



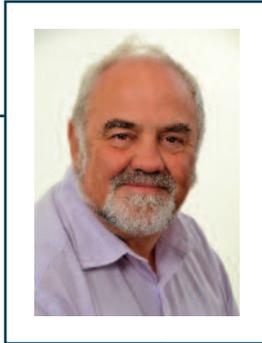
Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2

WELCOME TO THE 2ND SOMERSET RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Public Rights of Way are more than a valuable recreational resource - they are also an important asset in terms of the rural economy, tourism, sustainable transport, social inclusion and health and well being. The public rights of way network is key to enabling residents and visitors alike to access services and enjoy the beauty of Somerset's diverse natural and built environment.

Over the next few years, the focus is going to be chiefly on performing our statutory duties. However, where resources allow we will strive to implement the key priority areas of this 2nd Improvement Plan and make Somerset a place and a destination for enjoyable walking, riding and cycling.

Harvey Siggs
Cabinet Member
Highways and Transport



OVERVIEW

This Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) is the prime means by which Somerset County Council (SCC) will manage the Rights of Way Service for the benefit of walkers, equestrians, cyclists, and those with visual or mobility difficulties.

The first RoWIP was adopted in 2006, since that time although ease of use of the existing network has greatly improved, the extent of the public rights of way (PRoW) network has changed very little. Although many of the actions have been completed, the Network Assessment undertaken for the first RoWIP is still relevant for RoWIP2.

There are 5 main aims of RoWIP2:

- **Raise the strategic profile of the public rights of way network**
- **Deliver statutory functions in an efficient way**
- **Develop a safe and improved access network**
- **Improve access information**
- **Work in partnership with volunteers and key organisations**

The ENPA chapter of the RoWIP is reviewed periodically but it is not possible for the timing of this to coincide with the RoWIPs for Devon and Somerset as well as the ENPA Partnership Plan.

A similar sized county in terms of area is Cornwall which has nearly 2000km less in paths.

Network Assets:

- 15,000 gates
- 10,000 signposts
- 11,000 stiles
- 1300+ culverts
- 2800+ bridges <6m
- 400+ bridges >6m

Somerset has one of the longest rights of way networks in the country – it currently stands at 6138 km.

Over 78% of the network is made up of footpath with just over 21% being available to horse riders and cyclists.

There are over 12 metres of path per person in Somerset compared to 4.5 metres in Devon.

RAISING THE STRATEGIC PROFILE OF THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

The Rights of Way network in Somerset is inextricably linked to tourism, health & wellbeing, living sustainably, travel planning, road safety, economic well being, volunteering and community involvement.

The Rights of Way Service can help to deliver benefits in relation to these areas.

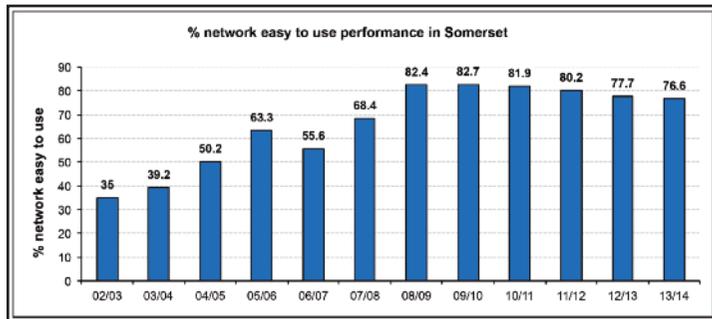
Raising the strategic profile of the path network and this Improvement Plan will not only increase awareness with other organisations, policy- and decision-makers; but will enable better planning and development of neighbourhoods, with the needs of path users taken into account, and help facilitate external funding or investment in improving the quality and accessibility of paths.

Liaise with all Local Planning Authorities to ensure that any policies and strategies (including Minerals & Waste Development Framework) in general has regard for the RoWIP, any priority routes and the PRow network.

Continue to ensure that improvements to the rights of way network are secured through planning applications and that the necessary funds and agreements are sought to implement improvements.



DELIVER STATUTORY FUNCTIONS IN AN EFFICIENT WAY



A 10% sample of the network is surveyed every year by trained volunteers. The survey not only makes up part of the inspection programme but also provides a good indication of how much of the network is easy to use. Since 2002/03 the percentage of the network considered easy to use has doubled from 35% to over 76%.

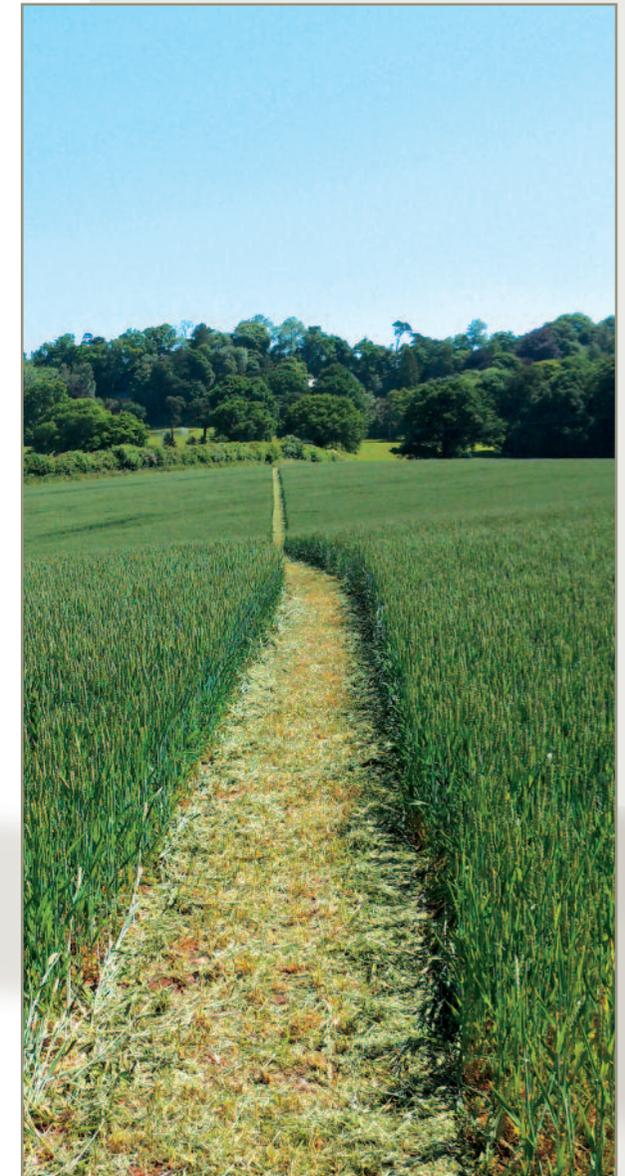
Resource constraints over the next decade will make it increasingly challenging to continue the upward trend.

Developing volunteer initiatives and partnerships with other organisations will help to make resources go further enabling us to continue to deliver our statutory functions as effectively as possible.

Maintain the 2013/14 % ease of use until 2025, and if possible, improve it.

When significant expenditure is required on the maintenance of a right of way, we will consider a diversion of the route (providing the legal tests are met) to reduce installation and future maintenance costs.

Continue to process and reduce the backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map and Statement and work towards producing an updated Definitive Map and Statement.



DEVELOP A SAFE & IMPROVED ACCESS NETWORK

Ways in which the path network can be improved and made safer for walkers, equestrians and cyclists, are better connectivity, improving road crossings, replacing stiles with gates and upgrading footpaths to multi-use paths.

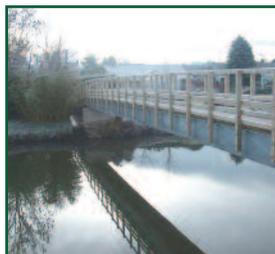
Improvements to the network, where appropriate, should be achieved alongside existing maintenance, especially where there are long term asset management benefits (e.g.: replacing a stile with a galvanised metal pedestrian gate). Whilst resources are limited for this kind of work, there are external sources of funding that can assist.

Development of a safer access network can also be achieved through financial contributions from developers and agri-environmental/land management schemes, which do not have a direct cost for the Highway Authority.

Rationalisation of rights of way will be a key consideration, when changes to the network are proposed through public path orders or development. Future network maintenance will be an important factor when improvements are sought as part of a public path order or development proposal.

Work with developers and relevant stakeholders to streamline, develop and improve the PRow network within and in the vicinity of development. Local mitigation and strategic improvements will be sought through public path orders and where necessary, physical works.

Create a list of routes currently available to those less able and also put forward for assessment those routes that could be improved.



When improving PRow or creating new PRow, an inclusive approach will be taken from the outset, so that wherever possible the routes will be accessible to horse riders, cyclists, walkers and those with visual and mobility impairments.

When creating, improving or diverting PRow, we will endeavour to improve connectivity of the network and improve safety when emergence onto or crossing a road is part of the proposal.

Work with Policy Planners and others to identify PRow which link communities, schools, services, public open space etc, that could be upgraded/improved to serve as multi-use routes.

IMPROVE ACCESS INFORMATION



The public can view information on all public rights of way, their associated features such as gates/bridges etc, faults and relevant public registers on the internet. They can report faults that they have come across while walking, riding or cycling. However, there is still more that can be done to improve access to information. Information campaigns can be complementary and effective tools to assist officers with carrying out statutory duties.

Permissive paths (informal paths provided by landowners and organisations) can greatly enhance the public rights of way network, but the record of what exists is incomplete. A complete combined record of public and permissive access would be of much benefit to the public.

There is also limited information about easy access paths, e.g.: routes without stiles. Research for the first RoWIP showed that the main barrier for people with disabilities was not so much a shortage of easy access routes but a lack of co-ordinated accessible information about the routes that do exist.

Develop the interactive mapping website to provide detailed information on easy access paths.

Enhanced signage and waymarking, e.g.: destination, distance, etc, may be considered on promoted routes (national, regional & local).

Continue to liaise with landowners and other key stakeholders to collate and map permissive and other route information and formalise permissive access with agreements where necessary.

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VOLUNTEERS AND KEY ORGANISATIONS

Community Paths Partnership is an umbrella term for many initiatives, the essence of them being the same, to encourage community involvement in the maintenance and improvement of the rights of way network at a local level. Community involvement and the use of volunteers should represent a cost saving, thus helping limited resources to go further. Individual initiatives are piloted (where necessary) and subsequently monitored to ensure they continue to deliver efficiency savings.

It is important that the Partnership is sustainable and does not rely too heavily on administrative support or on large amounts of funding. Examples of very successful initiatives include the Parish Path Liaison Officer and Trail Watcher schemes.

Whilst delivery of efficiencies by the effort of volunteers is a welcome benefit of the Partnership, the additional benefits of local ownership, engagement and awareness-raising should not be underestimated. The relationship with volunteers and local councils can help when staff need to speak to landowners.

There are also many large landowning agencies and organisations that we work with to improve the path network and it is vital that we maintain and develop strong partnerships with them.



Continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders when developing, maintaining and implementing improvements to the PRoW network.

Continue to develop and maximise the benefit of the Community Paths Partnership and review and celebrate the success of individual initiatives.

Continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities to resolve cross-border maintenance, legal and improvement issues and to ensure consistency in the signage and maintenance standards of promoted routes.

NEXT STEPS

Implementation

Although it is a statutory duty to produce a RoWIP and review it when required there is no similar duty to implement it. There is no revenue funding for improvements and it is unlikely that there will ever be any dedicated funding to deliver all of the actions. Where possible, improvements to the existing network will be built into the routine maintenance programme, delivered through partnership initiatives or through planning gain. Actions shall be addressed in priority order so far as is possible within available resources.

Monitoring and evaluation

Where possible, processes may be put in place to monitor the impact and/or success of an action. This will be particularly relevant to route development where people counters can be installed before and after improvements to illustrate any trends that may occur.

RoWIP review

The RoWIP will be reviewed in 2024 or earlier if deemed necessary.

RoW Legislation

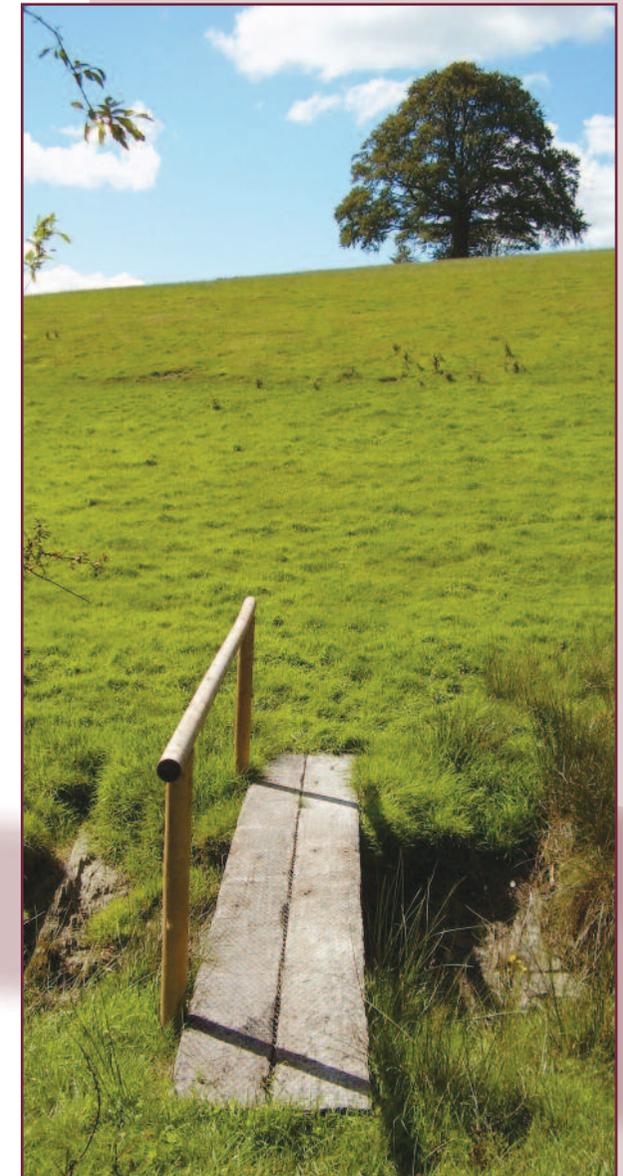
There may be further policy changes as a result of changes in legislation.

