

# Report to Esk Valley Trust

## NORTH ESK WAY DEVELOPMENT STUDY

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Esk Valley Trust (EVT) was established in 2001 by local people interested in conserving and promoting the North and South Esk river valleys. Development and promotion of a long distance path following the two arms of the river from source to sea was identified from the outset as one of EVT's five key aims.

Midlothian Council are currently developing a route along the South Esk, from the head of the catchment above Gladhouse Reservoir on the Moorfoot Hills to its junction with the North Esk at Water's Meet in Dalkeith Country Park.

The potential for development of a route following the North Esk from its source on the Pentland Hills to where it meets the sea at Musselburgh has been discussed for many years. Existing paths which might form the skeleton of some of the route have been identified, and proposals for access improvement between Roslin Glen and Mavisbank have been explored as part of the Landscape Partnership bid strategic woodland management plan recently commissioned by Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT). However there are still missing sections, and no immediate plans for development or promotion of a route along the North Esk.

Local interest and support for the North Esk Way has been confirmed by various past community consultations, but while numerous organisations have expressed their interest, none have had the resources to take ideas forward. This development study was commissioned by EVT in spring 2012 to help turn the local community's enthusiasm and ideas into reality.

## **2. AIM OF THE DEVELOPMENT STUDY**

The aim of the study, as set out in the brief, was to research scope and document proposals for a viable route along the North Esk from the river's source on the Pentlands to its junction with the South Esk at Waters Meet. The brief acknowledged that without a pre-identified budget, the initial emphasis should be on establishing a functional waymarked route, recognising scope for future longer-term improvement. Application for capital funding for the route was recently made to Heritage Lottery Fund by ELGT and partners, as part of the wider Landscape Partnership bid. The development study brief confirmed that proposals would complement this bid, but should this prove unsuccessful, would also provide the necessary details for independent funding application if required.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

Following competitive tender, the contract for the development study was awarded to Vyv Wood-Gee, a professional countryside management consultant with wide-ranging experience of access development and long distance routes, who has previously worked with EVT on the Esk Valley Access Audit. Mapping for the development study was undertaken by Alex Bryden of Forest Mapping Services, using GIS base maps kindly provided by Midlothian Council. The methodology adopted for the development study, as proposed at tender and subsequently approved by EVT, has involved the following key stages:

### 3.1 Inception meeting

The inception meeting held at Vogrie Country Park on 8.3.12 was attended by David Sugden and Kate Duthie of EVT, Charlie Cummings of ELGT, Jo Cooke and James Kinch from Midlothian Council (MLC), and Ian Browne (volunteer with Midlothian Ranger Service who has been involved in developing ideas for a route along the North Esk). Discussion focussed on potential route options, sections already promoted and previous contact with landowners and managers.

### 3.2 Liaison with project partners and access authorities

Potential opportunities and limitations on the route, together with additional background information, have been pursued through ongoing liaison with ELGT, John Parks (MLC Access Officer), Jo Cooke of MLC Ranger Service, John Pope as chairman of the Local Access Forum and a Director of Scotways, Scottish Natural Heritage and others. Boujke Muskens, project officer on contract to Midlothian Council has been consulted regarding proposals for the South Esk Way. Scottish Borders Council have been consulted regarding problems with obstructed rights of way and core paths within their jurisdiction. Various other staff within MLC have been consulted regarding the Border Railways project and other detailed aspects of route development.

### 3.3 Consultation with farmers and land owners

EVT had previously written to land owners and managers between Carlops and Penicuik in October 2011 explaining the aims of the North Esk Way, and subsequently spoke with the majority to discuss in broad outline the proposed route in relation to their land. The consultant renewed contact on commencement of the development study in March 2012 by telephone, followed by individual visits to discuss in more detail scope for route development and promotion, and any associated opportunities, obstacles or objections. Meetings and visits were protracted somewhat by clash with lambing, holiday and other commitments of key land owners and managers, but most were very supportive of the route. Responses are summarised in the route survey spreadsheet (Appendix A).

Undertaking of capital work on a path previously negotiated or developed through other access projects could potentially result in confusion regarding liability or maintenance obligations, and raise issues of double funding. EVT confirmed at the outset that written confirmation of agreed details and consultation with those where the proposed route follows an existing core path or promoted route where no capital improvement work is required were beyond the scope of the development study contract. Similarly consultations regarding the section between Roslin and Polton, which it was understood had previously been considered as part of the strategic woodland management plan, were not included in the development study brief.

### 3.4 Survey proposed route(s) and review existing on-site interpretation

The consultant surveyed the entire route on foot to assess suitability for development and promotion of access, required capital work to establish and sustain public access, signage requirements and scope for interpretation. Survey included potential alternatives for key sections where no route currently exists, or where several alternatives exist.

### 3.5 Progress reports and review meeting with EVT to discuss problem sections

EVT have been appraised by e-mail and an interim report of progress in negotiating, surveying and developing the route. Opportunities and problems relating to the various sections of the proposed route, and potential options to address restrictions on route development, were discussed with EVT at an informal review meeting on 29.5.12.

