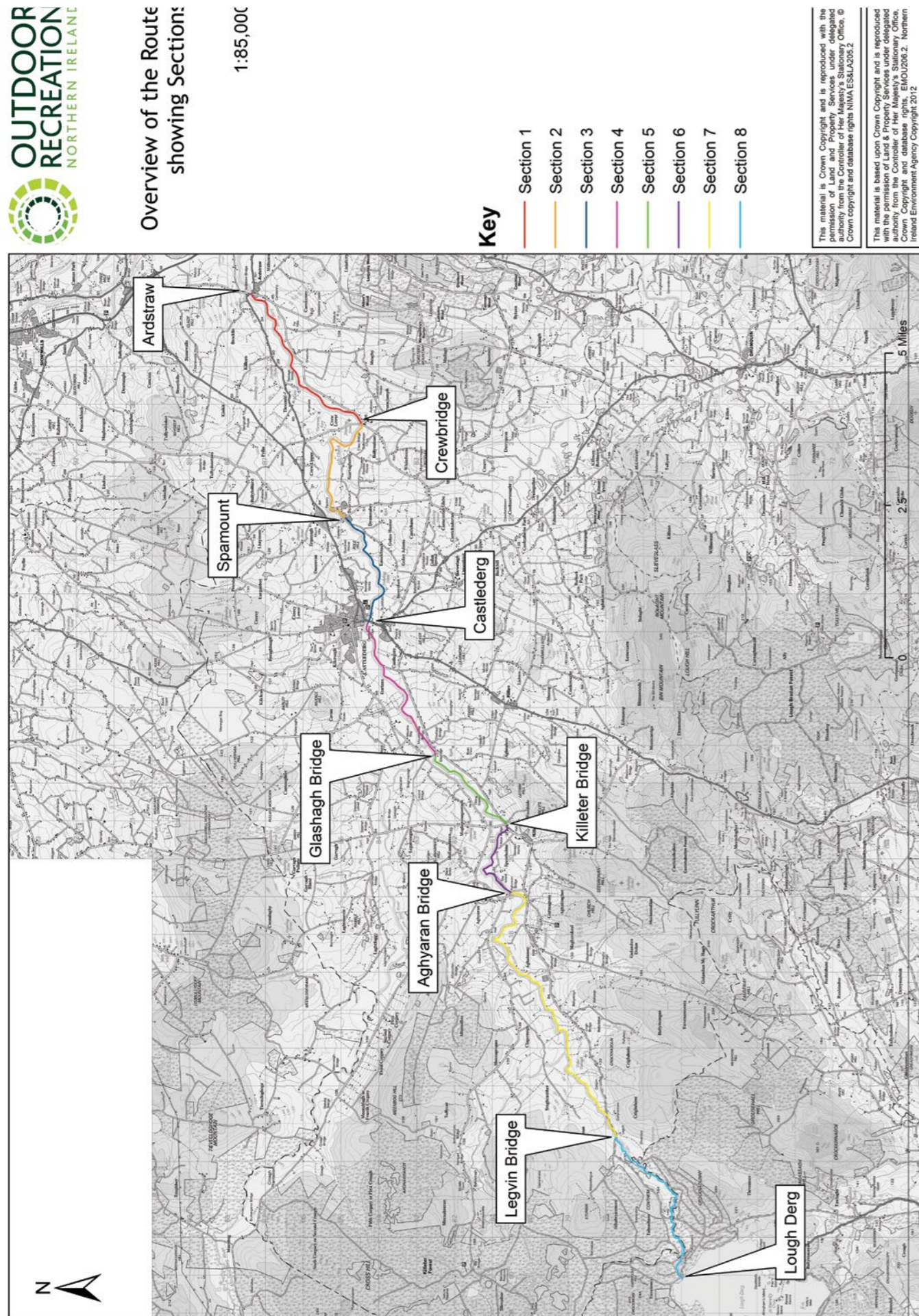
The average person walks 3 miles per hour. Therefore, sections should be of a manageable length for someone walking at this speed. By using sections:

• The audit will be easier to achieve i.e. different people/ groups can complete different sections
• Analysis is made easier

To ensure consistency, each Section should be audited entirely by the same person or group.