You can also contact us by:

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Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix A: Schedule of policies and actions
April 2014

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GLOSSARY

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BOAT	Byway Open to All Traffic
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
CRoWA 2000	Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000
DC	District Council
<i>de facto</i>	Traditionally exists, whether by right or not
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
DMMO	Definitive Map Modification Order
DMS	Definitive Map & Statement
ENP(A)	Exmoor National Park (Authority)
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
FTP	Future Transport Plan
FWAG	Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
GPS	Global Positioning System
HA 1980	Highways Act 1980
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LAF	Local Access Forum
LAMP	Levels and Moors Partnership
LDF	Local Development Framework
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LTP	Local Transport Plan

Natural England	The body that replaced the Countryside Agency, Rural Development Service & English Nature
NCN	National Cycle Network
NMPV	Non-Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
PPLO	Parish Path Liaison Officer
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RoW	Rights of Way
RUPP	Road Used as a Public Path
SCC	Somerset County Council
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
s106 agreement	Legal agreement between developer and LPAs
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
TAMP	Transport Asset Management Plan
TCPA 1990	Town & Country Planning Act 1990
UUR	Unsurfaced Unclassified Road

RoWIP2 STRUCTURE

The 2nd Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2) is based upon 5 key aims.

These are as follows:

- **Raise the strategic profile of the public rights of way network,**
- **Delivery of statutory functions in a financially efficient way,**
- **Develop a safe and improved access network,**
- **Improve access information,**
- **Work in partnership with volunteers and key organisations.**

Each of these key aims is explained in more detail in their own chapter with supporting statements (SS), policy statements and actions. Supporting statements are shown in *italics* in the Plan and policy statements and actions are shown in **bold** text with a **grey shadow** and a numbering system referring to the Aim that they relate to.

The policy statement and actions from each key aim are collated in the Statement of Action.

The majority of the evidence base behind the 5 key aims and their actions comes from the network assessment and in-depth consultation. More detail on these and the scorecarding system for prioritising route development can be found in Appendices B-G.

Exmoor National Park (ENP) straddles the County boundary of Somerset and Devon. The Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) produced a separate RoWIP chapter that was completed in 2005 to coincide with the publication of Devon County Council's RoWIP. This chapter has since been updated and revisions are shown in Appendix H.

OVERVIEW

THE RoWIP PROCESS

RoWIP2 is the prime means by which Somerset County Council (SCC) will manage the Rights of Way Service for the benefit of walkers, horse riders, cyclists, and those with visual or mobility difficulties.

Public consultation (in which the majority of respondents were walkers) in early 2004 was followed by targeted consultation throughout the rest of 2004 involving horse riders, carriage drivers, cyclists, visually and mobility impaired and landowners. The key findings from the consultation process and the Network Assessment helped to shape the first RoWIP and are still relevant for RoWIP2.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The following table illustrates the different categories of public rights of way and who is entitled to use them.

Category of PRow	Public users that are entitled to use PRow
Public footpath	Walkers.
Public bridleway	Walkers, horse riders, and cyclists.
Restricted byway	Walkers, horse riders, cyclists and non-mechanically propelled vehicular users.
Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)	All of the above plus mechanically propelled vehicular users.

Users of motorised wheelchairs (Class 1, 2 & 3 if it has a speed restrictor) are allowed on all of the above categories of PRow.

SOMERSET CONTEXT

Somerset has one of the longest rights of way networks in the country. It currently stands at 6142 km. The following table shows the lengths and percentages for the different categories of PRow in Somerset.

Category of PRow	Kilometres	% of total network
Footpath	4803	78.0
Bridleway	1031	17.0
Restricted byway	299	4.9
BOAT	9	0.1
Total	6142	100

Facts & Figures

The County of Somerset covers 3452 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 525,000 (2012). Devon, with a smaller PRow network has a population of 1.1 million. This equates to almost 12 metres of PRow per person in Somerset and only 4.5 metres per person in Devon.

The current population is made up as follows-

- 18.2% are children (0-15 years),
- 60.4% are of working age (16 to 64)
- 21.4% are above the state pension age (65+).

There are fewer 20 to 29 year olds than would be typical; this is thought to be due to young people leaving the county either to attend university or for employment.

The population of older people (65+) is expected to rise from 107,600 in 2008 to 196,400 in 2033-an increase of 82.5%. West Somerset already has the highest proportion of older people (65+) of any district in the UK.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid 2009 population estimates by ethnic group, indicate that in 2009 7% of Somerset's population was non-white British, lower than the regional (9%) and national (17%) averages.

Life expectancy for men is 79.5 years and 83.7 for women which is higher than the national averages. However there is still a discrepancy in the most deprived areas where life expectancy is 5.4 years lower for men and 2.7 years lower for women than in the least deprived areas. 25.9% of adults in Somerset are estimated to be obese which is above the national average of 24.2%. 12% of adults participate in at least twenty minutes of moderate physical activity at least three days a week, also above the national average. One in six Year 6 children have been measured as obese, up slightly year on year which, although below the national average of 19%, is a worrying upward trend. National data shows a clear correlation between deprivation and obesity prevalence for children.

Fourteen areas in Somerset rank amongst the 20% lowest in England for child wellbeing. These areas are located within Bridgwater, Taunton, Yeovil and Highbridge..

The English Indices of Multiple Deprivation are calculated for every Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) There are 327 LSOAs in Somerset and 32,482 in England; each equates to around 1500 people or 400 households. In 2010 fourteen LSOAs were among the 20% most deprived areas in England and five of those were among the 10% most deprived. Two more were in the 5% most deprived nationally which was the first time that Somerset had any LSOAs in this section.,

AIM 1: CONTINUE TO RAISE THE STRATEGIC PROFILE OF THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

1.1 EXISTING SITUATION

The Strategic context of RoWIP2 can be summarised by Figure 1.

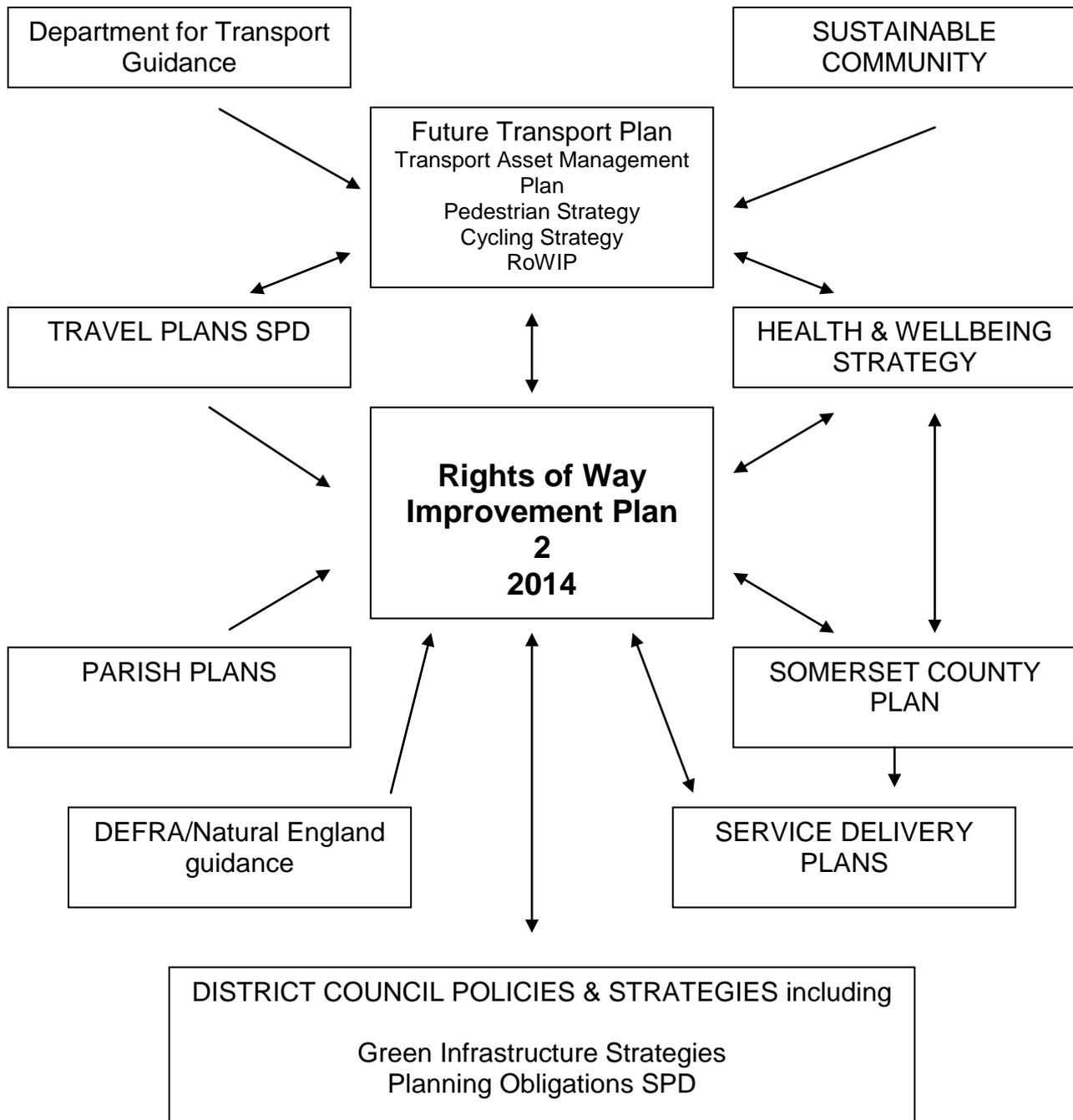


Figure 1: Strategic context of the Rights of Way Improvement Plans 2 (RoWIP2)

1.2 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK, LOCAL PLANS,

The last adopted Structure Plan for Somerset was the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review 1991 - 2011. Along with the Regional Spatial Strategy all of its policies except Policy 6 (Bristol/Bath Green Belt) were revoked by Government. Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans prepared by Local Authorities in Somerset when adopted, will form the development plan.

LOCAL PLANS

The term 'Local Plan' has been re-introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Formerly a Local Development Framework was to be prepared by local authorities including Core Strategies and other development plan documents. Some of these have been recently adopted by the local planning authorities in Somerset (Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council and Exmoor National Park) under the old terminology given transitional arrangements. Local Plans are documents that set out the vision for an area, guide how and where development takes place in Somerset and will form the development plan for an area together with Neighbourhood Plans prepared by parish/town councils or Neighbourhood Forums.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

A Neighbourhood Development Plan is one of the new community rights introduced to devolve decision making to a more local level and give people more say over their area and puts communities in charge of setting out the homes, shops and amenities they want in their neighbourhood. In addition to deciding the future of their area, local people will benefit from development in their area if they have a plan. Areas with a neighbourhood plan will receive 25% of community infrastructure levy revenues to spend on projects important to them,

SS1.1 *The PRoW network cannot be considered in isolation when assessing its adequacy for current and future use and many data layers were compiled in the Network Assessment (Appendix C) to complement the PRoW layer. However, one layer that was difficult to source was public open space. It is crucial that there are strong links between public open space and the PRoW network. Public open space is usually owned and managed by District, Borough and Town Councils and is typically in urban areas, e.g.: parks and gardens, etc. It offers accessible green space for recreation and relaxation to many people who live within walking and cycling distance. Areas of public open space are in some cases green corridors that enable linkages between town and country by providing safe off-road routes. Accessible, safe urban and urban fringe PRoW are also crucial to help encourage modal shift.*

Action 1.1: Liaise with all LPAs to ensure that any policies and strategies (including Minerals & Waste Development Framework) in general has regard for the RoWIP, any priority routes and the PRoW network.

1.3 SOMERSET SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2009-2026

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) sets out the vision and priorities to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area showing how partners will work together to develop sustainable communities.

Under the following six aims of the Somerset Strategic Partnerships Sustainable Community Strategy there are 19 challenges, 12 of which are detailed below with how, through the RoWIP2, the rights of way service can help to meet these challenges.

Making a Positive Contribution

- Challenge 1: Strengthen the leadership given by councils and partners through closer working together and engage local people and communities in decision making.
- Challenge 2: Widen and strengthen the involvement of local people in their communities

Development of initiatives under the Community Paths Partnership will go further to help engage and involve local councils and individuals in the maintenance of their local rights of way network.

Living Sustainably

- Challenge 3: Prepare for and respond to the impact on Somerset of climate change

Partnership working with the Environment Agency is important in ensuring that coastal and estuarine paths are taken into account through coastal management processes.

- Challenge 4: Increase people's quality of life through the use of Somerset's environment, nature and heritage.

Continuing to maintain and improve the rights of way network wherever possible will increase people's quality of life through the availability and use of this resource.

- Challenge 6: Encourage communities to be more self-sufficient and united.

The Community Paths Partnership will develop how communities can work together to achieve efficiencies and be more self-sufficient in how they support the County Council in managing and maintaining their local rights of way network.

Ensuring Economic Well Being

- Challenge 7: Broaden and strengthen the local economy

Maintenance and improvement of the rights of way network are key in strengthening and broadening the local tourism sector economy, and can make a difference to rural businesses.