### 3.6 Mapping and report production

The report which follows and accompanying maps and spreadsheets document the results of route survey and consultations, and identify costed specifications for work required to develop the proposed core route to a usable and sustainable standard. Costs are estimated, including materials and labour, based on experience of other relevant recent capital path work. More accurate costs, particularly for drainage work, would depend on inviting suitably experienced contractors to provide detailed estimates (beyond the scope of the development study).

## **4. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICALITIES IN ESTABLISHING THE NORTH ESK WAY**

### **4.1 Objectives of the North Esk Way**

The project brief identified the following objectives for the proposed North Esk Way:

- The route should attract and provide for local users as well as visitors from outwith the immediate area.
- The route should take account of criteria identified as essential to the success of long distance routes.
- The least restrictive option should be adopted for all access facilities and controls to accommodate as wide a range of users as possible of varying age and ability wherever physically possible and sustainable.
- The route should take account of scope for effective links to/from accommodation and services.
- Minimum distance on road.
- Minimum future maintenance requirements.

It was agreed at the inception meeting for the development study that the vision for the route is an **enjoyable** path through the valley of the North Esk, but that following the river from source to sea need not necessarily imply a path adhering strictly to the riverbank.

### **4.2 Potential user profile**

The proposed North Esk Way will appeal to people of all ages and abilities (including mixed age families/groups) interested in exploring a beautiful part of Scotland. Correspondence from EVT to land owners/managers prior to the development study referred to footpaths and the original aim being to create a “riverside walkway for pedestrians”. Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, all non-motorised users enjoy rights of responsible access to most land (and inland water). It is recognised that some sections of route are unable to physically sustain and in places topography or sensitivity of habitat may necessarily restrict development to pedestrian only. However in keeping with the Land Reform Act presumption should generally be in favour of multi-use access and the interest and needs of cyclists and horse-riders must be taken into account alongside those of walkers in developing any route. It was agreed at the inception meeting that in deciding on the line of the route, developing the most enjoyable experience for walkers should take priority over identifying a route capable of sustaining multi-use.

In practice the different types of user likely to be attracted by the North Esk Way can be defined as follows:

- Mainly pedestrians other than some multi-use sections;
- Local people using sections of the route for short circular walks/rides;
- Local people using parts of the route for medium-longer distance walks/rides;

- Day visitors using sections of the route for part of short or mid-distance circular walks, or using paths;
- Visitors walking most or all of the proposed route from source to sea over a number of days.

It is recognised that the scope for people to complete the route in shorter sections, and for development and promotion of circular walks based on the linear route, is likely to attract significantly greater numbers than those with the time or inclination to complete the full route on simultaneous days. The North Esk Way is considerably shorter and less arduous than national trails such as the West Highland Way or Southern Upland Way, and as such is likely to appeal to those looking for a “softer” walk which will not necessarily require fitness training or previous walking experience.

#### **4.3 Criteria for successful development of long distance routes**

Research into experience of long distance routes both in the UK and around the world has identified the following criteria common to successful long distance routes:

- Easily accessible start and finish points, preferably accessible by public transport.
- Challenge without being over-daunting.
- Change in scenery or character at least every half-day.
- Accommodation and services spaced at regular intervals along the route, matched to route users’ needs (e.g. overnight accommodation every 10-15 miles minimum. Ideally food available inbetween).
- Minimum length on hard tarmac road.
- Clear signage and waymarking.
- Routes achievable within 4-5 days are in the UK more popular than those which take several weeks to complete.
- Scope to complete the route in different sections, over a number of days or years.

#### **4.4 Scotland’s Great Trails**

To qualify for branding as one of Scotland’s Great Trails, the North Esk Way would need to meet the following criteria:

- Be a continuous, clearly identifiable and appropriate waymarked route between defined start and end points (or defined access points in the case of circular routes).
- Be largely off-road (generally no more than 20-30% on road).
- Be at least 40 km /25 miles and have potential for multi-day journeys by foot, bike and/or horse, or canoe.
- Offer at least a basic range of visitor services, with information on the route, facilities and services available to users in appropriate formats.
- Offer opportunities to appreciate the natural, cultural and historic interest in the area through which it passes.
- Be designed, maintained and managed with user experience as a key consideration.

#### **4.5 General principles in designing and establishing the route**

In keeping with the Land Reform Act and SOAC, general principles adopted wherever possible in defining and negotiating the proposed North Esk Way have been:

- Existing paths and tracks should be used where possible, with paths already included in the regional core path plan the first choice (as these have already been subject to formal consultation).