Fig 1: Example of 'Sections' for the purposes of a Trail Audit

Overview of the Route showing Section:

1:85,000

Key

— Section 1
— Section 2
— Section 3
— Section 4
— Section 5
— Section 6
— Section 7
— Section 8

Ardstraw
Crewbridge
Spamount
Castlederg
Glashagh Bridge
Killeter Bridge
Aghyaran Bridge
Legvin Bridge
Lough Derg

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3. Subsections

The condition of the trail surface is important when assessing potential issues and development costs relating to a proposed Community Trail.

A 'Subsection' should be created where the condition of the trail surface changes. Each time the trail surface changes, the following should be considered and recorded:

(i) No work required – this is where the existing trail surface is sustainable and suitable for the proposed purpose.

(ii) Upgrade required – this is where the existing trail surface is not sustainable or suitable for the proposed purpose.

(iii) New surface required – this is where there is no trail surface at present and the natural surface material is not sustainable or suitable for the proposed purpose.

A Section may therefore have one Subsection or many Subsections depending on the condition of the trail surface.
A Subsection is the shortest length at which a route would be divided.

Fig. 2 – Example of a Subsection where 'No work required' is recorded

Fig. 3 – Example of a Subsection where 'New surface required' is recorded

4. Items

When completing the audit, the existence and condition of Existing Items of infrastructure should be recorded for each Section.
In addition, a record should be made where there is a clear need for a New Item. Items include stiles, benches, picnic tables, gates, bridges, information panels etc.

Existing Items

For each existing item, one of the following three comments should be recorded:

1. Fit for Purpose: if the item is in good condition and does not require maintenance work

2. Requires Work: if the item is in poor condition and requires work

3. Needs Replaced: if the item is beyond repair

New Items

Where new items are required, the following comment should be recorded:
1. 'New item required: along with the type of item that is required

This may include for example the installation of a bridge to cross a stream, a bench to enjoy a viewpoint, or installation of an information or interpretation panel

Fig. 4 – Example of an Existing Item where 'Fit for Purpose' is recorded

Fig. 5 – Example of an Existing Item where 'Needs replaced' is recorded

5. Access

It is important to consider how users will access the proposed Community Trail. This may be at one location or may be at several locations.

Access points should be recorded at all locations where users can join or leave the proposed Community Trail. As well as the obvious start and finish points, this may also include access to points of interest or visitor services and facilities.

CHAPTER 2: AUDIT SHEETS

There are five sheets to complete during an audit.

These correspond to the Overview, Section, Sub Sections, Items and Access as shown in Fig. 1. Each one is described in detail below. When carrying out an audit, ensure that:

- The direction of travel is the same, i.e. if it is a linear Community Trail, then all Sections should be audited in the same direction; if it is looped, then each Section should be audited in a clockwise OR anti-clockwise direction.
- Grid references are collected as eight figure grid references e.g. 3489 8737 (guidance on collecting grid references is provided in Appendix 1 of this document).
- An adequate number of photographs are taken and their references and locations recorded. A photo should be taken in the direction of travelling, i.e. as you come towards an item, access point or trail surface and not looking back upon it.

SHEET 1 – TRAIL OVERVIEW

The Trail Overview sheet is used to maintain an overall record of the full audit and should include the following information (for all audits that take place):

A. Number of Sections

B. Audit Date(s)

C. Name of auditor(s)

D. Weather for each audit

E. Number of Subsections (within each Section)

F. Number of Item sheets (within each Section)

G. Number of Access sheets (within each Section)

H. Photograph references - for start and finish photograph of each Section

I. Any other pertinent information

A copy should be maintained for reference throughout the process.

SHEET 2 – SECTION

The information required to complete the Section audit sheet includes:

A. **Overview:** Community Trail name

B. **Section Details:** Name / number of the Section

C. **Start / End date:** of the audit

D. **Weather:** Weather on the day of audit and summary of weather on preceding 7 days

E. **Car parks:** Indicate the location and type of car parks along the Section, e.g. formal lay-by, formal car park, informal lay-by and informal roadside.

F. **Toilets:** Indicate the location and type (public convenience, private convenience i.e. pub, hotel etc.) of toilets available along or near to the Section.

G. **Other amenities and facilities:** Provide information on other useful amenities and facilities including restaurants, bed and breakfasts, shops, cafes etc.

H. **Control Points:** Use this space to provide information, including location and details, of any Positive Control Points (PCPs) and Negative Control Points (NCPs) encountered along the Section.
   - Positive Control Points include for example, viewpoints, heritage features, designated habitats, rivers etc.
   - Negative Control Points, that is, those specific places or features where it is not desirable to route Community Trails e.g. very wet or boggy ground, areas of known anti-social behaviour etc., areas that may pose a risk to users.