- Challenge 8: Plan for new sustainable communities to be built in Somerset
Sustainable transport infrastructure is a component in developing sustainable communities; to ensure that good quality walking and cycling routes link residential areas to areas of employment, education, services and recreation.

Enjoying and Achieving

- Challenge 10: Raising achievement and fulfilling aspirations

There are many communities and individuals that aspire to help more with maintaining the rights of way network and further development of the Community Paths Partnership will help to fulfil those aspirations.

- Challenge 12: Promoting lifelong learning and cultural opportunities

Providing an easy to use rights of way network and volunteering opportunities ensures that people can access and enjoy the natural and built environment of Somerset.

Staying Safe

- Challenge 16: Road safety

The maintenance and improvement of rights of way can play a vital role in improving road safety by providing an alternative to using the road network for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

Being Healthy

- Challenge 18: Reducing health inequalities
- Challenge 19: Tackling high risk health issues

Obesity and physical inactivity costs the National Health Service billions of pounds each year. Increasing access to the natural environment through the rights of way network can play a vital role in efforts to increase physical activity and reduce obesity. In addition to this, being more active and having contact with the outdoors reduces stress and can reduce depression and anxiety.

The extensive rights of way network in Somerset is never far from residential areas. As a recreational resource which is free at point of access, it is an accessible resource for exercise available to a large proportion of the

population, thereby playing an important role in reducing health inequality in areas such as obesity and heart disease.

1.4 SOMERSET COUNTY PLAN 2013-2017

The County Plan focuses on three main areas: Our Vision for Somerset, Our Priorities and Our Targets. The Rights of Way service has strong links to these three areas as follows:

Our Vision for Somerset

- Somerset is a healthier and safer place.

Rights of way are a free resource that can enable people to increase their level of physical activity through walking, cycling or horse riding. Use of PRow can also be as part of some other activity whether as a hobby (fishing, bird watching) or as a utility trip to the shops or to work.

Our Priorities

- All our residents have every opportunity to live healthy lives.

Outdoor physical activity makes a direct, positive contribution towards mental health and emotional well-being. The benefits for mind and body of exercising in the countryside cannot be underestimated.

- Giving residents a voice and acting on what they say

Continued consultation with local communities on tasks such as vegetation clearance of rights of way and responding to their requests to clear priority paths.

- Help individuals and communities to help themselves.

Development of existing and new volunteer initiatives under the Community Paths Partnership such as the Adopt A Path and the Parish Strimmer Schemes will ensure that links with communities and their participation in helping to keep their rights of way network clear will continue to increase.

Our Targets

- Help residents stay healthy; encourage our children to be active.

Our policy of the least restrictive option when considering works to paths (gap, gate, stile) will make the network easier for all to use. Provision of a fully open public path network, made as accessible as possible plays a vital role in helping reduce inequality in health and wellbeing. Research has shown that a well maintained rights of way network, an easy to use free outdoor

recreational resource can help in getting people active and to maintain or improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

- Work more effectively with partners for a smaller, leaner and more customer focused public sector in Somerset

Expansion of volunteer schemes such as the Rambler Working Parties will deliver savings and enable improved levels of service.

1.5 HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY FOR SOMERSET 2013-2016

The first Health and wellbeing Strategy for Somerset, led by a new Health and Wellbeing Board for the county sets out a vision for health and wellbeing in Somerset:

“People live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities with timely and easy access to high quality and efficient public services when they need them”.

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy gives priority to three themes to improve health and wellbeing:

- Theme 1: People, families and communities take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing
“The lifestyles we lead play a significant part in our health and wellbeing but that some of the diseases which are the main causes of premature death can be prevented by making changes to our everyday habits. Over three-quarters of adults in Somerset do not do enough physical activity to benefit their health. Conditions associated with obesity are thought to currently cost the local NHS £138 million a year”

Action-Community Action-The Health and Wellbeing Board will give greater support for community led action to encourage healthier lifestyles. Examples of action include developing local health walks.

An easy to use, well signposted, accessible rights of way network will play a vital part in helping to encourage walking as a means of keeping fit and healthy and providing the infrastructure for Health Walks.

An extensive new review of the health benefits of walking produced by the Ramblers and MacMillan Cancer Support (2013) has revealed that walking brings people together, helps them feel positive and is a cost effective way to exercise. The research shows that walking is the most accessible physical activity, and the most popular. Walking is a free, gentle, low-impact activity that requires no special training or equipment.

- Theme 2: Families and communities are thriving and resilient
“Our mental health is an important indicator of our ability to cope with everyday life. It is thought that 70,000 people in Somerset have a mental health problem at any one time often influenced by things like social isolation”.

Action-Well connected, vibrant communities-There will be a much greater focus on supporting neighbourhoods and communities to take responsibility for shaping and transforming their own lives and their local services.

The increase in interest in volunteer participation and the ongoing development of initiatives to engage this interest can help with issues such as mental health and social isolation. The majority of interest comes from pensioners or those who have retired early and engaging them in light physical activity will contribute to maintaining or improving their physical and mental health.

The Strategy promotes stronger community engagement, participation in volunteering and service delivery provision along with local assets being used more effectively and efficiently.

Community led volunteering projects such as the those taking place under the Community Paths Partnership help develop how communities can work together to prioritise what is important for their local needs in managing and maintaining the local rights of way network.

1.6 TRANSPORT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (TAMP)

The TAMP provides a clear plan of action, and is updated and rolled forward annually. This process helps to determine maintenance budgets.

It will help in setting priorities and managing risks, and will improve the transparency of decision-making. The TAMP defines established levels of service, and captures performance, budgetary and valuation information. It also reviews levels of service, identifies performance gaps, and reviews budgets against service standards.

An asset capture survey of the public rights of way network was carried out during 2006/07. At this time, there were over 1000km of sealed and mixed/tarmac surface on the network, nearly 15,000 gates, over 10,000 signposts, 11,000 stiles, 1361 culverts, 2856 bridges with span of less than 6m and 415 with a span greater than 6m. There were 1000 missing gates and nearly 2000 missing signposts although subsequent work programmes and reactive works will have addressed this and reduced these numbers.

Assets are valued according to their Gross Replacement Cost (GRC), which is how much it would cost to build equivalent assets to current standards now. The GRC in 2013 for the public rights of way assets was estimated at £88 million.

The TAMP also identifies a series of key improvements which will advance the Council's asset management practice. The TAMP's Improvement Plan details the specific actions to be taken, and outlines which areas of service will benefit subject to suitable finance being available.

Action 1.2: Continue to inform the TAMP process and ensure where possible that appropriate monies are secured to maintain the existing assets and install those that are missing.

1.7 FUTURE TRANSPORT PLAN (2011-2026)

RoWIP2 forms an Appendix to the Future Transport Plan (FTP). The FTP is a longer term transport strategy than the previous two Local Transport Plans (5 year periods). The FTP will be made up of a long-term strategy document and shorter-term implementation plans. The focus of the FTP is on the 5 national transport goals:

- Supporting economic growth,
- Reduce carbon emissions,
- Promote equality of opportunity,
- Contribute to better safety, security and health, and
- Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment,

structured around the six key aims of the Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026.

The Department for Transport (DfT) guidance for Transport Plans expands on each of these goals and there are clear synergies between these goals and the aspirations of this RoWIP.

Supporting economic growth

- Ensure local transport networks are resistant and adaptable to shocks and impacts such as adverse weather, accidents, terrorist attacks and impacts of climate change

Development of a connective well-maintained walking and cycling network can provide a transport network in the event of circumstances that would affect motorised transport.

Reduce carbon emissions

- Deliver quantified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions within cities and regional networks, taking account of cross-network policy measures

Development of a well-maintained and connective network of walking and cycling routes, for accessing service and employment centres is crucial in encouraging modal shift and thus a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Promote equality of opportunity

- Enhance social inclusion by enabling disadvantaged people to connect with employment opportunities, key services, social networks, and goods through improving accessibility, availability, affordability and acceptability

Improved maintenance of the rights of way network and the removal of unnecessary limitations, especially in urban fringe areas in conjunction with other measures, can help to deliver improved accessibility.

Contribute to better safety, security and health

- Reduce social and economic costs of transport to public health, including air quality impacts.
- Improve the health of individuals by encouraging and enabling more physically active travel.

Providing a network of well-maintained routes for non-motorised transport will help enable modal shift from the motorised vehicle to more physically active and cheaper modes of travel such as walking and cycling

Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment

- Minimise the impacts of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape and seek solutions that deliver long-term environmental benefits.
- Enhance well-being and sense of community by creating more opportunities for social contact and better access to leisure activities and the natural environment

Investment and improvements to the non-motorised transport infrastructure could negate the need for road building projects, which can often have a large impact on the natural environment. There are also long-term environmental benefits to investing in the non-motorised transport infrastructure through a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A well maintained and improved rights of way network, combined with other green infrastructure, can provide a wealth of opportunities for social contact and access to the countryside for a variety of activities.

The Action Priority tables in the Statement of Action illustrate how the actions identified in RoWIP2 can help deliver the above objectives.

1.8 AGRI-ENVIRONMENT/LAND MANAGEMENT SCHEMES

Under agri-environment/land management schemes, landowners can be paid for providing additional/improved permissive access.

SS1.3 *Using these schemes to achieve improvements to the access network is beneficial to the landowner as well as representing a cost-saving to the Highway Authority. However, it is important that the linkages in the relevant policies and strategies are made to assist Natural England staff when negotiating such agreements.*

Action 1.3: Continue to liaise with Natural England and Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group officers to ensure that the RoWIP and any identified priority routes are taken into account when negotiating agri-environment/land management scheme applications.

1.9 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL & TRAVEL PLANNING

LPA's have a duty to consult the Highway Authority when a planning application materially affects or is adjacent to a PRoW.

SS1.4: In addition to the existing consultation, the RoW Service is consulted by planning officers on developments over a certain size, e.g.: Minerals & Waste applications and Key Site applications for residential/industrial and also where a development could materially affect a route proposal that has been received from the public. Wherever feasible, justifiable improvements to the access network will be achieved through planning gain provided that the tests as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (guidance on planning obligations) are met.

Action 1.4: Continue to ensure that improvements to the rights of way network are secured through planning applications and that the necessary funds and agreements are sought to implement improvements.

Although planning gain initially can be a cost-effective way of securing a PRoW improvement, due consideration should be given as to whether the improvement will prove value for money in the long term and therefore any routes sought through planning gain should be subject to the same scorecarding process as all other improvement proposals.

SS1.5 ; There are a number of paths throughout the county which are obstructed by buildings, etc. These paths were never diverted or stopped up when planning permission was granted and in some cases there is no viable alternative path. It is much easier to deal with the impact on paths which cross or are in the vicinity of a development site prior to the development taking place rather than when completed. Development which affects a public right of way should not commence until the necessary stopping up or diversion order has come into effect.

Action 1.5: Continue to follow guidance set out in Circular 1/09 or subsequent versions of guidance related to rights of way affected by development.

1.10 OTHER STRATEGIES AND PLANS

SS1.6: There are many other strategies and plans that have links with this Improvement Plan as illustrated by Figure 1. Exmoor National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) have Management Plans which often have a strong emphasis on public access due to the desirability of the public to visit these areas. It is therefore important that the RoWIP supports these Plans and any other strategies.

Policy Statement 1.6: The RoW Service shall support all relevant strategies/plans and where possible help partners to achieve their aims especially where they help deliver on Actions within the RoWIP.

AIM 2: DELIVERY OF STATUTORY FUNCTIONS IN A FINANCIALLY EFFICIENT WAY

2.1 MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The condition of rights of way since 2002/03 has been measured using 'ease of use' criteria (formerly Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178). Although no longer a national indicator, the survey methodology remains a useful management tool in inspecting and assessing the condition of the network. Every year trained volunteers survey a 10% sample of the network which forms part of the inspection programme.

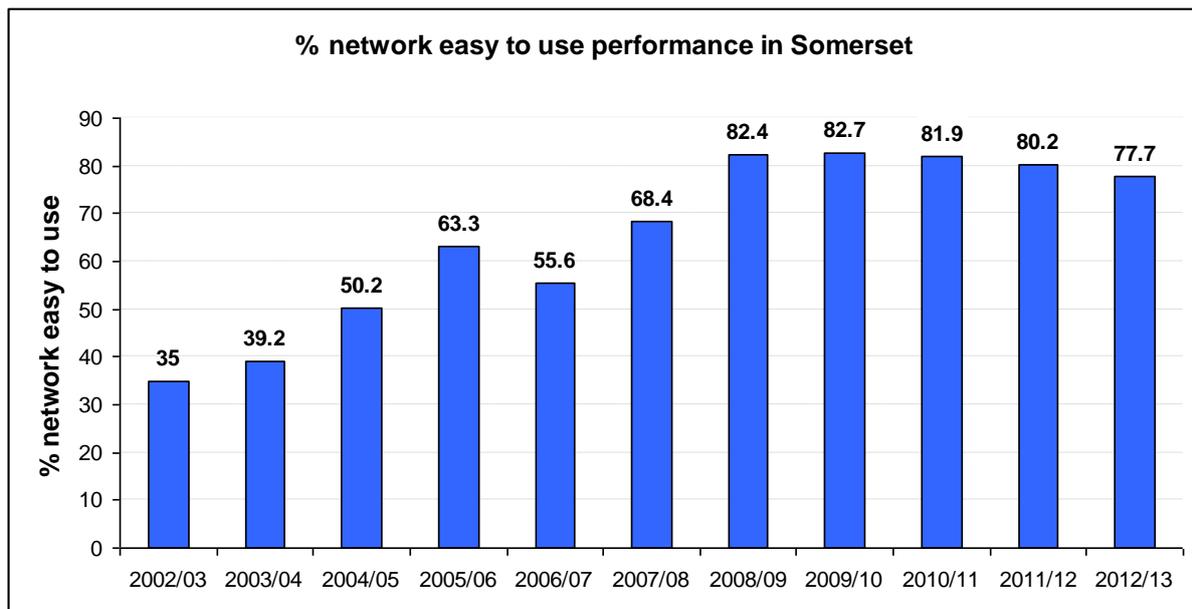


Figure 2: Percentage ease of use performance in Somerset.

