

Training and Consultancy at Leonard Cheshire

We work with organisations to break down barriers for disabled people, creating more inclusive environments in workplaces, services, and public spaces. Our bespoke solutions are designed to create meaningful, lasting change, tailored to the unique needs of each client.

Client Testimonial: Natural England

The client

Natural England is the public body responsible for protecting and enhancing England's natural environment. Their work includes promoting biodiversity, supporting sustainable land management, and improving public access to outdoor spaces. Natural England in collaboration with local authorities, oversee the management of National Trails, long-distance routes that pass through some of the country's most scenic landscapes, working to ensure these trails are accessible to all.

The Coast to Coast Path National Trail is a 192-mile long-distance walking route, running from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire. It passes through the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, and the North York Moors, offering varied terrain and spectacular views. As part of its designation as a National Trail, Natural England is committed to improving accessibility for users, including disabled people, cyclists, and horse riders.



▲ Reviewing and developing mapping



▲ Consulting with Lake District National Park Staff and volunteers onsite

The brief

Natural England sought a partner to assess and improve accessibility along the Coast to Coast Path National Trail. They wanted to identify barriers that may limit access for disabled people, cyclists, and horse riders and to find ways to make the trail more inclusive. The project involved assessing key areas such as access to facilities, ease of

movement along the route, and the clarity of information, signage, and waymarking. Additionally, they requested advice on presenting this information to the public in a clear and user-friendly way. Natural England also wanted to explore connections between the trail and local services, as well as exploring opportunities to develop alternative routes for disabled people and those using mobility aids.

The solution

Leonard Cheshire's Training and Consultancy team conducted a thorough high level assessment of the route that combined both desk-based research and site visits. The team reviewed reports, maps, and accessibility guidelines, and held virtual workshops with Natural England's project team, local project staff, and stakeholders to assess the full route. We identified key areas of the Coast to Coast Path National Trail to visit, and conducted on-the-ground assessments, took photographs, and spoke with local users and stakeholders to gain deeper insights into access barriers and opportunities for improvement.

Reviewing legibility and wayfinding



Reviewing visual and digital information on the route

These site visits, along with consultations with Cycling UK, The British Horse Society, Disabled Ramblers, disabled people, and other relevant stakeholders - including representatives from Natural England, National Park Authorities, and local councils - enabled the team to develop and propose practical solutions for improving access along the Coast to Coast Path National Trail, allowed the team to develop and propose practical solutions for improving access. The assessment also suggested enhancements to signage and waymarking, ensuring that the information provided was clear and accessible to users.

The outcome

Leonard Cheshire delivered a detailed report with recommendations for immediate and long-term improvements to accessibility on the Coast to Coast Path National Trail. The report exceeded Natural England's expectations, offering deeper insights and highlighting wider opportunities for improvement. One notable "quick win" identified was the use of Transport font for signage, a typeface renowned for its legibility, particularly for those with visual impairments.

Natural England shared the report with National Parks and local authorities along the Trail and are exploring broader options for publication.

The full report is now available on the National Trails website:
https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/coast-to-coast/

The insights gained have already been incorporated into Natural England's Design Guide for the Coast to Coast Path National Trail, and the recommendations are also being used in other projects. Already the impact of our recommendations is being seen along the Trail as it is brought up to National Trail Quality Standards, with improvements made to signage, infrastructure, and access furniture.

Natural England expressed their appreciation for Leonard Cheshire's unwavering enthusiasm and support throughout the project, noting that they have already started applying the findings to make the trail and other projects more accessible.

Reviewing
design and
disposition of
resting and
seating



Upgrading
steps and
bridges



Hazel Thomas (Natural England's Coast to Coast Path National Trail Project Manager) said:

"We have always wanted to make sure that confirming Wainwright's well-loved route also considered the needs of as wide a range of users as possible. The work done by Leonard Cheshire not only delivered our brief but went beyond consolidating the awareness of the whole team and demonstrating how, in some cases, even small adjustments to our delivery can make a noticeable difference to meet a wide range of people. The ambitious proposals for gateways along the route will certainly provide the ongoing Trail Partnership with lots of ideas for future improvements. We really enjoyed working with Leonard Cheshire whose knowledge and enthusiasm added to the success of this work."

To find out more

Visit: leonardcheshire.org/get-support/working/training-and-consultancy

Email: training@leonardcheshire.org | Call: 020 3242 020