- Wherever possible the route should follow a clearly defined track, dyke, hedge, fence or other readily identifiable field boundary or feature to encourage and enable users to adhere to the agreed route.
- The proposed route should avoid incursion on curtelage around buildings or intrusion on privacy which might result from routing through a steading or private garden, which conflicts with the principles of responsible access advocated by the SOAC. Similarly the proposed route should avoid where possible passing directly between a farmhouse and steading.
- Safety risk and potential liability should be minimised by avoiding unstable or precipitous ground. Members of the public may choose to take access across such ground, but inclusion of such sections of path on the North Esk Way would be irresponsible and give rise to potential liability issues.
- Whilst individuals may have a right of access on most land, there is no legal compulsion on land owners or managers to agree to promotion of a route, such as the North Esk Way, across their land. Members of the public may still choose to exercise their right of responsible access, but it is not recommended that EVT promote sections of route which farmers and landowners have expressly refused, for whatever reason, be included within the proposed route development.

#### **4.6 Path specifications**

The North Esk Way is envisaged as an informal path, the nature, width and surface of which will vary depending on location, land use and independent access development. From the outset, the vision has been of a relatively informal path which encourages and enables people to explore and enjoy the countryside, towns and villages through which the route passes, rather than seeking to establish a formally surfaced path to the specifications required for heavy cycle or equestrian use. As such, there is no presumption of formal surfacing. Well drained, beaten earth is in many circumstances favourable to a formally surfaced path, provided it is capable of withstanding anticipated level and types of use.

#### **4.7 Access controls and facilities**

“Hernia” gates which are difficult to open and close, which do not swing freely on their hinges (such as those tied to a post with baler twine), with trailing bars or deep mud or water either side are real disincentives to anyone using a path or trail. The more difficult a gate is to open and close, the greater risk of it being left open and stock straying as a result. Stiles are restrictive to many users and may lead to people clambering over dykes and fences in pursuit of an easier option.

Proposals for development of the North Esk Way therefore include replacement of all stiles and gates which do not currently function efficiently along the route with appropriate gates in keeping with current legislation and recommendations from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Paths for All Partnership that the least restrictive option be adopted wherever possible. Self-closing bridlegates are cheaper to install and more in keeping with the Land Reform Act than robust metal kissing gates but still offer farmers reassurance that gates will not be left open with consequent risk of stock straying. Where a wider field gate is required to maintain farm access but there is need to control unwanted vehicular access and/or confidence for the farmer of self-closing access facility for public access, a 2-in-1 gate (such as the York model manufactured by Centrewire) incorporating bridlegate is recommended.

Gate prices are based on materials and labour to install using Centrewire metal gates or equivalent, which although more expensive than wooden alternatives are more sustainable, require less maintenance, and meet specified British Standards.

## **5. PHYSICAL ROUTE**

The appended sectional Ordnance Survey GIS map extracts summarise the proposed route. Electronic copies of the sectional maps, and an overview map of the whole route, have been provided to EVT to facilitate zooming in to view at larger scale.

### **5.1 Start point**

The proposed official start point is the source of the River North Esk at the Borestane, which lies in West Lothian, just over the border of Midlothian along the ridge of the Pentlands, literally yards to the west of the good track which runs down to Temple House. Bearing in mind the importance of easy accessible start and finish points, in practical terms, the start point of the North Esk Way for most people is likely to be Carlops.

### **5.2 Finish point**

The study brief stipulated Waters Meet, where the Rivers North and South Esk join, as the finish point of the development study. EVT and others are understood to be keen to promote a riverside path on from Waters Meet to Musselburgh, which will involve resolution of current obstructions, for example the lack of facility to get over or around the Dalkeith Country Park dyke. The Penicuik to Musselburgh foot and cycleway offers a functional alternative.

### **5.3 Route summary**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Status and condition</b>	<b>Implications for North Esk Way</b>
Borestane to North Esk Reservoir	Existing well signed and clearly defined accepted right of way, regularly used and passable although two boggy sections, one difficult burn crossing and ladder stile over dyke with no access through adjacent hurdle will restrict some users and benefit from capital improvement work.	Drainage and gate replacement desirable but not strictly essential. Route otherwise ready for promotion.
North Esk Reservoir to Fairliehope	Well signed firm stoned track around west side of reservoir links through bridlegates to main stoned access track south from North Esk Cottage to Fairliehope, accepted right of way, already promoted and in regular public use.	No work required, ready for promotion, subject to approval by tenant at Fairliehope
Fairliehope to Carlops	Proposed route follows well drained, surfaced farm track from Fairliehope to A702, accepted right of way, no work required. Alternative route on accepted right of way along north bank of river which is more interesting but physically more challenging offers a circular walk for the more agile. Latter would benefit from	Main farm track already signed as core path and ready for promotion, subject to approval by Carlop Hill Farm. Alternative river-route can be identified in promotional material but signage as part of North Esk Way would cause confusion and potentially raise liability issues, hence not recommended.