SS2.1: *The percentage figure is a reflection of how well an authority has been performing its statutory duties. In 2002/2003 Somerset came bottom of the Shire counties for BVPI 178 with 35%. Public and parish consultation revealed the highest priority was maintenance of the PRow network. Since 2003 good progress has been made with the percentage for 2012/13 now 77.7% (highway links methodology).*

Action 2.1: Maintain the 2012/13 % ease of use until 2023, and if possible, improve it.

From 2008 onwards, the Highway Links methodology has been used in addition to Highway Lengths. Highway Links methodology is a more logical assessment of the ease of use of the network as it looks at sections of paths that link to other highways or paths. The Highway Links methodology will be the preferred method for reporting the percentage 'ease of use' throughout the RoWIP2 period.

2.2 NETWORK SURVEY

The network survey undertaken in 2006/07 captured all assets and surface type of all the public rights of way in Somerset. This information has informed the Transport

Asset Management Plan and was also of use to the Structures Team who subsequently carried out a more detailed survey on those bridges that carry public and private vehicular rights.

SS2.2: *The results of the surveys have highlighted the significant current and future capital and maintenance costs, particularly bridges and structures as well as all other assets on the network.*

Policy Statement 2.2: When significant expenditure is required on the maintenance of a right of way, we will consider a diversion of the route to reduce installation and future maintenance costs.

2.3 DEFINITIVE MAP & STATEMENT

The Definitive Map & Statement (DMS) held by Somerset County Council is the legal record of Public Rights of Way in Somerset. It was completed in September 1972 at the end of an exercise that began in the early 1950's following the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949. As a result the majority of the PRow are those that the Parish Councils considered to be historic rights of way and/or those that had been regularly used by the public for a considerable time. Many of these were utility paths for getting to places of work (often farms), school or church. Use of PRow since the preparation and production of the DMS has changed over the years from utility use to a network that is mainly used for recreational purposes.

SS2.3: *The volume of consultation responses for improvement proposals suggesting new routes, diversions of existing routes and the deletion of other routes illustrates that paths recorded on the current Definitive Map are not meeting the needs of the public today. The digitisation of the Definitive Map has made it possible to produce an updated DMS. The review of processing applications to modify the DMS resulted in the adoption of a more streamlined procedure. Whilst this has delivered efficiencies in the time it takes to process an application, many more applications have been submitted over the period of the first RoWIP, meaning that there is a substantial number of applications to investigate.*

Action 2.3: Work towards producing an updated Definitive Map & Statement and reducing the backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map & Statement.

An updated DMS will not resolve existing anomalies or any unrecorded rights of way, however it will ensure that all modification orders and public path orders that have been confirmed since the Definitive Map was published will be shown on the updated DMS.

SS2.4: *The Statement of Priorities determines in what order applications to modify the DMS are investigated. During the first RoWIP period, the RoWIP Desktop Scorecard was used to assist with prioritisation. In reviewing the RoWIP, the Statement of Priorities was also reviewed and amended.*

Policy statement 2.4: Continue to review how we prioritise the backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map and Statement and ensure that the Statement of Priorities accords with RoWIP principles.

AIM 3: DEVELOP A SAFE AND IMPROVED ACCESS NETWORK

3.1 CONTEXT

Whilst significant improvement in the percentage of rights of way that are classed as 'easy to use', has been made during the first RoWIP period, there is still more to be done to ensure that the existing network is well maintained, easy to use and free from obstruction. Therefore, the maintenance and enforcement function of the Rights of Way Service is where the majority of available resource will be directed.

However, it should be recognised that improvements to the network, where appropriate, should be achieved alongside existing maintenance, especially where there are long term asset management benefits (e.g.: replacing a stile with a galvanised metal pedestrian gate). Whilst resources are limited for this kind of work, there are external sources of funding that can be investigated in addition to those potentially available from the Future Transport Plan. There are also other ways of developing the access network, for example, through planning gain and agri-environmental schemes, which do not have a direct cost for the Highway Authority.

In preparing for RoWIP2, consideration was given to the fact that it is only 8 years since the adoption of the first RoWIP, therefore a decision was made that further network assessment and in-depth user group/ landowner research were not necessary. The following findings are based on a refreshed network assessment and consultation carried out for the first RoWIP.

3.2 DEMAND & SUPPLY

Before looking at the approach to develop the access network it is necessary to look at the demand and supply; the users - their needs and desires and the landowners – over whose land public rights pass. Extensive consultation has helped to add to existing national research in considering this.

Since the completion of the Definitive Map & Statement in 1972, there have been many changes in agriculture and society. Due to improvements of efficiency in agricultural practices, field sizes in some areas have increased (i.e.: hedgerows have been removed often resulting in paths which were once field edge becoming cross field). Farm labour has decreased and the rural population has become further removed from the function of the countryside as growth in urban areas and increased disposable income makes living in the country more desirable and affordable for many commuters.

Whereas once a large proportion of PRow were historically used as utility routes, i.e.: to get to school, church, shops or work, the majority are now used for recreational purposes. The change in how PRow are now used has led to calls from some organisations and individuals for the rationalisation of the network and the creation of routes that are more suited to leisure use. However, the current legal framework does not allow for such sweeping changes. Public consultation revealed that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the public are either satisfied or very satisfied with PRow matters and that unspoilt landscape, car parking and heritage/ archaeology sites were the main priorities when visiting the countryside.

Landowners

It is important to understand that although the surfaces of PRoW are vested in the Highway Authority, the land beneath the PRoW is usually privately owned. The majority of landowners consulted during the preparation of the first RoWIP did not mind public access on their land, as long as the public acted responsibly.

The main problems for landowners in Somerset as a result of public access are gates left open, out of control dogs and dog fouling. Gates left open and out of control dogs were found to be above average problems for landowners in Exmoor National Park, whereas dog fouling and out of control dogs are above average problems for landowners in the Mendip Hills AONB (see Appendix D). If dogs aren't regularly wormed, their faeces can carry worms that can cause harm to livestock. In some areas these issues can lead to landowners being obstructive and negative towards public access.

Many of the problems experienced by landowners as a result of PRoW on their land are outside of our control, but improvements in path furniture, waymarking and education (see Policy Statements 4.6, 4.7 & 4.9) will help to lessen some of the problems experienced. The Community Paths Partnership (see Action 5.1) will continue to build upon the good relations that our officers already have with many landowners/landowning bodies.

Visually and mobility impaired

In the public consultation, almost 15% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability 'Difficulty walking' was the main mobility reason given by respondents for not visiting the countryside as much as they would like, closely followed by 'difficulty with stiles'. Consultation with Parish Councils revealed that they were most dissatisfied with the provision of 'routes with access for all'.

Discussions with Mobility focus groups (see Appendix E) highlighted that there are many barriers in accessing PRoW and the countryside. Many felt that there were suitable routes out there but that they were blocked by stiles. In the landowner consultation over half were in favour of replacing stiles with stock-proof kissing gates on their land. Perhaps more important than physical barriers is the lack of coordinated information about where those with visual and mobility impairments can go in the countryside. Country parks and nature reserves are popular destinations for the less able however there is little information on where else is accessible. Pre-site information in a variety of media as well as good on-site information are important to the success of a day out in the country (see Aim 4).

Exmoor National Park Authority, and the three AONB Services in Somerset are all working on additional route provision for those with visual and mobility impairments, for example the multi-use path and easy access loop as part of the Neroche Landscape Partnership project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund in the Blackdown Hills AONB. The network survey identified routes that may be suitable for use by the less able and those that have the potential to be suitable with minor improvements (see Actions 4.2 & 4.7).

The needs of those who are visually or mobility impaired are wide and varied. However, some common requirements are; adequate parking space, suitable surfacing, accessible toilets, flexibility in lengths of routes that can be taken (short-cuts, loops, etc), adequate pre-site and on-site information regarding gradients, resting places, barriers (type, width, etc.). It will not always be possible to create routes that will suit everyone due to several other parameters. Therefore it is important that consultation takes place throughout route development for those with visual and mobility impairments to ensure that any improvements that are implemented are suitable for the maximum number of people possible.

Walkers

There are approximately 9.1 million adults in England who walk for recreation for at least 30 minutes once a month. This is almost twice the number that go to the gym and nearly three times the number that cycle. Walkers needs vary probably more than any other user type as it is an activity that the majority of the population undertake on a daily basis. They range from the rambler who likes challenging routes and unspoilt landscapes to the resident who walks from their home to work or the shops or to healthcare centres.

Public consultation (see Appendix D) showed that walking is the most popular reason for visiting the countryside in Somerset. It also highlighted that many people have difficulty using stiles, many stiles were not 'dog friendly' and that the most common reason for not visiting the countryside was the surface condition of PRow.

Cyclists

Cyclists needs are also very varied due to the different types of cycling. Of those that took part in the cycling consultation in Somerset (see Appendix D), over 80% cycle on a daily or weekly basis. Safety on roads is the main reason for cyclists not cycling as much as they would like. The main priority for utility cyclists is more cycle lanes on roads, whereas for recreational cyclists it was more multi-use trails. The National Cycle Network plays an important role in Somerset, connecting many centres of population. This is not only valuable for recreational purposes but also in contributing to a modal shift for travelling to work and school. Research on cycling in the market towns and the recommendations has helped to inform the Cycling Strategy in the Future Transport Plan.

Mountain bikers were also consulted and 80% of them considered the current network provision either satisfactory or better. The majority mountain bike on a weekly basis although 39% cited lack of routes as a reason for not mountain biking as much as they would like. Exmoor, Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills are all relatively well served with bridleways for undertaking this activity, however 65% admitted to cycling on public footpaths, partly for convenience and in some instances because they offer a better ride. Their main priority was for more adventurous single-track routes. Lack of connectivity between routes was the main issue in the Blackdown Hills for mountain bikers. Mountain bikers are prepared to travel over forty miles to go for a ride with two thirds using a car to get to the start of their ride.

Horse riders

The Strategy for the Horse Industry in England and Wales was launched in December 2005. Its strategic aims include:-

- Bring the Horse Industry together and develop its national, regional and local impact
- Boost the economic performance of equestrian businesses
- Increase access to off-road riding and carriage driving

On a national scale 4.3 million people ride with over 2 million of these riding at least once a month.

The majority of those consulted in Somerset (see Appendix D) ride everyday however over 80% encountered poor surfaces, overgrowth and hard to open gates frequently or occasionally. Although Exmoor, Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills are relatively well served with bridleways, 13% of parishes in Somerset have no riding PRow or unsurfaced, unclassified roads (UURs). Almost half of riders use main roads with 42% citing 'not enough routes' and 20% citing 'too dangerous' as reasons for not riding as much as they would like. Hence riders' highest priority was enhancing the existing network through links to form circular routes, improved road crossings and the legal upgrading of routes.

Non-mechanically propelled vehicular users (NMPV)

In essence NMPV covers carriage drivers. Carriage drivers were consulted at the same time as horse riders although very few responses were received. Of those who did respond, they mainly drive on a weekly basis with all of them using minor roads and half of them using main roads. Off-road provision for NMPV users is limited and where it does exist is often fragmented. Some bridleways may be of suitable width and surfacing for carriage drivers and additional public rights could be achieved through a legal upgrade to a restricted byway.

Mechanically propelled vehicular users (public & private)

Motorised users of PRow are often the subject of bad press for excess speed and/or noise, as well as cutting up the surface. However, it is often the minority element that tarnishes the image of the majority. User groups, such as the Trail Riders Fellowship, have developed a code of conduct for its members with regard to reasonable behaviour when riding. Research undertaken by DEFRA and Countryside Agency (2005) has shown that the majority of vehicular use of PRow is private; either agricultural vehicles or residential access. Whilst the Statutory Guidance for RoWIPs does not consider motorised use it should be noted that it is a means for those who are visually and mobility impaired to access the countryside.

Children

Although the public consultation panel was made up of a broad age range, the profile of those who responded revealed that they were mainly over 45 years of age. Many

children and families walk, ride and cycle in the countryside and in many respects, improvements made for those with visual and mobility impairments would benefit children, particularly families with toddlers and pushchairs. The Future Transport Plan's Active Travel Strategy sets out objectives to encourage walking and cycling to school.

Visitors

The wide distribution and online availability of the public consultation was hoped to reach visitors to Somerset, but only three returns were received.

Some of the main findings from the Somerset Visitor Survey 2009/10 are as follows;

- 59% of visitors were categorised as day visitors,
- 75% of visitors were adult-only groups,
- One of the top three most important factors for visiting Somerset was the scenery (49%),
- 94% of visitors were from the UK with 52% from the south west region
- the average spend per day visit was £26.39 per trip compared to the national average of £34.00
- the importance of walking in the county has increased since the 2003 survey with a score of 3.34 out of 5 .

On a more local basis, the Quantock Hills Visitor Survey 2003 revealed that:

- 27% of visitors live outside of Somerset,
- 16% of visitors live in and around Quantock Hills,
- 79% arrive by car,
- 91% of visitors are repeat visitors,
- only 20% were interested in the possibility of using public transport for their visit,
- 51% would like to see more circular walks, and
- 83% would wish to see motorised vehicles restricted to roads and lanes.

