Burren PROGRAMME

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

An Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

'The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas'.

Best Practice Checklist No.5

Vehicle Access Provision

Why the Burren Programme (BP) co-funds this work:

Having good access to farmland, including vehicle access, is of great benefit to a farmer for the herding and feeding of livestock, and can be important when required to treat sick animals or remove fallen ones. This is particularly the case where the farmer has an off-farm job, or where the site is very remote and extensive. On the other hand, the creation of new vehicle tracks will often result in some localised environmental damage, particularly during the construction phase. Where the BP team and other relevant authorities feel that track construction can help to improve the overall management of a site now and in future, and thus enhance its environmental condition, such works may be funded. However, in conjunction with the farmer, every effort will be made to minimise any potential damage – in terms of the precise route chosen, the type of material and machinery used, and any other mitigation measures deemed necessary.

Burren Programme funding:

Access provision work is co-funded (assuming the work in question is considered worthwhile) at a maximum rate of 25% (so the farmer pays 75% of the overall cost), whether it is for the repair and upgrade of existing tracks (priority) or the construction of new tracks. The cost of each access provision job is calculated using unit rates developed as part of the BurrenLIFE project. These rates are as follows:

- Construction of new tracks: €4/metre
- Surfacing of previously unsurfaced tracks: €2/metre
- Re-surfacing of previously surfaced tracks: €1/metre

For some access provision works where exceptional circumstances occur, the unit rate may not be appropriate, in which case you will need to provide estimated breakdowns for the work and receipts following its completion. The amount of money you will receive (subject to provision of satisfactory receipts in the case of exceptional circumstances) for each access provision job will be listed in your I-2 work plan.

To be assured of receiving your allocated payment for such planned work, the work must be carried out and completed to at least the baseline standard outlined in this checklist. Failure to do so will result in a **delay, reduction or loss of payment;** and may result in no other access jobs being funded for the rest of your contract (see BP Terms & Conditions). In contrast however, by doing a job well, you will receive the full allocated payment, reap the benefits of the job itself and make it easier to get permission and funding for future work.

It is also worth emphasising that a new vehicle access track will take a longer time to plan, mostly requiring prior permissions from bodies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), National Monuments Service (NMS) and the local authority; so it is recommended that you plan in advance, and remain patient during this process.

Remember, always read your individual I-2 work plan carefully before starting any job, and speak to your advisor and/or the BP team if in any doubt.

Prior consultation check:

Construction of new tracks will require consultation with a number of bodies, mostly the NPWS, NMS and the local authority. Your advisor and the BP team (including the Field Monuments Advisor where necessary) will assist you as much as possible in this planning process. Careful consideration will need to be given in the assessment of the proposed track route, particular for:

- Track work in or close to an archaeological complex and/or monument(s);
- Tracks which cross areas of exposed limestone pavement or sensitive wetland habitats;
- Tracks of greater than 1km in length, as these will need full planning permission;
- Tracks which propose to use materials (white-sand, trunking etc.) from elsewhere on the farm.

Creating a new vehicle access track:

1. All required permissions must be in place before starting work and all conditions must be adhered to when carrying out the work. Agreed routes must be strictly followed and no additional work, including turning areas - should be undertaken without prior permission. Failure to comply fully may mean that the job will not be funded.

2. Bedrock must not be excavated during track construction without prior permission, though surface clay and loose stone may be removed before chip is overlaid. Where at all possible, try to 'ramp over' or 'work around' any obstructions rather than excavating them.

3. Archaeological features, including the remains of old walls, should not be damaged by the construction of tracks. Where old walls are present, tracks should cross through existing gaps or by ramping at low points as

per any conditions of your permission. When ramping, a layer of geotextile (e.g. 'Terram') should be laid over the wall before laying the surface.

4. Limestone chip is recommended for the construction of access tracks in the Burren. White-sand, if available from a suitable, approved source on the farm can be considered in some cases, but even then a top layer of limestone chip is recommended. Shale or other materials (e.g. building rubble) are not permitted.

5. Tracks should be finished with fine (½ inch down) limestone chip placed along the wheelings (two ca. 50cm wide parallel bands). Finishing with larger chip will make it very difficult for livestock to use the track safely - as vehicle tracks can also be seen as helpful 'herding' routes.

6. Where the terrain is relatively level, the centre of the track should not be surfaced - this will save you money while enabling the track to 'bed in' with the landscape much quicker.

7. On very steep track sections, concrete gullies or similar may be required to divert the surface water flow and thus prevent the track from being excessively eroded. This also applies where existing temporary springs may otherwise flow across the route of the track.

8. Ideally every effort should be made to reduce the visual impact of the track - for example by stone-facing ramparts, removing any dislodged or upturned rock from track sides, etc.

9. **New access tracks cannot be used to enable the subsequent feeding of silage on winterage fields**; where this is found to be occurring, the issued funding for the track will be clawed back and recouped.

Tip: *Plan any track well in advance and choose the route that will cause the least amount of damage to the local environment, avoiding areas of exposed limestone pavement and all archaeological monuments – this will help to speed up the planning process and help you secure the required permissions.*

Tip: *Always consider how you can turn your vehicle at the end of a track – do you need a turning bay?*

Tip: *Allow the track to 'settle' for a while, if possible, before applying the finishing top layer of chip.*

Tip: *Try to do track work during the dry season to help limit the amount of tracking damage.*

Upgrading an existing access track:

1. Before laying down new chip, remove any built-up mud or excess shale from the track surface (off-site, if possible), and cut back all encroaching scrub and treat the stumps to prevent regrowth along the route.

2. Resurface wheelings using limestone chip only, screening off with ½ inch down, leaving the central section of the track as-is (unless there are protruding loose rocks or holes which need to be smoothed-over).

3. No additional work, such as extensions or turning areas - should be undertaken without prior permission when the track has been assessed and costed for 're-surfacing/upgrade' in your plan.

Acceptable Standard	Unacceptable Standard
	
Chip only used as needed, nicely recolonising.	*Excessive use of chip across full track width.*
	
Level route, so very little disturbance needed.	*Built in wet weather, needs finishing with chip.*
	
Minimal use of chip while providing good access.	*Surfaced with large chip, difficult for stock to use.*
	
Existing track, with newly surfaced wheelings.	*Excessive disturbance and excavation of bedrock.*