	replacement of existing stiles.	
Carlops to Kitleyknowe Cottage	Due to landowner resistance to promotion or development of the approved and signed core path around Scroggy Brae, proposed route follows existing path across recreation ground and then along minor road to Kitleyknowe Cottage	Viable route which can be promoted immediately while Scottish Borders Council endeavour to resolve obstructions on Scroggy Brae path.
Newhall Estate - Turtle Bank	Core path from Kitleyknowe Cottage towards Amazondean already signed and well used, some wet patches but passable year-round. Informal unsigned beaten earth path through southern edge of wood along Turtle Bank, with good views across river to Newhall house and gardens. Steps down from Turtle Bank to river require repair. Footbridge in good order. Good path links part-way to Newhall march boundary at Craigy Bield.	Route agreed with landowner, minor work required to install gate and repair steps, following which ready for signage and promotion.
Craigy Bield - The Steele	No existing path but owner of Airlie has verbally agreed new link east across field between Newhall and track to The Steele. Proposed route would then cross existing river bridge and follow track south up hill, following the new woodland boundary fence around the top of the bank – no existing path but no work required for latter other than gate in march boundary.	Route agreed with landowners, requiring minimal work installing several self-closing gates, but problems with next section limit scope for development or promotion of this section short-term.
The Steele to Penicuik Estate	No existing path or established access between Newhall and Penicuik Estate. Proposed route would run along the top of the south bank of the river, on the north side of the fence/dyke which minimises disturbance of livestock and avoids stading at Auchencorth. Would require installation of self-closing gates/kissing gates at junction of field boundaries and some short bridges/boardwalks or culverts across cleughs but all dependent on land manager approval.	Currently main gap in proposed route with no readily identifiable option to resolve. Tenant farmer at Auchencorth currently refuses to agree to promotion or development of North Esk Way across land he farms which extends all the way from The Steele to Penicuik Estate, including Harlawmuir and fields between South Bank Wood and Ravensneuk Farm. Land south of the road farmed by same tenant. Although land manager cannot deny responsible public access under Land Reform Act, promotion of route without land manager's agreement cannot

		<p>be recommended.</p> <p>Public road between Upper Whitfield and Ravensneuk is fairly straight with good visibility, but as a result traffic travels fast and this long stretch of road is likely to discourage people from walking the North Esk Way. Relevant tenant farmers and landowners north of the river are understood to be resistant to any public access negating option to pursue the various suggestions put forward for alternative routes north of the river.</p>
Penicuik Estate	Route south of river agreed with Sir Robert Clerk as preferred from all perspectives, only part currently core path but mainly following existing woodland tracks, requiring minimal work to clear some fallen trees and establish new path link in one location.	Route through Penicuik Estate could be promoted with relatively minimal work, but frustration for walkers of meeting dead end at Auchencorth boundary may encourage further access which could aggravate any potential future negotiation with Auchencorth.
Penicuik to Roslin Glen	Penicuik to Musselburgh foot and cycleway along the disused railway via Auchendinny already in daily multi-use. North Esk Way branches off down steps to Roslin Glen Country Park, crossing north over the river at the bridge below the weir, and then following the existing track to the B7003, with a short section along pavement, crossing back over the river via the roadbridge, on existing waymarked paths through the country park and then north over the river again via the footbridge to Roslin Castle. All in regular daily use, no capital work required.	Existing promoted route which can be waymarked as part of North Esk Way without further work.
Roslin Glen to Polton	Preferred route follows network of existing paths and tracks through woodland along the north bank of the river which in the main requires only clearance of fallen trees (detailed proposals included in the North Esk Strategic Woodland Management Plan prepared on behalf of	Development and promotion of path through woods requires only relatively minor capital work but dependent on agreement of numerous landowners (not included in the development study brief on the understanding that this had already taken place).

	<p>Lothian and Fife Green Network Partnership.</p> <p>Alternatively the track up to Roslin, public road and cycle path through to Mountmarle, and then good track through Bilston Wood to the top of Hewan Bank provides a functional route requiring no improvement, but lacks interest for walkers other than Roslin Chapel.</p>	
Polton to Lasswade	<p>Ready-established regularly used core path along the north bank of the river, climbing up to Eskgrove, along which a few sections would benefit from improved drainage but no other major work required. Landowner consultation for this section was not included in the project brief. The existing core path from Eskgrove to the cemetery at Lasswade requires nothing other than waymarking. An existing path/track links through from the cemetery, coming out onto the A768 at a traffic island, which facilitates crossing of Lasswade Road onto the pavement on the north side. Alternative option to follow School Brae down to Lasswade, with access to pub and food, then Lasswade Road.</p>	<p>Some minor drainage work required at Eskgrove end of Path, and path link via cemetery requires negotiation, otherwise ready for promotion.</p>
Lasswade to Meville Gate	<p>Proposed route follows approved core path up golf course access road, beyond which Melville High Drive is physically passable despite some fallen trees by those prepared to ignore discouraging signs and climb locked gates, but subject to ongoing legal dispute. Next section through Melville Castle's ground to the B6392 accepted core path in regular public use requiring no improvement. Due to landowner opposition, no other viable off-road alternatives north or south of river between Lasswade and Elginhaugh without deviating a long way from the river.</p>	<p>Requirement to climb locked gates is not in the spirit of a promoted route, but EVT needs to consider how it wishes to pursue this section, and the implications of clearing or promoting access along disputed route.</p>
Meville Gate to	<p>Various options considered and</p>	<p>Short-term option to sign and</p>