High visitor pressure sites such as the Quantock Hills need tailored visitor management to address the problems that affect this area.

Shared use

Some of the literal responses in the consultation referred to problems with other users. Whilst conflict does occur in some areas, either as a result of illegal use or irresponsible conduct, research has shown that the problem is perceived to be greater than it actually is. When and where a problem arises it will be dealt with under Policy Statement 4.2. Route development will not be hindered by the possibility of conflict but will be done in such a way as to minimise the risk of conflict between different users. The approach to tackling conflict should be to encourage and enable safe access for all legal users in the first instance with restriction of access being the last resort.

Non-users

The mobility focus groups and cycling/equestrian consultation identified reasons why some people don't use PRow as much as they would like and the barriers that prevent them using it all together. However, further research is required to understand why certain sectors of the population do not access the countryside, e.g.: national research has shown that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in visits to the countryside.

We cannot influence all the factors that result in non-use, however many of the policies and actions throughout this document will go some way to encouraging and enabling non-users to access the countryside.

3.3 THE APPROACH

SS3.1: *Consultation and the network assessment (Appendices C-E) have shown that walkers are relatively well served across Somerset in terms of the mileage and density of public rights of way and permissive routes available to them. However, the provision of routes for horse riders, cyclists and those with visual and mobility impairments could be greatly improved in many areas of Somerset. If resources are used to improve the network, it is logical that an attempt is made to make it available to as many users as possible thus providing value for money. There will be constraints in many circumstances, such as landowner objection, physical features, location, connectivity to similar routes, etc. Proposals for route development will, in most cases, initially require objective assessment through the scorecard process (see Appendix G). This will then be followed by subjective assessment, where necessary, by officers. The following policy statement does not preclude footpath-only improvements taking place as long as they either score highly against the scorecard and are not an added burden to the maintenance function.*

Policy Statement 3.1: When improving PRow or creating new PRow, an inclusive approach will be taken from the outset, so that wherever possible the routes will be accessible to horse riders, cyclists, walkers and those with visual and mobility impairments.

SS3.2: *Road safety is an important consideration when developing or improving the network. Public path orders can play an important role in ensuring that new junctions and crossing points with roads are adequate or are improved to ensure sufficient intervisibility between motorists and people using the rights of way and/or better connectivity with other paths.*

Policy Statement 3.2: When creating, improving or diverting PRow, we will endeavour to improve connectivity of the network and improve safety when emergence onto or crossing a road is part of the proposal.

The following actions in the rest of this chapter will be distinct areas for development. However, it is important to realise that many of the improvement proposals that have been received through the consultation process may fall outside of these actions. The proposals that don't fall into these actions are still worthy of consideration as they may contribute to providing a safer more connective network, but due to the

quantity of proposals a prioritisation procedure is required. Creating additional or new rights can be an expensive process, therefore in prioritising the proposals the process needs to show that any route improvements that are chosen outside of the actions within this plan will be beneficial to users but will also not be an onerous burden in terms of future maintenance costs. The scorecard for prioritising proposals and the procedures regarding the implementation of improvements is explained in more detail in Appendix G.

When undertaking improvements to the PRow network, one of the first considerations must be the landowner, to try and ensure that his/her interests are taken into account in designing the improvement, whilst at the same time not compromising the original objective of the proposal. To assist in achieving improvements, landowners, where identified, may be compensated for the dedication of new rights across their land.

3.4 URBAN / URBAN FRINGE AREAS

SS3.3: *The urban centres and the urban fringe are where the majority of people live in Somerset, and improvements to routes in these areas should prove to be good value for money. Consultation revealed that more people access the countryside by car than they do directly from home. Whilst it would be preferable if everyone could access the countryside direct from their home it is not always practicably possible, especially if there are certain attractions that are a considerable distance away from residential areas. However, some measures can be taken to improve accessibility and in turn increase the levels of walking and cycling on urban and urban fringe rights of way. This will not only improve levels of health but will also help to reduce congestion and pollution, and relieve the visitor pressure experienced by some of the more popular rural honey pot areas.*

Action 3.3: Continue to assess urban/urban fringe PRow in Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater, and the market towns using the results of the network survey to identify PRow that would be suitable for furniture removal or replacement with less restrictive furniture to improve accessibility around our most densely populated areas.

SS3.4: *The high percentage of short journeys taken by car would suggest that either the existing PRow are not suitable for use as a means of getting from A to B, people don't know about them or the routes that are required in communities today simply don't exist. To encourage modal shift from the car to either foot or bicycle it is necessary to identify routes that represent desire lines to places of work, education, attraction and public open space. Many education centres have high levels of traffic of all modes at peak times of the day and week. Therefore, creating safe off-road routes from population centres to education centres is crucial.*

Action 3.4: Work with Policy Planners and others to identify PRow on the urban fringe that link to nearby communities, schools, services, public open space etc, that could be upgraded/improved to restricted byway or bridleway to serve as multi-use routes.

3.5 PROMOTED ROUTES

SS3.5: *The South West Coast Path National Trail and other regionally promoted trails are a major contributing factor to the economy of Somerset. They attract residents and visitors alike to experience the trails that are often themed by the landscape they pass through or linked with historical events or characters. The England Coast Path National Trail, is due to be opened in Somerset in 2014, this will run from Minehead (connecting with the South West Coast Path) to Brean Down. The economic benefit of such trails has not been quantified in Somerset per se. However, research undertaken on the South West Coast Path estimated that it generates £300 million a year for the economy of the region and supports over 7,500 jobs, with over a quarter of visitors to the south west coming solely to walk the trail. Local users of the trail also contribute a similar value as visitors to the local economy. The impact of such trails on accommodation providers and hostels was illustrated when the Coleridge Way walking route was launched. Businesses along the route reported increased trade, pubs and tearooms reviewed their opening hours and a new B&B was set up to meet demand. The riding industry nationally is thought to be worth £4.3 billion a year. In Somerset, the contribution of the riding industry to the economy could be greater if there were more multi-use trails. Consultation showed that riders in Somerset prefer circular routes as opposed to linear trails.*

Policy Statement 3.5: The County Council will support the implementation of long-distance multi-use routes where there is an identified need or benefit, provided that any change in status does not incur expensive legal costs, and any change of surface does not significantly impact on future maintenance costs.

SS3.6: *Sustrans, the national sustainable transport charity, negotiate and construct routes in Somerset to complement the National and Regional Cycle Networks. These routes are not only valuable for walkers and cyclists but also for horse riders and wheelchair users. Historically, the needs of horse riders have not always been taken into account when Sustrans negotiated agreements with landowners and also in the type of surfacing that has been chosen.*

Policy Statement 3.6: The County Council will support and work with Sustrans in developing and implementing National and Regional Cycle Networks in Somerset in return for reciprocal rights for horse riders (where possible) and those with mobility impairments

3.6 ACCESSIBLE PATHS

Accessible means many different things to many different people. However, in this context it refers to those routes that are free from the types of barriers that would prevent someone with mobility difficulties from using it. For example it may mean a route that is free from stiles, thereby making it easier for people with conditions such as arthritis to use or it may mean that it is a route completely free of any kind of barrier and has a minimum width wide enough to enable users of all kinds of wheelchairs to use it.

SS3.7: *Mobility focus groups identified that there was not only a lack of routes available for people with mobility difficulties but also a lack of information about the routes that did exist. Analysis of the network survey, will show where the barrier free PRow are in Somerset, and where there are routes with gates but no stiles, etc. It should also provide details of routes that, with minimal improvement works, could be made suitable as accessible paths.*

Action 3.7: Utilise information from the network survey to create a list of routes currently available to those less able and also put forward for assessment those routes that could be improved.

It is also unknown at present the extent of accessible paths that are available in the wider access network, provided by large landowners, trusts and charities. Therefore it is crucial that this work is integrated into Actions 4.3.

3.7 THE WIDER ACCESS NETWORK

Public rights of way are not the only off-road resource for walking, cycling and horse riding that are available to the public and one of the aims of this Plan is to develop a safe access network then it needs to take into account all other provision that exists in Somerset and look at access provision holistically.

SS3.8: *The Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 provides for a continuous linear National Trail around the English coast. Coastal access may not be completely on public rights of way but will still form part of a continuous linear route.*

Policy Statement 3.8: As Access Authority, the County Council will work with Natural England and landowners to manage and maintain the England Coast path a continuous linear route along the Somerset coast.

SS3.9: *There are a number of Unsurfaced Unclassified Roads (UURs) around the county in varying states of repair. They can improve connectivity as part of a circular or linear route for vulnerable users (particularly carriage drivers) as they are often quiet, low trafficked roads.*

Policy Statement 3.9: An appropriate level of maintenance may be sought where UURs are identified as forming part of a connective network for vulnerable users.

SS3.10: *It will not always be possible to provide full connectivity for vulnerable road users, and therefore careful highway verge management on sections of the road network where there is no off-road alternative would improve the safety of vulnerable users.*

Policy Statement 3.10: The provision or improvement of a suitable made up or grass margin may be sought where no off-road alternative is available for vulnerable users (HA 1980 s71).

SS3.11: *Natural England and the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) negotiate agri-environment agreements with landowners. The access element of*

these agreements can provide the landowner with a regular payment in return for providing permissive access. Historically, access agreements haven't always represented the needs and desires of the local users. The PRow database enables advisors to view the layer of improvement proposals that have been submitted by the public thereby making it easier to negotiate routes that the public desire. It is hoped that agri-environment schemes, with the support of Natural England, can be used as a tool in the implementation of improvements to the PRow network where landowners do not wish to dedicate permanent public rights.

Policy Statement 3.11: Where access under agri-environment schemes or permissive agreements has ceased to exist, consideration may be given to working with landowners to try and secure access on a permanent basis where there is a clear public need.

3.8 COUNTY FARMS

SS3.12: *The County Council is a landowner of several farms across Somerset, many of which have PRow over them. This provides an opportunity for the Council to take the lead as a landowner and improve the accessibility of its PRow where appropriate*

Action 3.12: Ensure that where possible and appropriate, network improvements are secured on County Farms.

3.9 COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES & COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

SS3.13: *With over 2000 County Wildlife Sites and the development of Community Woodlands taking place there is an opportunity to work with the partners to improve and develop access routes in these sites to provide safe off-road routes that are available to all to enjoy.*

Action 3.13: Work with partners to ensure that access improvements are included in the development of County Wildlife Sites and community woodlands and that wherever possible these will be multi-use routes.

3.10 HABITATS REGULATION ASSESSMENT

SS3.14 *The improvement and upgrading of existing and new Public Rights of Way can potentially lead to impacts from routes either within European and internationally designated nature conservation sites or in areas outside these sites which nonetheless ecologically support the conservation objectives of these designations. These impacts can be from increased pressure on sensitive habitats from trampling and dog fouling leading to deterioration or loss and disturbance to the resting places of species such as otters and bats. Projects and actions which affect a designated site or areas outside these which ecologically support its conservation objectives are required to be assessed under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 in order that the integrity of designated sites is maintained.*

Policy Statement 3.14: Actions, including improvements, upgrades to the public rights of way network, and potential new rights of way will comply with the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). A 'test of likely significant effect' for actions to and new rights of way which directly affect European and internationally designated sites and in areas that ecologically support the integrity of these sites.

3.11 CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A SAFER AND IMPROVED ACCESS NETWORK

SS3.15: *Public consultation revealed that the main reason for people not visiting the countryside as much as they would like was the surface condition of PRow. Surfacing is an important point to consider when developing the access network. By adopting the multi-use approach to route development it is very difficult to provide the ideal surface for each category of user, as within categories there are different preferences. However, it is better to provide off-road routes that can be shared by several different users than exclude certain users altogether. The best way to achieve a multi-use route is by upgrading a footpath to/ creating a bridleway/ restricted byway.*

Policy Statement 3.15: Any upgrading of footpaths or creations of bridleways/ restricted byways (excluding Definitive Map Modification Orders) will take into account the level of use it is likely to receive from all categories of users and any surfacing requirements will reflect this (subject to costs and future maintenance requirements).

Whilst the needs of all users will be considered in the choice of surfacing, the material used should not be to the detriment of the environment or the character of the local area.

SS3.16: *As previously mentioned, an offer of compensation may be made to the landowner(s) on land where network development is sought. The rates for compensation vary depending on different circumstances. Therefore, in most cases, land valuers will be asked to estimate the level of compensation based upon the amount of depreciation caused to the land holding as a result of the new access rights that are sought.*

Policy Statement 3.16: Land valuation will usually determine the level of compensation offered to landowners in return for the dedication of new or higher rights of access over their land.

SS3.17&3.18: *As detailed under Aim 2, there is a shortfall in the amount of resource necessary to maintain the existing network. With this in mind, any addition in length to the network as a result of development, a diversion proposal, or improvement suggestion should be, wherever possible, countered with the extinguishment of some routes where there are several routes in proximity to each other which do not meet the current or likely future needs of the public. Each case will need to be considered on its merits e.g.: new bridleways in certain situations may not add any additional requirements to the annual maintenance programme. However, a new*

route with bridges and other structures could well have large future maintenance costs. Changes to the network using public path orders, particularly in relation to development, can provide an opportunity for the upgrading of footpaths / creation of bridleways/ restricted byways as well as improving accessibility through reducing the number of limitations (stiles and gates).

Policy Statement 3.17: Rationalisation of rights of way will be a key consideration when changes to the network are proposed through public path orders or development. Future network maintenance will be an important factor when improvements are sought as part of a public path order or development proposal.