I. **User conflict:** Consider current users/ proposed users and assess potential issues between these uses e.g. shooting rights holders who have historically used a particular area of forest or anglers using a section of riverbank whose seasonal activities could be affected by the development of a Community Trail.

J. **General Summary of Section and other pertinent information:** Provide a brief summary of the Section and any other information that may be relevant to the development of the Community Trail

K. **Start / Finish Photographs:** Include photograph reference – each photo taken using a digital camera is given a unique number or reference – normally shown during playback. Consult the camera instruction manual on how to obtain this number.

SHEET 3 – SUBSECTION

When completing a 'Subsection' audit sheet (see Fig.7) record the following:
NOTE: Not all of the information may be known at the time of audit but may be entered either pre- or post-audit

A. **Overview:** Trail Name

B. **Section Details:** Name and Number

C. **Weather:** Weather conditions on the day of the audit

D. **Subsection Number:** These should be noted in the order in which they occur

E. **Start and Finish grid reference:** of each Subsection

F. **Path condition:** Select only one of the following options:
   a. No Work Required
   b. Upgrade
   c. New Build

G. **Approx Length:** Of each Subsection

H. **Landowner:** where known

For I- K there is a list of options to choose from – See Table 1.

I. **Trail Environment:** The environment in which a path is set should be recorded to help determine the topography and soil condition (see options listed in column I in Table 1).

J. **Existing Trail Type:** Record the existing trail type (see options listed in column J in Table 1). Where no trail exists as per the drop down list, this should be noted.

K. **Existing Trail Surface:** The existing trail surface should be recorded (see options listed in column K in Table 1). If the existing surface option is not provided in the drop down list, details should be recorded within the 'Other' box.

L. **Surface Condition:** Record if the existing surface is wet or dry at time of audit
   Complete this column even if there is no existing trail surface.

M. **Photo Reference:** Provide photographs of each Subsection showing the existing trail surface. Note the photograph reference.

N. **Other information:** Provide other details in the 'other information' box.

Table 1 – Options for I to K

	(I) Trail Environment	(J) Existing Trail Type	(K) Existing Surface
A	Beach	Desire line	Boardwalk – plastic / timber
B	Farmland (arable)	Farm track	Concrete
C	Farmland (grazing/livestock)	Footpath	Grass
D	Forest/Woodland	Forest road	Organic Matter (e.g. leaves)
E	Mountain	Laneway	Sand/shingle
F	Public Park	Public road	Soil/mud
G	Riverside	Quarry track	Stone – bedrock
H	Shoreline	Other	Stone/gravel – compacted
I	Within a Town or Village	No Existing Trail	Stone/gravel – loose
J	Other (please provide details)		Tarmac

Overview: Derg Valley
Section Details: Glashagh Bridge to Killeter
Date: 3rd June
Completed By: HG and JK
Weather: Dry and warm

Sub Section No.	1	2	3	4
Start Eastings	222777	21630	21619	21055
Start Northings	82089	81398	81373	80785
Finish Eastings	21630	21619	21055	20870
Finish Northings	81398	81373	80785	80639
Trail Condition – No Work Required	O	O	O	X
Trail Condition – Upgrade	X	O	X	O
Trail Condition – New Build	O	X	O	O
Approx Length (m)	500m	1.0km	200m	300m
Land Owner ^	B	B	A	A
Trail Environment *	G	G	D	G
Existing Trail Type ª	A	A	D	A
Existing Trail Surface °	C	C	F	C
Surface Condition (delete as appropriate)	Dry	Wet	Dry	Dry
Photo Ref	702	743	833	850
Other information	Riverside desire line – unsustainable surface	Riverside desire line – unsustainable surface	Gravel forest road - sustainable	Riverside desire line – unsustainable surface

^ **Land Owner:**
A - Public
B - Private
C - Both
D - Not known

* **Trail Environment:**
A - Beach B - Farmland (arable)
C - Farmland (grazing/livestock)
D - Forest/woodland E - Mountain
F - Public park G - Riverside
H - Shoreline I - Within a town or village
J - Other (please provide details)

ª **Existing Trail Type:**
A - Desire Line
B - Farm Track C - Footpath
D - Forest road
E - Laneway F - Public road
G - Quarry track
H - Other (please provide details)
J - No trail

° **Existing Surface:**
A - Boardwalk - plastic/timber B - Concrete
C - Grass D - Organic matter e.g. leaves
E - Sand/shingle F - Soil/mud G - Stone - bedrock
H - Stone/gravel - compacted
I - Stone/gravel - loose J - Tarmac
K - Other (please provide details)

SHEET 4 – ITEM

Completing the Item audit sheet (see Fig. 8) will provide a comprehensive inventory of Existing Trail Furniture Items and New Items required along the length of each Section.