Dalkeith	<p>surveyed, none straightforward. Recommended route follows pavement on south side of Meville Gate road, then path/track running parallel to west side of disused railway, no legal status and not considered during review of alternative routes for Waverley Way but currently used by walkers and cyclists. New bridge would be required over railway, linking to steps and existing core path which leads into Iron Mills Park. Existing core paths lead through, past cemetery, to Dalkeith High Street and down the pavement to Dalkeith Country Park.</p> <p>Alternative is along the wide pavement alongside the A6106 from King's Gate, diverting off down Lugton Brae, rejoining the main road to cross the river and through Dalkeith.</p>	<p>promote road-based route but recommended that EVT should pursue scope for off-road route development including new bridge over Waverley Line west of Ironmills Park.</p>
Dalkeith to Waters Meet	<p>Charge for entry to Dalkeith Park, hence Buccleuch Estates insist on this being sole entry point. Agreed route from gates follows main drive past house. Waymarked path in daily use from Montagu Bridge through Old Wood crossing the river over the footbridge just before Waters Meet already promoted by Buccleuch Estates, who have plans to clear fallen trees.</p> <p>Alternative would be to link through Dalkeith to rejoin Penicuik to Musselburgh cycle route at Thornybank, but less in the spirit of proposed route.</p>	<p>Route verbally agreed with Cameron Manson (at Buccleuch Estates' request) but formal written approval for promotion as part of the North Esk Way, or for signage and waymarking, will be required from the factor and Duke of Buccleuch.</p> <p>Access issues beyond Waters Meet need to be resolved if people are to be able to follow the river through to Musselburgh.</p>

#### **5.4 Summary statistics**

<b>Status of proposed route (as mapped)</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Estimated length (as mapped)</b>	<b>Approx. % total proposed route</b>
Core path, right of way or other agreed path/track	Existing paths and tracks which are already promoted (e.g. Roslin Glen Country Park, Penicuik to	27.83 km	73.7%

	Musselburgh disused railway and paths within Dalkeith Country Park), accepted rights of way (e.g. Carlops to Borestane), approved core paths (e.g. riverside path Polton to Lasswade) and/or paths and tracks which have been discussed and verbally agreed with the relevant land owner / manager (e.g. Turtle Bank through Newhall Estate). Includes sections of path through Penicuik Estate agreed with owner on which no capital improvement work required.		
Existing path requires some improvement	Sections of proposed route requiring capital improvement work e.g. riverside path from Roslin Glen to Hewan Bank, short section of path through Penicuik Estate.	2.88 km	7.6%
Public road (quiet or with pavement)	Public road has been included only where there is no practical alternative and/or where either the road is a quiet minor road, or there is a safe pavement alongside a busier road. Includes single-track but very quiet road from Carlops to Kitleyknowe Cottage, short section along pavement on A768, pavement along Melville Gate road and short section up Dalkeith High Street to which there is no viable alternative	1.71 km	4.5% <i>(increases to 7.85% if route follows pavement along public road from Kings Gate to Dalkeith instead of proposed path through Ironmills Park)</i>
Recommended new off road route	Two sections of route (Lasswade cemetery to A768 and Kings Gate to Ironmills Park parallel to disused railway) based on existing paths/tracks which are already used for public access but are not recorded rights of way or included in core paths plan, subject to landowner agreement (and in latter case erection of new bridge over railway)	0.73 km	1.9%
Aspirational route refused by land	Aspirational path along south side of river through	3.86 km	10.2%

manager	Auchencorth, no existing path, tenant farmer resistant to any access development or promotion.		
Disputed right of way (Meville High Drive)	Claimed right of way, included as “other path aspirational” in core path plan, physically passable if gates climbed, but currently disputed by landowner	0.74 km	2%
<b>Total length of proposed route from Borestone to Waters Meet</b> (assuming sections through Auchencorth and Melville High Drive can be resolved and new bridge installed linking path from Kings Gate and Ironmills Park)		37.75 km	
Optional alternative route (Fairliehope to Carlops)	Additional alternative riverside route with no clearly identifiable path, badly eroded in places, suitable for more agile walkers, but attractive alternative option, particularly to create circular route	1.02 km	
Obstructed right of way (Scroggy Brae)	Preferred off-road alternative closer to river if/when obstructions resolved and quality of path improved to standard suitable for promotion	1.06 km	Reduces length of total route on public road by 0.8 km

## **6. SIGNAGE AND WAYMARKING**

Effective signage and waymarking will be essential to the success of the route in guiding people along the agreed path and increasing confidence by reassuring users that they are on the right path. In general principle:

Fingerposts should be used to clearly sign the route at intersection with public roads or at key junctions with other tracks or paths where the destination and respective direction is unlikely to be sufficiently clear with waymarking alone. The aim of the fingerposts is to raise awareness of and help people identify the route of the North Esk Way.