CASE STUDY - HINKLEY POINT NUCLEAR POWER STATION

A Development Consent Order (DCO) has been granted for a new nuclear power station (Hinkley Point C, (HPC)) alongside existing stations A & B in Stogursey parish on the Somerset Coast. Approximately 8 miles of existing public footpaths including part of the West Somerset Coast Path, soon to form part of the England Coast Path National Trail, were closed by order in May 2012. The DCO means that the paths will remain closed until the development is complete. The paths were initially closed to allow site preparation works to take place. It is anticipated that the new reactors will take approximately 10 years to build, after which the larger development site will retract and some of the paths will re-open but on slightly different routes to link to the proposed network of paths set out by EDF and approved by the County Council in the HPC Restoration & Enhancement Plan.

The proposed network of paths, based on officer knowledge and a desk-top exercise informed by RoWIP proposals may be subject to change depending on feasibility and consultation with landowners, parish council and other stakeholders. Funding was secured through a s106 agreement, the first phase of which is being used to undertake physical improvements to the existing network of paths in the immediate vicinity of the site as mitigation for the impact on the number of paths closed due to the site preparation works. Further funding will be used to deliver strategic improvements to the wider network. Delivery of the proposed network will involve legal and physical upgrading of a number of footpaths and in some cases creating new bridleways to form a network of multi-use paths with improved connectivity and safe emergence onto and across roads. The work will be phased in accordance with the HPC Restoration & Enhancement Plan.

Some rationalisation of the network is proposed to reflect routes which are currently used and not legally recorded and stop up other routes which are legally recorded but not used and to 'package' some proposals to make them more attractive to landowners. This is in accordance with other statements set out in the RoWIP to future-proof and make the network more sustainable in terms of future maintenance and to reflect current recreational use as required by RoWIP guidance. Further mitigation work may become likely as a result of the HPC connection project being undertaken by the National Grid with the same rationalisation and improvement principles also applying to this project.

Action 3.18: Work with developers and relevant stakeholders to streamline, develop and improve the PRoW network within and in the vicinity of development. Local mitigation and strategic improvements will be sought through public path orders and where necessary, physical works.

SS3.19: There may be instances where a Creation Order for a high priority route is not confirmed due to objections. If there is evidence to suggest that the route is or has been well used then there is potentially a legitimate case for the route being added to the Definitive Map.

Policy Statement 3.19: Where the implementation of a high priority route (that is not subject to a Definitive Map Modification application) fails, and there is sufficient evidence then an application shall be made to modify the Definitive Map and it will be investigated in accordance with the prioritisation process.

AIM 4: IMPROVE ACCESS INFORMATION

4.1 CONTEXT

To achieve some of the actions within this plan then it is necessary to improve how information is provided to the general public. Information campaigns can be complementary and effective tools to assist officers with carrying out statutory duties. Through the RoW database and interactive website, the public can view all public rights of way, their associated features, faults and public registers on the internet and can report faults that they have come across whilst out walking, riding or cycling.

4.2 SIGNAGE

As Highway Authority, the County Council has a duty to signpost all public footpaths, bridleways and byways where they leave a metalled road. Destination and distance are optional extras, which can be seen in some parts of Somerset, although the majority of signposts display only the statutory requirement of the status with a fingerboard indicating the direction.

SS4.1: Wooden signposts, whilst aesthetically more pleasing than metal ones, are easily damaged by hedge flails and agricultural vehicles and are sometimes purposefully vandalised. This means that some locations require a new signpost on a regular basis; therefore little is to be gained by spending extra money on including the destination and distance. However, it is believed that this extra information can be a deciding factor in whether people chose to use a route or not. Not everyone owns an up to date Ordnance Survey map for their locality and of those that do, some don't necessarily know how to read it, hence there is a case for including this information to encourage use.

Action 4.1: Enhanced signage and waymarking, e.g.: destination, distance, etc., may be considered on promoted routes (national, regional & local).

SS4.2: There are likely to be occasions where additional signage is necessary such as 'code of conduct' or interpretative signage for those with visual or learning difficulties.

Policy Statement 4.2: Different types of signing will be considered where it is felt it would be of considerable benefit to the public or to those with visual, mobility, learning or health difficulties.

4.3 WIDER ACCESS DATASETS

SS4.3: As highlighted under Aim 4, the access network is about more than just public rights of way. Although data layers have been put together for information such as Open Access Land, there are many other layers of access provision that are not known to the County Council or to Ordnance Survey. To inform development of the access network it is advantageous to have complete information about the entire access provision within Somerset. This information, for example, would range from the permissive routes on Woodland Trust land to public open space owned and managed by local authorities.

Action 4.3: Continue to liaise with landowners and other key stakeholders to collate and map permissive and other route information and formalise permissive access with agreements where necessary.

This information gathering exercise should also highlight non-PRoW routes that are accessible paths (see Action 3.6).

SS4.4: Once data is collected under Actions 3.6 and 4.3, it is crucial that accessible path information is highlighted and promoted through the RoW interactive mapping website and other media to raise awareness of what is available to those with mobility difficulties. The main difficulty experienced by those who attended the mobility focus groups was a lack of information about where they can go.

Action 4.4: Develop the RoW interactive mapping website to provide detailed information on easy access paths.

SS4.5: In addition to the website development, it would be beneficial to highlight promoted routes to help market the Somerset PRoW network as a tourism product. Changes in agriculture and increased disposable income have all contributed to the growth of the tourism sector in the South West to such an extent that almost a quarter of farmers have diversified into tourism. Somerset has an unusually high proportion of businesses located in market towns and rural centres based outside of Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater. However, the employment in some rural centres is often by one main employer in sectors which are predicted to decline, which underlines the importance of marketing the PRoW network as a tourism product for walking, cycling or riding (for residents and visitors)

Whilst the website currently displays the whole PRoW network, it is not clear which are the best routes to use and which ones are the most desirable for recreational purposes. Promoted routes usually fulfil both these criteria. The internet is increasingly being used, especially by visitors to search for recreational activities; e.g.: walking, riding, cycling, when on their holiday. We already have a comprehensive catalogue of promoted routes from a national to local status, however this information needs to be imported onto the database in a standardised format that can be searched by postcode, radius from a location, length of route, linear or circular, etc. The Visit Somerset website details accommodation providers and attractions. By linking this with detailed promoted route information it would make it easy for residents and visitors to find suitable promoted routes in their locality suited to their needs.

Action 4.5: Work with other access providers and Tourism partners to improve promoted route information on the internet.

4.4 EDUCATION

Many of the non-maintenance problems associated with PRoW are often as a result of a lack of knowledge by users and landowners. One of the ways that information provision can be improved is through educating users and landowners about their rights and responsibilities. For example, in the majority of cases it is the landowner

who is responsible for the maintenance of stiles and gates on PRow. However, consultation showed that many landowners are still not fully aware of their legal responsibilities with regard to PRow on their land. Equally dogs should be under close control on a PRow yet one of the most common complaints received from landowners relates to dogs worrying livestock and dog fouling.

SS4.6: *Information leaflets are a useful tool for members of the public to learn about these issues in more detail ranging from responsible dog behaviour to ploughing and cropping. There are many leaflets and booklets promoting parish walks and long distance routes. However, the highest non-statutory priority to come out of the public consultation was for information about using countryside paths. Requests for more information about routes also came out of the equestrian consultation.*

Policy Statement 4.6: Comprehensive information will be available on the County Council website on all aspects of PRow including where people can walk, ride and cycle.

SS4.7: *The focus for education of the public must start in schools, to capture the young generation and encourage responsible behaviour on PRow and in the countryside. One of the main issues that arose from the schools consultation was dog fouling on PRow that pass through school grounds/playing fields and the associated health and safety risks highlighting the fact that rights of way issues affect schools on a very local level.*

Policy Statement 4.7: Work with Education Services will continue as resources allow, with school visits from PRow staff to increase knowledge and understanding about rights of way.

SS4.8: *Work related learning is now part of the National Curriculum and Somerset County Council actively promotes itself as an employer of young people by offering work experience placements to local school and college students. A Rights of Way Work Experience scheme is in place with the theme of 'Discover, Experience, Explore'. Students taking part in the scheme will be given an opportunity to get actively involved in all the work we do from being out on site working with wardens, to examining historical maps with our Definitive Map team and working on our website. The scheme is an easy way of getting young people involved in rights of way who might never have thought of going out walking, riding and cycling before.*

Policy Statement 4.8: Work experience placements will be offered to interested students.

SS4.9: *Irresponsible dog walkers and dangerous dogs are the source of many complaints to Rights of Way officers, coming from both users and landowners. The landowner consultation highlighted that an above average proportion of landowners in the Mendip Hills and Exmoor National Park (ENP) consider out of control dogs, dog fouling and dogs worrying livestock to be serious problems for them. Bodies such as the AONBs, ENP Authority and District Councils are already tackling this problem, however, further measures may be taken through education to encourage responsible dog ownership in the countryside.*

Policy statement 4.9: Work with the District Council-based Dog Wardens to tackle the problem of dog fouling on PRow and dangerous dogs will continue, through agreed protocols, education, signing and media campaigns.

AIM 5: WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VOLUNTEERS AND KEY ORGANISATIONS

5.1 COMMUNITY PATHS PARTNERSHIP

Community Paths Partnership is an umbrella term for many initiatives. However, the essence of them all is the same, to encourage community involvement in the maintenance and improvement of the rights of way network. Community involvement and the use of volunteers should represent a cost saving thus helping limited resources to go further. It is important that the Partnership is sustainable and does not rely too heavily on administrative support or on large amounts of revenue funding.

***SS5.1:** Current initiatives include, Parish Path Liaison Officers (PPLO), Trail Watchers, Strimmer Scheme and Volunteer Working Parties. With over 90% of parishes having a PPLO and the majority of the West Somerset Coast Path, River Parrett Trail, Coleridge Way and Neroche Herepath being 'watched' by volunteers, the initiatives are very popular. The development of Volunteer Working Parties could deliver further efficiencies but is also a more complex initiative to administer.*

Action 5.1: Continue to develop and maximise the benefit of the Community Paths Partnership and review and celebrate the success of individual initiatives.

5.2 A HEALTHIER SOMERSET

Current Department of Health advice states that adults should undertake moderate activity for at least 150 minutes a week.

The recent research by the Ramblers and MacMillan Cancer Support (2013) states that physical inactivity now rivals smoking as one of the nation's biggest health problems. Experts estimate that illnesses brought about through inactivity cost up to £10billion a year nationally through sick days, health care costs and early deaths.

The research shows that walking is the most accessible physical activity, and the most popular. Walking is a free, gentle, low-impact activity that requires no special training or equipment. Promoting walking is a 'best buy' for both health and active travel. Schemes to provide improved local walking and cycling routes have typically had cost benefit ratios of 20 to 1 compared to road and rail schemes which typically have ratios of 3 to 1.

The British Horse Society recently produced a document entitled the Health Benefits of Horse Riding in the UK which revealed;-

- Horse riding stimulates mainly positive psychological feelings
- Horse riders are strongly motivated to take part in riding by the sense of wellbeing they gain from interacting with horses
- Being outdoors and in contact with nature is an important motivation for the vast majority of horse riders

Similarly, studies on cycling have shown cycling to be a healthy, low impact exercise that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and is one of the easiest ways to reduce health problems caused by a sedentary lifestyle/

It is now widely acknowledged that lack of exercise stands as a major independent risk factor for Coronary Heart Disease-currently the cause of the highest number of deaths in Somerset, as well as contributing to other risk factors such as obesity BMI calculations showed that 42% of participants were the “normal weight”. In total, 33.3% were classed as being overweight and 16% were classed as obese. 1.9% were classed as morbidly obese

A quarter of people reported doing no regular physical activity at all. Efforts should focus on encouraging those who do no regular activity to do something, as this is considered to be the area which holds the most significant public health gain.

The Walking the Way to Health initiative (WHI), run by the [Ramblers](#) and [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) aims to help more people, including those affected by cancer, discover the joys and health benefits of walking.

SS5.2: *All recent research demonstrates how valuable an asset the rights of way network is as a means to provide health benefits for local communities in Somerset. PRow and the wider access provision are a free resource that can enable people to increase their level of physical activity through walking, cycling or horse riding. Use of PRow can also be as part of some other activity whether as a hobby (fishing, bird watching) or as a utility trip to the shops or to work. Access to the countryside also makes a direct, positive contribution towards mental health and emotional well-being. The benefits for mind and body of exercising in the countryside cannot be underestimated and changes to more sustainable modes of travel will also help to reduce the growth of congestion and pollution. .*

Action 5.2: Support physical and mental health initiatives that involve the maintenance and/or use of PRow.

5.3 STAKEHOLDERS

SS5.3: *Representatives of user and landowner groups can be very useful in an advisory capacity when improving the network and often bring issues to our attention. Many of them are also statutory consultees for public path and modification orders and therefore building strong partnerships with these representatives is important to ensure that we understand what their needs and desires are and they understand what our aims and objectives are. It is equally important that we build upon existing partnerships with other government and non-governmental organisations. Working with other organisations and landowning bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Canal & Rivers Trust, Crown Estate, etc. will be important to implementing many of the actions within this Plan. By encouraging buy-in to PRow improvements from these stakeholders, the costs and benefits of projects can be shared and can be packaged as part of a bigger initiative to deliver mutual aims. This will also be particularly important when bidding for external sources of funding.*

Policy Statement 5.3: Continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders when developing, maintaining and implementing improvements to the PRow network.