When completing the Item sheet record the following information:

A. **Overview:** Trail name

B. **Section Details:** Name and Number of the Section within which the item falls

C. **Subsection No:** Subsection number within which the item falls

D. **Item Grid Reference**

E. **Existing or New Item:** Select ONE of these options:
   a. If existing – Go to column entitled 'Condition Status' and select one of the options:
      i. Fit for purpose
      ii. Requires maintenance
      iii. Needs replaced
   b. If new item is required – Continue to column entitled 'Item Type'

F. **Item Type:** Using the options provided in Table 2 (and on the audit sheet), note the item type. This should be done for both existing and newly required items. Where the item is not listed, provide details in the 'other information' box.

Note that where the item is a fence line (e.g. to physically divide the proposed Community Trail from farmland) the start and end grid reference should be recorded in the 'Information' column.

G. **Size information** - Where safe to obtain, provide information relating to the height, length and / or width of an existing or required item e.g. the height of a fence for a stile or the width of a stream to cross with a bridge.

H. **Photo Reference:** Provide photographs of each item or where an item should be. Note the photograph reference.

I. **Other information:** Provide any other relevant information relating to each Item.

Remember that each Community Trail must be 'clearly defined on the ground and may have waymarking and appropriate signage'. Therefore consideration should be given to the benefit of having waymarking and signage along your Community Trail.

Table 2 – Options for Item Type

Item Type	
Bench	Metal, stone or wooden bench
Gate	Bridle gate, farm gate, kissing gate, pedestrian gate, turnstile
Picnic table	Metal, stone, plastic or wooden picnic table
Steps	Stone, concrete, metal or wooden steps
Bridge	Metal, stone, concrete or wooden bridge
Signage	Interpretation or information panel, warning/notice sign, waymarker post
Stile	A-frame, stepover, stone/wall stepover stile
Boardwalk	Wooden, plastic boardwalk
Fencing	Post and Rail, Post and Wire
Counter	Break beam / pressure pad
Other	Life ring/throw line, bin, fishing platform

Fig. 7: Example of Item Audit Sheet

Overview: Derg Valley

Section Details: Glasleagh Bridge to Killeter

Completed By: HG and JK

Date: 3rd June

Weather: Dry and warm

Sub Section No.	Item Grid-Reference		Existing or New Item		Condition Status IF EXISTING (Tick one)			Existing and New Required Item Type *	Size Information (e.g. Height, width, length, other visual observations)	Photo (s) Reference	Other information
	Eastings	Northings	Existing Item	New Required	Fit for Purpose	Requires Maintenance	Needs Replaced				
1	222277	822689	×	○	○	×	○	6	2m. Span.	7574	Bridge requires specialist to inspect bridge as it is unstable
1	222207	81929	×	○	×	○	○	20		7575	
1	222207	81929	×	○	×	○	○	7		7576	
1	222109	81832	×	○	×	○	○	20		7577	
1	21988	81780	×	○	×	○	○	21		7578	
1	21988	81780	×	○	×	○	○	6	1m. Span.	7579	
1	21961	81763	×	○	×	○	○	3		7580	
1	21889	81902	×	○	×	○	○	21		7581	New stepover stile to access field
2	21630	81998	○	×	○	○	○	21		7582	
2	21630	81998	×	○	×	○	○	21		7583	
3	21649	81373	○	×	○	○	×	21		7584	Stile overgrown and rotten – needs replaced
3	21560	81282	×	○	○	○	○	20		7585	
3	21517	81205	×	○	×	○	○	21		7586	
3	21503	81208	×	○	×	○	○	9		7587	In poor condition due to high water and tear
4	21055	80985	×	○	○	○	×	3		7588	In poor condition due to high water and tear
4	21055	80985	×	○	○	○	×	20		7589	In poor condition due to high water and tear

*Item Type:
BENCH: 1. Metal Bench 2. Stone Bench 3. Wooden Bench.
GATE: 8. Bridle Gate 9. Farm Gate 10. Kissing Gate 11. Pedestrian Gate 12. Turnstile
PICNIC TABLE: 16. Metal Picnic Table 17. Stone Picnic Table 18. Plastic Picnic Table 19. Wooden Picnic Table
STEPS: 23. Stone Steps 24. Concrete Steps 25. Metal Steps 26. Wooden Steps