Waymarking should be used between fingerposts to clarify the direction of the route wherever this is unclear.

Lettering and wording on all signs should comply with guidance defined in Paths for All Partnership’s “Signpost Guidance” and SNH’s more recent sign guidance, with fingerposts stating path destination. Preface by the word “footpath” no longer complies with the Land Reform Act and can be misleading, substitute of the words “path to” is usually unnecessary given that a fingerpost obviously implies a path. All signage and waymarking should allow for people following the North Esk Way in either direction.

Although on most routes a single style is usually adopted throughout, signage and waymarking of the North Esk Way needs to take account of and work alongside pre-existing signage and waymarking of core paths, rights of way and other promoted routes. With this in mind, proposal for a wooden fingerpost or routed waymark post is not viable – erection of a second post where one already exists is unnecessary and would in most cases be inappropriate. Rather it is suggested that an easily recognisable logo or symbol be adopted for the North Esk Way and applied consistently, albeit in different physical forms, to sign and waymark the full length of the route.

### **6.1 Logo**

The project officer working on the South Esk Trail has already developed a logo which it is proposed be used for both the North and South Esk Ways. The logo very effectively combines the river-related aspect of the routes, and that they are of high nature conservation interest.



*Logo developed by Boujke Muskens for the South Esk Trail, which it is proposed be adopted for the North Esk Way, with accompanying change in wording*

### **6.2 Signage and fingerposts**

Sheet 3 of the appended spreadsheet summarises details of existing signage and fingerposts, and identifies where new fingerposts are required. EVT have expressed preference for wooden fingerposts, but it is suggested that this be reviewed in consultation with MLC to determine whether use of metal posts and blades might be more appropriate in order to tie in with existing fingerposts previously erected throughout Midlothian.

### **6.3 Waymarking**

For the purposes of waymarking, it is proposed that the logo be produced in a variety of materials to reflect the diversity of locations, structures and surfaces to which it will be attached, including adhesive logo stickers (akin to those used by Sustrans and for the Esk Trails) for attaching to pre-existing metal posts, and circular disks of pvc or other suitable material for nailing (requiring 3 nail holes) or glueing to wooden posts. Additional arrow disks to confirm the direction of the route may also be required. Where no existing post or suitable structure to which waymark disks can be attached exists, wooden posts can be used, either routed with arrow(s) as required (as used by EVT on Hewan Bank), or with directional arrow disks attached.

## **7. INTERPRETATION**

### **7.1 Aim of interpretation along the North Esk Way**

The aim of on-site interpretation along a route should be to enrich the experience of those using the route through provision of relevant information, typically about the history, geology, wildlife or cultural interest of the route or nearby sites and features. On-site interpretation should also increase understanding of and encourage respect for the essential characteristics of the locality.

Most people walking, cycling or riding a river-inspired trail will appreciate information about:

- the source of the river and where it meets the sea
- key facts and figures e.g. length of river, past and current changes in course
- associated wildlife
- fishing interest along the river, and the role different habitats play in this
- the role the river has played in shaping the local landscape, economy, building and social development
- key influences on the river (geology, agriculture, fisheries, industry, urbanisation, transport, climate etc.)

Orientation panels, either independent or an integral part of on-site interpretation, are also valuable to:

- raise awareness of opportunities for enjoying the route;
- inspire people to use the route;
- help people locate where they are along the route and in relation to other places of interest;
- identify parking and other services and facilities within easy reach of the route.

Appropriateness of locations, the way in which information is provided, and the frequency of orientation and interpretive provision, are all important considerations. Too many different sources and styles of information tend to confuse people and risk littering the countryside. Proposals for interpretation linked to the North Esk Way must take account of all of these factors, and complement existing interpretive provision along or in close proximity to the proposed route. Interpretive provision should also be carefully sited and designed to minimise risk of vandalism.

### **7.2 Existing interpretation**

Examples of existing on-site interpretation panels along the proposed route are summarised below:

Location	Description and originator	Information provided
Roslin Castle Station	Penicuik-Dalkeith Walkway (Midlothian Council)	River North Esk, wildlife of various habitats along the route, industrial heritage
		
Roslin Glen Powder Mills	Roslin Glen Country Park (Midlothian Council)	River North Esk, wildlife of various habitats along the route, industrial heritage
Roslin Glen – Powdermills	General information panel about Roslin Glen Country Park, including site map (Midlothian Council)	summary paragraphs and accompanying pictures gorge woodlands, meadows and grasslands, River North Esk, industrial heritage
		
Roslin Glen Country Park	Midlothian Places to Visit (Midlothian Council)	Sites and features of historic and other interest around Midlothian



Below Hewan Bank

Welcome to Hewan Wood (EVT)

Hewan Bank SSSI, Battle of Roslin, landslip



Hewan Bank

Stop, look and listen

River North Esk (source to sea), wildlife



Hewan Bank (half) Slipping slopes (EVT)

Geology of Hewan Bank

way up)		
		
Hewan Bank (top, off disused railway)	Welcome to Hewan Wood (EVT)	As above
Lasswade	Baird Smith Memorial	Detailed history of memorial
		

### 7.3 Proposed additional locations for interpretation or orientation panels

Given the number of information panels already in existence along some sections of the route offering information about local wildlife, geology and industrial heritage, particularly between Penicuik and Polton, the main priority should be providing orientation panels at key locations specific to the North Esk Way. The following table summarises recommendations in this respect.