The Somerset Local Access Forum is a key stakeholder and is identified as a lead partner under the Infrastructure, Access & Transport theme of the Equalities Vision and Community Cohesion Strategy 2004-2014. The Forum is comprised of one County Councillor, one District Councillor and various representatives from user, landowner and other interest backgrounds and meets 2-3 times a year to discuss access issues. An Exmoor Local Access Forum also exists as it was felt there are specific access issues within the National Park boundary that require a separate forum. Both forums have advised throughout the production of this Plan and will continue to advise as actions are implemented.

5.4 NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

The consultation with neighbouring authorities revealed some boundary issues particularly with regard to maintenance standards. The Blackdown Hills AONB, which straddles the Devon/Somerset boundary, and South Somerset where it borders Dorset were both highlighted as areas requiring attention, whether it be general maintenance or the installation of structures such as bridges. A common feature of the Somerset boundary is severance either by arterial roads or rivers and because the PRow networks were established in parallel rather than in conjunction with each other there are locations along the border where vulnerable users are forced onto major roads, should they wish to go from Somerset to a neighbouring county. There are also issues of change of status and modification applications for routes that cross the boundary.

Policy Statement 5.4: Continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities to resolve cross-border maintenance, legal and improvement issues and to ensure consistency in the signage and maintenance standards of promoted routes.

5.5 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

***SS5.5:** Transporting Somerset, the County Council service charged with providing public transport, already publishes some bus service leaflets that are aimed at users of promoted routes such as the West Somerset Coast Path and the Coleridge Way. The public consultation showed that only 6% use public transport to access the countryside. An issue also raised in the mobility focus groups was the limited availability of low-line buses on certain services and that most buses could only take one wheelchair at a time.*

Policy Statement 5.5: Continue to work in partnership with Transporting Somerset and transport providers to develop information about services serving promoted trails and popular, accessible routes and ensure that these services are as accessible as possible for visually and mobility impaired people and for cyclists

STATEMENT OF ACTION

FUNDING

Future Transport Plan 2011-2026

Whilst FTP money can be justified for certain activities that sufficiently deliver on transport objectives and performance indicators, there are many RoWIP actions that will fall outside of FTP funding. Those actions that deliver against the shared priorities are illustrated in the following priority tables, however this is not indicative that these actions shall receive FTP funding.

Revenue and other funding streams

There is no revenue funding for improvements and it is unlikely that there will ever be any dedicated funding to deliver all the actions in the following tables. Therefore, delivering statutory duties through initiatives such as the Community Paths Partnership will help revenue and capital budgets spread further. As far as possible, improvements to the existing network will be built into the normal maintenance programme or delivered through planning gain. Efficiency savings brought about by the technological advances will help to counteract any extra workload that may be placed on the Rights of Way Service.

Partnership working will be crucial to achieving many of the following actions by demonstrating the links that the improvement and use of the PRow network has with tourism, health and wellbeing, accessibility, and economic regeneration.

QUICK REFERENCE TABLES

Thematic tables

The following tables are a summary of the policy statements and actions throughout RoWIP2. They are grouped into tables that reflect the Aim of this document the order they appear. The right hand column is a guide to the relative priority of each action; high, medium or low. These priorities have been arrived at as a result of informed officer judgement, taking into account the statutory duties that SCC must perform, the statutory guidance for RoWIPs and Transport Plans, results of in-depth public consultation processes, and ongoing discussions with various colleagues and stakeholders.

Policy statements are shown in *italics* in the following tables and have not been given a priority rating as it is not applicable.

Ref	AIM 1: Raise the strategic profile of the PRow network	Priority
Action 1.1	Liase with all LPAs to ensure that any Public Open Space Strategy and their LDF (including Minerals & Waste Development Framework) in general has regard for the RoWIP, any priority routes and the PRow network.	HIGH
Action 1.2	Continue to inform the TAMP process and ensure where possible that appropriate monies are secured to maintain the existing assets and install those that are missing.	HIGH
Action 1.3	Continue to liaise with Natural England and Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group officers to ensure that the RoWIP and any identified priority routes are taken into account when negotiating agri-environment/land management scheme applications.	MEDIUM
Action 1.4	Continue to ensure that improvements to the rights of way network are secured through planning applications and that the necessary funds and agreements are sought to implement improvements.	HIGH
Action 1.5	Continue to follow guidance set out in Circular 1/09 or subsequent versions of guidance related to rights of way affected by development.	HIGH
<i>Policy Statement 1.6</i>	<i>The RoW Service shall support all relevant strategies/plans and where possible help partners to achieve their aims especially where they help deliver on Actions within the RoWIP.</i>	N/A

Ref	AIM 2: Delivery of statutory functions in a financially efficient way	Priority
Action 2.1	Maintain the 2012/13 % ease of use until 2023, and if possible, improve it.	HIGH
<i>Policy Statement 2.2</i>	<i>When significant expenditure is required on the maintenance of a right of way, we will consider a diversion of the route to reduce installation and future maintenance costs.</i>	N/A
Action 2.3	Work towards producing an updated Definitive Map & Statement and reducing the backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map & Statement.	HIGH
<i>Policy Statement 2.4</i>	<i>Continue to review how we prioritise and process the backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map & Statement and ensure that the Statement of Priorities accords with RoWIP principles.</i>	N/A

Ref	AIM 3: Develop a safe and improved access network	Priority
<i>Policy Statement 3.1</i>	<i>When improving PRow or creating new PRow, an inclusive approach will be taken from the outset, so that wherever possible the routes will be accessible to horse riders, cyclists, walkers and those with visual and mobility impairments.</i>	N/A

<i>Policy Statement 3.2</i>	<i>When creating, improving or diverting PRow, we will endeavour to improve connectivity of the network and improve safety when emergence onto or crossing a road is part of the proposal.</i>	N/A
Action 3.3	Continue to assess urban/urban fringe PRow in Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater and the market towns using the results of the network survey to identify PRow that would be suitable for furniture removal or replacement with less restrictive furniture to improve accessibility around our most densely populated areas.	HIGH
Action 3.4	Work with Policy Planners and others to identify PRow on the urban fringe that link to nearby communities, schools, services, public open space etc, that could be upgraded/improved to restricted byway or bridleway to serve as multi-use routes.	HIGH
<i>Policy Statement 3.5</i>	<i>The County Council will support the implementation of long-distance multi-use routes where there is an identified need or benefit, and providing that any change in status does not incur expensive legal costs, and any change of surface does not significantly impact on future maintenance costs.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.6</i>	<i>The County Council will support and work with Sustrans in developing and implementing National and Regional Cycle Networks in Somerset, in return for reciprocal rights for horse riders (where possible) and those with mobility impairments.</i>	N/A
Action 3.7	Utilise information from the network survey to create a list of routes currently available to those less able and also put forward for assessment those routes that could be improved.	HIGH
<i>Policy Statement 3.8</i>	<i>As Highway and Access Authority, the County Council will work with Natural England and landowners to manage and maintain the England Coast Path, a continuous linear route along the Somerset coast.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.9</i>	<i>An appropriate level of maintenance may be sought where UURs are identified as forming part of a connective network for vulnerable users.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.10</i>	<i>The provision or improvement of a suitable made-up or grass margin may be sought where no off-road alternative is available for vulnerable users (HA 1980 s71).</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.11</i>	<i>Where access under agri-environment schemes or permissive agreements has ceased to exist, consideration may be given to working with landowners to try and secure access on a permanent basis where there is a clear public need.</i>	N/A
Action 3.12	Ensure that where possible and appropriate, network improvements are secured on County Farms.	MEDIUM

Action 3.13	Work with partners to ensure that access improvements are included in the development of County Wildlife Sites and community woodlands and that wherever possible these will be multi-use routes.	LOW
<i>Policy Statement 3.14</i>	<i>Actions, including improvements, upgrades to the public rights of way network, and potential new rights of way will comply with the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). A 'test of likely significant effect' for actions to and new rights of way which directly affect European and internationally designated sites and in areas that ecologically support the integrity of these sites.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.15</i>	<i>Any upgrading of footpaths or creations of bridleways/restricted byways (excluding Definitive Map Modification Orders) will take into account the level of use it is likely to receive from all categories of users and the type of surfacing used will reflect this (subject to costs and future maintenance requirements).</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.16</i>	<i>Land valuation will usually determine the level of compensation offered to landowners in return for the dedication of new or higher rights of access over their land.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 3.17</i>	<i>Rationalisation of rights of way will be a key consideration, when changes to the network are proposed through public path orders or development. Future network maintenance will be an important factor when improvements are sought as part of a public path order or development proposal.</i>	N/A
Action 3.18	Work with developers and relevant stakeholders to streamline, develop and improve the PRow network within and in the vicinity of development. Local mitigation and strategic improvements will be sought through public path orders and where necessary, physical works.	HIGH
<i>Policy Statement 3.19</i>	<i>Where the implementation of a high priority route (that is not subject to a Definitive Map Modification application) fails, and there is sufficient evidence then an application shall be made to modify the Definitive Map and it will be investigated in accordance with the prioritisation process.</i>	N/A

Ref	AIM 4: Improve access information provision	Priority
Action 4.1	Enhanced signage and waymarking, e.g.: destination, distance, etc., may be considered on promoted routes (national, regional & local).	LOW
<i>Policy Statement 4.2</i>	<i>Different types of signing will be considered where it is felt it would be of considerable benefit to the public or to those with visual, mobility, learning or health difficulties.</i>	N/A
Action 4.3	Continue to liaise with landowners and other key stakeholders to collate and map permissive and other route information and formalise permissive access with agreements where necessary.	MEDIUM

Action 4.4	Develop the interactive mapping website to provide detailed information on easy access paths.	MEDIUM
Action 4.5	Work with other access providers and Tourism partners to improve promoted route information on the internet.	MEDIUM
<i>Policy Statement 4.6</i>	<i>Comprehensive information will be available on the County Council website on all aspects of PRow including where people can walk, ride and cycle.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 4.7</i>	<i>Work with the Education Services will continue as resources allow, with school visits from PRow staff to increase knowledge and understanding about rights of way.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 4.8</i>	<i>Work experience placements will be offered to interested students.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 4.9</i>	<i>Work with the District Council-based Dog Wardens to tackle the problem of dog fouling on PRow and dangerous dogs will continue, through agreed protocols, education, signing and media campaigns.</i>	N/A

Ref	AIM 5: Work in partnership with volunteers and key organisations	Priority
Action 5.1	Continue to develop and maximise the benefit of the Community Paths Partnership and review and celebrate the success of individual initiatives.	HIGH
Action 5.2	Support physical and mental health initiatives that involve the maintenance and/or use of PRow	MEDIUM
<i>Policy Statement 5.3</i>	<i>Continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders when developing, maintaining and implementing improvements to the PRow network.</i>	N/A
<i>Policy Statement 5.4</i>	<i>Continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities to resolve cross-border maintenance, legal and improvement issues and to ensure consistency in the signage and maintenance standards of promoted routes.</i>	N/A
Action 5.5	Continue to work in partnership with Transporting Somerset and transport providers to develop information about services serving promoted trails and popular, accessible routes and ensure that these services are as accessible as possible for visually and mobility impaired people and for cyclists.	LOW

Priority tables

The following quick reference tables show the actions grouped by their priority. The high priority actions appear first in the following table. These tables also show the staff resource, cost, timescale, FTP links and partners involved against each action.

Staff:

L:	Low	- up to one full time member of staff
M:	Medium	- up to two full time members of staff
H:	High	- more than two full time members of staff

Cost (does not include staff costs):

- :	None	- no capital cost or very minimal
£:	Low	- £1,000 - £5,000 capital costs
££:	Medium	- £5,000 - £15,000 capital costs
£££:	High	- £15,000+ capital costs

+	Low revenue on-costs
++:	Medium revenue on-costs
+++:	High revenue on-costs

Timescale:

S:	Short	- 1-2 years
M:	Medium	- 2-5 years
L:	Long	- 5+ years
O:	Ongoing	- action without a defined timescale
(C):	Commenced	- action already underway

These timescales are an indication of how long an action point would take if it were to be implemented and not the amount of time from the adoption of this RoWIP. Annual business plans will have more detailed timescales once it has been established what funding streams are available for implementation.

Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy:

The links to the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) are illustrated by:

- PC Making a Positive Contribution
- LS Living Sustainably
- EWB Ensuring Economic Well Being
- EA Enjoying and Achieving
- SS Staying Safe
- BH Being Healthy

Future Transport Plan:

The links to the FTP are illustrated by:

- EG Supporting economic growth
- RC Reduce carbon emissions
- E Promote equality of opportunity
- SSH Contribute to better safety, security and health
- QoL Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment

These relate respectively to the 5 national transport goals. Although many links can be demonstrated, actions will also need to deliver against FTP aims to attract any potential funding.