BRIDGE: 4. Metal Bridge 5. Stone Bridge 6. Concrete Bridge 7. Wooden Bridge
SIGNAGE: 13. Interpretation / Information Panel 14. Warning / Notice Sign 15. Waymarker Post
STILE: 20. A-frame Stile 21. Stepover Stile 22. Stone / Wall Stepover
BOARDWALK: 27. Wooden Boardwalk 28. Plastic Boardwalk
FENCE: 29. Post and Rail 30. Post and Wire
COUNTER: 31. Break beam / pressure Pad
OTHER: 32. Life Ring / Throw Line 33. Bin 34. Fishing Platform

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SHEET 5 – ACCESS POINT AUDIT SHEET

When completing an Access audit sheet (see Fig.7) the following should be recorded:

A. **Overview:** Trail Name

B. **Section Details:** Name and Number of the Section within which the Access Point falls

C. **Subsection No:** as above

D. **Link Point Grid Reference:** Grid reference for the point where the access joins the Trail

E. **End Point Grid Reference:** Where possible, provide a grid reference for the end of the access point, i.e. the end of a lane or road. If the start point is the same as the link point, a grid reference should still be noted.

F. **Access type:** Note whether the access is vehicular, pedestrian or both. Options are provided on the audit sheet – see column F in Table 3.

G. **Current User(s):** Using the options provided (see column G in Table 3), note the current user(s). If they are not listed, provide details in the 'other information' box.

H. **Landowner:** Where known, the landowner should be noted as being public, private or both.

I. **Access arrangements:** Using the options provided on the audit sheet (see Column I in Table 3) record the access arrangements where known. If they are not listed, provide details in the 'other information' box.

J. **Photo Reference:** Provide photographs of each access point. Note the photograph reference.

K. **Other information:** Provide any relevant and pertinent information relating to each Access Point.

Table 3 – Current User(s)

	(F) Access Type	(G) Current User(s)	(H) Landowner	(I) Access Arrangements
A	Vehicle	Anglers	Private	Permissive Path
B	Pedestrian	Cyclists	Public	Public Right of Way
C	Both	Equestrian	Both	Lease
D	Other	Paddlers	Not known	Licence
E		Quads/motorised		None
F		vehicles		Not known
G		Shooters		Other (e.g. Gentleman's Agreements – please provide information)
H		Walkers		
I		Agriculture		
J		Other (please provide details)		

Fig. 8: Example of Access Audit Sheet

Overview:	Derg Valley										
Section Details:	Glashagh Bridge to Killeter					Date: 3rd June		Completed By: HG and JK		Weather: Dry and warm	
Sub Section No.	Link point grid-reference		End point grid-reference		Access Type^	Current User(s) - If known *	Land-owner - if known ¹	Landowner Details	Access Arrangements •	Photo Ref. / Location	Details (Access Description and any known issues)
	Eastings	Northings	Eastings	Northings							
1	22431	81955	22431	81955	E	H	D	D	D	573	-
1	21988	81780	Too far	Too far	E	H	D	D	D	581	Car park at the top of field
4	21055	80785	21055	80785	E	H	D	D	D	599/598	Lay by from road

^ **Access Types:**
A - Vehicle B - Pedestrian
C - Both
D - Other (include details)

* **Current User(s):**
A - Anglers B - Cyclists C - Equestrian D - Paddlers
E - Quads/Motorised Vehicles F - Shooters G - Walkers H - Agriculture I - Other (include details)

¹ **Landowner: A -** Public **B -** Private
C - Both **D -** Not Known

• **Access Arrangements: A -** Permissive Path
B - Public Right of Way **C -** Lease **D -** Licence
E - None **F -** Not Known
G - Other (e.g Gentleman's Agreements)

CHAPTER 3: PRE & POST AUDIT CHECKS

Pre-audit checks

When planning the audit, make sure:

- Permission has been obtained from landowners to access their property (if required).

- A record of who is auditing each Section is kept, including their name, phone number and an emergency contact.

- Each audit team has a camera and a handheld GPS device or a scaled map of the area (see Appendix 1 of this document for guidance on GPS and grid references).