At present there is nothing to mark the Borestone as the source of the Esk. “Touchstone” markers at the beginning and end of long distance routes are very popular, although design would be a particularly important consideration in a semi-remote rural location such as the Borestone. The public car park at Carlops would be a more appropriate location for an information board.

<b>Proposed location</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Information</b>
Carlops – public car park	Already well used car park, hence will help raise awareness of route. Start point for most walkers, readily accessible by public and private transport.	Orientation panel with general information and overall route map. Brief information about River North Esk, why it is special.
Newhall – junction of Turtle Bank and track to Amazondean	Junction of several paths. Opportunity to reinforce principles of responsible access and highlight interest of this section of route. Less remote/rural setting than remainder of route through to Penicuik, or upstream of Carlops.	Summary information about North Esk Way and guidance on responsible access. Information about the history and attendant interest at Newhall and recommended route.
Penicuik –start of disused railway path	Key access point for route hence opportunity to raise awareness of North Esk Way amongst people using foot/cycle path. There is also potential to include information about the North Esk Way within interpretation panels or material at Penicuik House/Estate	Orientation panel with general information about route and river, and route map
Roslin Glen Country Park	Popular parking place, opportunity to raise awareness amongst local residents and visitors. There may also be scope to erect information on a spur linking to the route from the car park at Roslin Chapel.	Orientation panel with general information and overall route map
Dalkeith (entrance to country park)	Attracts large number of visitors hence will help raise awareness of route.	Orientation panel with general information and overall route map
Waters Meet	Junction of North and South Esk Ways	Summary (small) orientation panel with general information and overall route maps
Musselburgh	End of North and South Esk Ways where the rivers flow into the sea	Orientation panel with general information and overall route map

## **8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Readily accessible from Edinburgh and with direct links to and from many local communities, the potential economic, health, recreational and social benefits of developing the North Esk Way are immeasurable. The proposed route passes through or in close proximity to numerous SSSIs, listed gardens and designed landscapes; it takes in a wide range of historic monuments, including various castles, as well as numerous other sites and features of interest. The route would allow both local people and visitors to explore and enjoy the area at a leisurely pace, and in following the route, to walk through some of the most interesting pages of Scottish history.

The overall aim is to establish an enjoyable, clearly signed and waymarked route with supporting on-site interpretation from the source of the North Esk high on the Pentlands to the point where the river meets the sea at Musselburgh. The development study covered the route only to the junction of the Rivers North and South Esk at Waters Meet, where it links to the South Esk Way, which is being developed simultaneously by Midlothian Council. Longer term, there is potential to develop a link between the start of both routes to create a longer distance circular route.

The spreadsheets which accompany the development study document the results of route survey and record the outcome of consultations with relevant land owners and managers. Capital work together with signage required to establish the route, is identified and costed, with distinction in recommendations between those considered essential to route establishment, and other work deemed desirable if funds allowed.

Although the proposed route between the Borestone and Waters Meet is insufficiently long to qualify for branding as one of Scotland's Great Trails, development and promotion of a continuous route through to Musselburgh would meet the required criteria in terms of length, assuming the other criteria can be met and the route can feasibly be established on the ground.

Just under 75% of the proposed North Esk Way follows paths and tracks already in existence, which could be signed, waymarked and promoted with minimal capital investment. Subject to availability of funding, further sections (7.6% of total length) obstructed by fallen trees, such as between Roslin and Polton, could relatively easily be established. The total proportion of proposed route on quiet road or on pavements alongside busier roads is very low at 4.5%, or 7.8% if the road alternative is taken between Kings Gate to Dalkeith – well under the stipulated maximum on-road length to qualify as one of Scotland's Great Trails.

However, the resistance of several key land managers to any public access development currently poses significant issues for the development of a continuous route following the River North Esk from source to sea. Acceptable alternatives have been found for some sections, such as between Carlops and Newhall, to allow time for the relevant access authority to resolve current obstructions to the approved core path. Some other sections have proved more difficult to resolve. Despite best endeavours and every attempt to present the most convincing arguments in favour of route development, consultations have failed to secure the agreement of the tenant farmer at Auchencorth to development of the proposed route south of the river between Newhall and Penicuik Estate, which accounts for approximately 10% of the total length of route between the Borestone and Waters Meet. No viable alternative has been identified for this section which satisfies the specified objectives for route development. From Laughtlothian Wood on Penicuik Estate, a mutually agreeable route has been identified most of the way to Lasswade, but thereafter further problems arise. Scotways is understood to be actively pursuing resolution of legal dispute

regarding public access along Melville High Drive, but meanwhile access along this historic track and claimed right of way depends on climbing locked gates, which is far from ideal as part of a promoted route. Although this section of route accounts for a little under 2% of the total proposed route, no functional alternative has been identified other than public road most of the way from Lasswade to Dalkeith, or diversion out of the river valley, neither of which are considered acceptable by EVT. Current obstructions to access downstream of Waters Meet also need resolving if people are to be able to follow the North Esk from source to sea.

The fundamental question now faced by EVT, Midlothian Council and other interested partners is whether to go ahead with development and promotion of the sections of route with which there are no major problems, or whether to defer until a continuous largely off-road route can be successfully negotiated. An intermediate short-term option would be to identify road-based links for those sufficiently interested in a continuous route.

Development of the North Esk Way was one of EVT's initial core aims. Although it is disappointing not to be able to promote a route from source to sea at this stage, there are many advantages to signing, improving and promoting the sections of the proposed route which are readily achievable. This approach has been successfully adopted on various other routes, including, for example, the North-West coast path and Pennine Bridleway where opening of some initial sections has helped reinforce the groundswell of support and secure the necessary funding for development of the remainder of the route. It is worth bearing in mind that many people will choose to walk the North Esk Way in sections, even when it is fully functional as a continuous route.

## **Recommended action plan**

<b>Overarching</b>	
(a)	Agree action plan and responsibilities with appropriate partners.
(b)	Secure necessary funding.
(c)	Agree logo for North Esk Way and commission output in adhesive and other formats for route waymarking.
(d)	Agree location and format for proposed interpretation and orientation panels. Confirm approval for erection of panels, including obtaining planning permission if/where required.
<b>1.Upper North Esk Way (Borestane to Penicuik)</b>	
1.1	Confirm with landowners and tenant farmers written approval for promotion of the proposed route and proposed capital improvements between Borestane and Newhall. Implement as required.
1.2	Sign and waymark route between Borestane and Newhall.
1.3	Develop new section of route between Craigyfield and track to The Steele.
1.4	Install orientation/interpretation panel at Carlops car park (with facility to replace route map and details as further sections agreed).
1.5	Maintain liaison with Scottish Borders Council re. resolution of obstructions to right of way around Scroggy Brae.
1.6	Explore potential for development/promotion of circular route e.g. return loop via old Roman road from Nine Mile Burn via Patieshill to Carlops, or from Nine Mile Burn via Spittal to North Esk Reservoir.
1.7	Discuss further with Sir Robert Clerk development and promotion of agreed route through Penicuik Estate in advance of agreeing access through Auchencorth.

1.8 Review position regarding route between The Steele and Penicuik Estate annually, in conjunction with Midlothian Council and Sir Robert Clerk.
<b>2. Mid North Esk Way (Penicuik to Lasswade)</b>
2.1 Confirm with Midlothian Council and Sustrans agreement to signage and promotion of disused railway as part of North Esk Way and waymark accordingly.
2.2 Confirm with Midlothian Council agreement to signage and promotion of paths through Roslin Glen Country Park as part of North Esk Way and waymark accordingly.
2.3 Pursue improvements to path(s) along north bank of river between Roslin and Hewan Bank as recommended in, and as an integral part of implementation of, strategic woodland management plan. Waymark accordingly.
2.4 Waymark route between Hewan Bank and Polton.
2.5 Confirm landowner approval for drainage improvements along riverside core path before Eskgrove , implement required work, sign and waymark route as North Esk Way.
2.6 Waymark route between Eskgrove and Lasswade cemetery.
2.7 Confirm approval for promotion of route through/around cemetery and waymark accordingly.
<b>3. Lower North Esk Way (Lasswade to Waters Meet)</b>
3.1 Maintain liaison with John Pope, Sustrans and Midlothian Council re. resolution of access dispute along Melville High Drive. Review implications of promotion as part of North Esk Way in advance of dispute resolution.
3.2 Confirm preferred route from Meville Gate roundabout to Dalkeith.
3.3 Pursue with Midlothian Council Border Railways project scope for bridge over Waverley Line linking to steps across to Ironmills Park. If appropriate, pursue development and promotion of path parallel to west side of railway between bridge and King's Gate.
3.4 Waymark route from Meville Gate roundabout to Dalkeith.
3.5 Confirm with factor and Duke of Buccleuch agreement to promotion of existing tracks and paths through Dalkeith Country Park, waymark accordingly.
3.6 Consider scope for promotion of circular route following North Esk Way through Old Wood to Waters Meet, returning via existing promoted paths within Dalkeith Country Park north of river.
3.7 Install orientation/interpretation panel in Dalkeith (with facility to replace route map and details as further sections agreed).
<b>4. Esk Ways (Waters Meet to Musselburgh)</b>
4.1 Liaise with John Pope, Scotways and East Lothian Council re. resolution of obstruction Along river path at march dyke of Dalkeith Country Park.
4.2 Review need to revise proposed route of North Esk Way via Thornybank.