- You carry out a pre-audit briefing with those carrying out the audit to –
  - Explain the Frame of Reference.
  - Provide clear instructions on completing the audit sheets.
  - Explain the process involved.
  - The required outcomes.
  - Any other pertinent information collected through desk research.

- Each auditor has suitable walking attire for expected ground conditions and weather.

- Each team has sufficient copies of audit sheets.

- The weather is considered - Ideally they should be carried out within 24 hours following wet and inclement weather conditions. This allows for an accurate assessment of the trail condition and how it copes during periods of poor weather, when the trail is under most pressure from users and conditions (i.e. drainage, trail surface condition etc.).

- Each team has a clipboard – where possible, a 'Weather Writer' type clipboard (with clear, rainproof cover) to protect your sheets in the event of inclement weather.

- Each team uses pencil and / or pen depending on the weather when completing the audit sheets.

Post audit checks

Following the completion of the audit, ensure that the number of completed audit sheets tallies with the number noted on the Overview sheet. Hold a 'de-brief' with each team to discuss their Section(s) prior to leaving site. This will reduce the need to return to the site in the future.

APPENDIX 1 - OBTAINING A GRID REFERENCE

There are a number of ways of obtaining a grid reference during fieldwork:

- GPS

This is the preferred method as it provides an accurate, 8 figure grid reference of your position. GPS co-ordinates can be collected using a handheld GPS device or through one of a range of applications downloaded onto the GPS enabled mobile device. It is important to ensure that the chosen device uses the Irish Grid Reference System as this is the national grid referencing system for Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Most mobile phones provide latitude and longitude co-ordinates as standard. However, the work required to convert these co-ordinates to 8 figure grid references is time consuming and may create errors and inaccuracies.

- Maps

In some cases it may be suitable to use a map to obtain grid references. However, depending on the scale and detail of the map, it is likely only to be possible to obtain a 6 figure grid reference which is less accurate than an 8 figure grid reference.

How do I get a 6 figure grid reference?

Maps are covered by grid lines running north to south (known as 'Northings') and east to west (known as 'Eastings') – see Figure 9. Each grid line is numbered as part of the 'Grid System' which, when used properly, gives a grid reference to identify exactly where you are or indicates where a place is on a map.

Before working out how to get a 6 figure grid reference, it is useful to understand how to get a 4 figure grid reference:

Using a 4 figure grid reference allows you to identify any square on a map:

1. To do this, try marking a square that you wish to get the grid reference for. Then, go along the bottom of your map (eastings) until you come to the column and write down the lowest number

2. Next, go up the map (northings) until you find your marked square and write down the lowest number from the left side (after the first number)

'Along the corridor and up the stairs'

For example the number 1 in Figure 10 is 18 across and 45 up, therefore the 4 figure grid reference is 1845.

The remaining numbers would have the following grid reference:
2 = 1945   3 = 1844   4 = 1944

As each grid line represents 1km on actual ground, a 4 figure grid reference therefore represents 1 square km. To identify a location within this square, you will need to obtain a 6 figure grid reference. To do this, divide the square into tenths (see Figure 10). Using the same method as described for obtaining a 4 figure grid reference, continue along your eastings until you are in line with the dot and record the number (e.g. 185) then do the same to record the northing (e.g. 443).

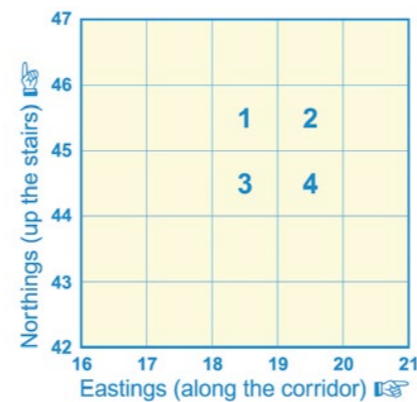The 6 figure grid reference for the dot in Figure 10 is therefore 185 443.

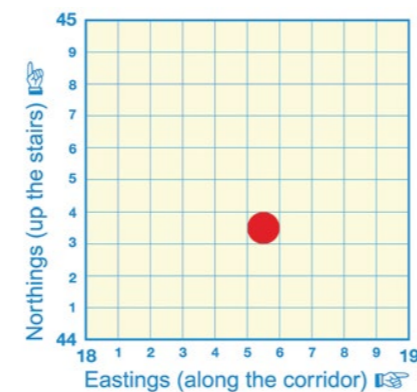**Fig. 9: Obtaining a 4 figure grid reference**

Fig. 10: Obtaining a 6 figure grid reference