Ref	HIGH Priority Actions	Staff	Cost	Timescale	SCS (PC,LS,EWB, EA,SS,BH)	FTP (EG,CC,E, SSH,QoL)	Key organisations
Action 1.1	Liaise with all LPAs to ensure that any Public Open Space Strategy and their LDF (including Minerals & Waste Development Framework) in general has regard for the RoWIP, any priority routes	L	-	O(C)	PC, LS, EWB, SS, BH	EG, RC, E, SSH, QoL	District councils.

	and the PRoW network.						
Action 1.2	Continue to inform the TAMP process and ensure where possible that appropriate monies are secured to maintain the existing assets and install those that are missing.	L	-	O	LS, EWB	EG, RC, E, SSH, QoL	SCC departments, ENPA
Action 1.4	Continue to ensure that improvements to the rights of way network are secured through planning applications and that the necessary funds and agreements are sought to implement improvements. .	L	+	O	LS, EWB,	EG, RC, E, SSH, QoL	SCC departments, district councils, ENPA
Action 1.5	Continue to follow guidance set out in Circular 1/09 or subsequent versions of guidance related to to rights of way affected by development	O	-	O			
Action 2.1	Maintain the 2012/13 % ease of use until 2023, and if possible, improve it.	H	£££+++	O	PC, LS, EWB, EA, SS, BH	EG, RC, E, SSH, QoL	ENPA, Community Paths Partnership volunteers.
Action 2.3	Work towards producing an updated Definitive Map & Statement and reducing the backlog of applications to modify the Definitive Map & Statement.	H	-	M+O			
Action 3.3	Continue to assess urban/urban fringe PRoW in Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater and the market towns using the results of the network survey to identify PRoW that	L	-	S	PC, EWB, SS, BH	E, SSH, QoL	ENPA.

	would be suitable for furniture removal or replacement with less restrictive furniture to improve accessibility around our most densely populated areas.						
Action 3.4	Work with Policy Planners and others to identify PRow on the urban fringe that link to nearby communities, schools, services, public open space etc, that could be upgraded/improved to restricted byway or bridleway to serve as multi-use routes.	L	-	O(C)	PC, EWB, SS, BH	EG, RC, E, SSH, QoL	SCC departments, district councils.
Action 3.7	Utilise information from the network survey to create a list of routes currently available to those less able and also put forward for assessment those routes that could be improved.	L	-	S	PC, EA, BH	E, SSH, QoL	ENPA.
Action 3.17	Work with developers and relevant stakeholders to streamline, develop and improve the PRow network within and in the vicinity of development. Local mitigation and strategic improvements will be sought through public path orders and where necessary, physical works.	L	--+	O	PC, LS, EWB, SS	RC	SCC departments, district/town/parish councils, user groups, developers.
Action 5.1	Continue to develop and maximise the benefit of the Community Paths Partnership and review and celebrate the success of individual	L	£+	O(C)	PC, LS, EWB, EA, SS, BH	EG, RC, SSH, QoL	ENPA.

	initiatives.						
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Ref	MEDIUM Priority Actions	Staff	Cost	Timescale	SCS (PC,LS,EWB, EA,SS,BH)	FTP (EG,CC,E, SSH,QoL)	Partners
Action 1.3	Continue to liaise with Natural England and Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group officers to ensure that the RoWIP and any identified priority routes are taken into account when negotiating agri-environment/land management scheme applications.	L	-	O	PC, EWB, EA, SS	SSH, QoL	Natural England.
Action 3.12	Ensure that where possible and appropriate, network improvements are secured on County Farms.	L	££+	M(C)	PC, EA, SS	E, SSH, QoL	SCC departments
Action 4.3	Continue to liaise with landowners and other key stakeholders to collate and map permissive and other route information and formalise permissive access with agreements where necessary.	L	£+	O(C)	PC, SS	E, SSH, QoL	District councils, ENPA, large landowning bodies, e.g: Forestry Commission.
Action 4.4	Develop the PRoW interactive mapping website to provide detailed information on easy access paths.	M	-	M	PC, EA, BH	E, SSH, QoL	Stakeholders, landowning bodies, user groups.
Action 4.5	Work with other access providers and Tourism partners to improve promoted route information on the internet.	M	££+	L(C)	PC, EWB, EA	EG	SCC departments, district/town/parish councils, AONBs, TICs.
Action 5.2	Support physical and mental health initiatives that involve the	L	££+	M	PC, EA, BH	E, SSH, QoL	Health and Wellbeing Board,

	maintenance and/or use of PRoW						Walking the Way to Health officers.
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Ref	LOW Priority Actions	Staff	Cost	Timescale	SCS (PC,LS,EWB, EA,SS,BH)	FTP (EG,CC,E, SSH,QoL)	Partners
Action 3.13	Work with partners to ensure that access improvements are included in the development of County Wildlife Sites and community woodlands and that wherever possible these will be multi-use routes.	L	££++	L	PC, EA, BH	E, SSH, QoL	SCC departments.
Action 4.1	Enhanced signage and waymarking, e.g.: destination, distance, etc., may be considered on promoted routes (national, regional & local).	L	££+	O	PC, EWB	E, QoL	District councils, AONBs, parish/town councils, ENPA.
Action 5.5	Continue to work in partnership with Transporting Somerset and transport providers to develop information about services serving promoted trails and popular, accessible routes and ensure that these services are as accessible as possible for visually and mobility impaired people and for cyclists.	L	££+	L	PC, LS, EWB	EG, RC, E, SSH, QoL	SCC Transporting Somerset, bus & train companies.

The distribution of actions across the priority tables demonstrates that the majority of actions raised in RoWIP2 are high priorities. The majority of them require minimal capital investment but require a level of staff resource that is not currently available. There are also actions that are the initial stages of a proposal which could become much more resource intensive with time and this will be monitored and reviewed.

The minority of actions that have high costs often require significant capital investment and also cause significant revenue on-costs.

NEXT STEPS

Implementation

Actions shall be addressed in priority order so far as is possible within available resources.

Monitoring and evaluation

Where possible, processes may be put in place to monitor the impact and/or success of an action. This will be particularly relevant to route development where people counters can be installed before and after improvements to illustrate any trends that may occur..

RoWIP review

The RoWIP will be reviewed in 2023 or earlier if deemed necessary.

RoW Legislation

There may be further policy changes as a result of changes in legislation.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix B: Maintenance & Enforcement Policy April 2014

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This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.



RNID typetalk

Maintenance Policy

The management of the Maintenance function of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in Somerset is governed on a national level primarily by the statutory legislation of the Countryside Act 1968, the Highways Act 1980, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW 2000), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC 2006) and a variety of regulations, guidance and central government policies.

Foremost Duties and Powers relating to Public Rights of Way

<p>Duties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which we are the highway authority, including any roadside waste which forms part of it. [Highways [HA80 s130; amended CROW2000 s63]</i> • <i>To have regard to the needs of people with mobility problems when authorising stiles etc [CROW2000 s69]</i> • To maintain highways maintainable at public expense [HA80 s41] • To enforce provision re; ploughing of footpaths or bridleways [HA80 s34; amended RWA90 s1] • To erect and maintain signposts where any Public Right of Way Traffic (PRoW) leaves a metalled road [CA68 s27] • To erect such signposts if in the opinion of the Highway Authority this is required to assist persons unfamiliar with the locality to follow the way [CA68 s27] unless Parish Councils specifically request otherwise • Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 [DDA95]
<p>Powers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To erect/maintain signposts along any FP/BW/BOAT [CA68 s27] • Powers as to gates across highways [HA80 s145] • Powers to prosecute on obstructions [HA80 s137] • Authorisation of new barrier [HA80 115b & 66 as amended by CRoW s70] • Duty to maintain highways maintainable at public expense [HA80 s 41] • Maintenance of privately maintainable footpaths & bridleways [HA80 s50], • To prosecute for damaging highway, etc [HA80 s131] • To prosecute for disturbance of surface of certain highways [HA80 s131A] • Construction of bridge maintainable at public expense [HA80 s91] • To reconstruct a bridge forming part of a public path [HA80 s92] • To repair stiles etc [HA80 s146]

- To drain highways [HA80 s100]
- To remove unauthorised marks [HA80 s132]
- To remove structures [HA80 s143]
- Ploughing etc of footpath or bridleway [HA80 s134]
- Power to order offender to remove obstruction [HA80 137ZA]
- Interference by crops [HA80 s137A]
- Powers of the Highway Authority in relation to interference with highway [HA80 schedule 12A]
- Power to remove structures from highway [HA80 s143]
- Action on the deposit of things on highway [HA80] s148(c)
- Prohibition on keeping bulls on land crossed by PRow [WCA81 s 59]
- To make Traffic Regulation Orders [RTRA84 s1]
- To make temporary Traffic Regulation Orders [RTRA84 s14 & s 16]
- To require removal of barbed wire [HA8084 s164]
- To require the removal of signs [RTRA s69]
- Action on certain kinds of danger or annoyance for highway users [HA80 s161]
- Carrying Firearms in a public place [FA68 s 19]
- Damage to highway consequent on exclusion of sun and wind [HA80 s136]
- To require felling or cutting of trees or hedges that are overhanging or a danger [HA80 s154; amended CROW2000 s65]
- Fear or provocation of violence [POA86 s4]
- Action on displaying on public paths notices deterring public use [NPACA49 s57]
- To authorise erection of stiles etc on FP or BW [HA80 s147]
- Regulation of cycle racing on public ways [RTA88 s31]
- Control of use of FP and BW for motor vehicle trials [RTA88 s33]
- Action on Dangerous land adjoining street [HA80 s 165]

1.1 Prioritisation of Public Rights of Way maintenance

The following table illustrates the category system for paths. Given resource pressures, there is a need to prioritise the resolution of problems on the network by making a judgement on the severity of the fault and the category of path that it occurs on. Any faults that pose a serious health and safety risk to members of the public will be treated as a high priority. However, where there is no immediate health and safety risk, faults shall be resolved using the categories below with Category 1 paths being the highest priority, etc. Parish/Town Councils and user groups will be engaged in deciding upon the categories of paths within their areas.

Category	Description
1*	National & regional promoted trails.
1	District and parish level promoted routes. Well used local routes.
2	Occasionally used routes.
3	All other paths.

Section 130A Highways Act 1980 (as amended by CRow 2000) allows members of the public to serve notice on the County Council to take action to remove certain obstructions from specific PRow. If the complainant is not satisfied that the obstruction has been removed there is recourse to seek an Order from the Magistrates Court to remove the obstruction.

Highways Act 1980 Section 130A (as amended by CRow 2000 section 63)

1.2 Signposting and Waymarking

The County Council will ensure that public rights of way are signed in accordance with their correct legal status (unless it considers signage unnecessary and the parish council agree) where they leave metalled routes.

Installation of new or replacement rights of way signposts will normally be by provision of a timber finger post with directional arrow and status of the right of way. Some sealed surface paths in urban areas will not be signed.

Where the right of way forms part of a promoted route (eg. National Trails, regional routes, other long-distance paths or local circular walks) the Council may consider more detailed signage and waymarking, such as named routes, specific destinations, distances, etc. and will seek to meet the extra costs involved either from internal or external funding sources. Waymarking will be consistent with standard guidance as set out by Natural England in "Waymarking Public Rights of Way"

The County Council will provide adequate waymarking or other signage as appropriate wherever there might otherwise be difficulty in following the route of a path.

Countryside Act 1968 s27

1.3 Maintenance of stiles and gates

It is the duty of the landowner to ensure that any stiles and gates are kept in a good state of repair. The County Council's duty only extends to ensuring that the landowner complies with this obligation and to provide a grant of 25% towards repairing or replacing such structures. The County Council has a discretionary power to extend this grant.

Highways Act 1980 s 146

When considering the replacement or installation of new gates and stiles, the County Council will seek the least restrictive option following the priority principle of BS 5709 of gap, then gate, then stile; The Council will not permit replacement furniture of a

more restrictive character. Where the Council requests a less restrictive option it may meet any extra costs involved (e.g. where a kissing-gate is installed to replace a stile) either from internal or external funding sources.

CRoW Act 2000 section 69 & Highways Act 1980 sections 175A & 145

Circumstances for which the County Council can provide authorisation for the erection of new stiles/ gates is that the structures are required for stock control purposes, as set out in section 147 HA 1980. Barriers can also be authorised under Highways Act 1980 sections 115b & 66 as amended by the CRoW Act 2000 section 70.

Highways Act 1980 sections 147, 115b & 66 as amended by CRoW Act 2000 section 70.

1.4. Maintenance of surfaces

The surface of most PRoWs is vested in the County Council as Highway Authority, the landowners interest only extends to the sub soil. The County Council will maintain the surface of PRoWs appropriate to their designated route category and status so that they are safe and fit for all lawful public use. Consideration may be made for surface improvements necessary to satisfy new duties set out in the CRoW Act 2000 and the Equalities Act 2010.

Ways over which there are private vehicular rights will receive no higher level of maintenance other than is necessary for the use which is made of the path by the public. The County Council will take enforcement action in appropriate cases if the surface of a PRoW is unlawfully disturbed or damaged. (Vehicular damage on BOATS does not apply).

The Council will consider making Traffic Regulation Orders on routes receiving regular or significant damage from vehicular use whether lawful or unlawful, in accordance with DETR guidance 'Making the Best of Byways'.

The County Council is also responsible for ensuring that vegetation growing in the surface of the PRoW is kept under control and does not make the route difficult to use. The County Council undertakes annual maintenance, as required, one, two or three cuts on paths dependent upon route hierarchy and vegetation type.

A significant number of PRoW coincide with private drives/ roads used to gain access to property. Some of these may have been surfaced in the past by the County Council. Where this is the case, such routes will now only be maintained to a standard fit for their public use, which is likely to be a much lower standard than that necessary for private vehicular use. Any application for an improvement/change to the surface of a PRoW will require a commitment from the applicant to undertake future maintenance of the enhanced surface and may also require a binding legal agreement.

The presumption is made against the authorisation of new sealed surfaces on existing unsurfaced PRoW, unless it can be demonstrated that such a surface is compatible with the existing status and use of the way, and a need for such a change of surface is shown, the Council has to have in mind the increased

maintenance responsibility incurred if authorisation is given. Authorisation may be conditional upon a commitment to third party maintenance in future. In most cases the specification will require the approval of Somerset Highways.

Similarly the preference of the Council is for paths to remain unenclosed. Should a landowner wish to fence or enclose a public right of way they are, by virtue of paragraph 36 (4) Highways Act 1980, obliged to undertake future maintenance of the surface of the enclosed path as the surface of an enclosed path ceases to be maintainable at public expense.

***Highway Act 1980 sections 36 (4), 41, 50.131, 131A and Schedule 12A
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 sections 1, 14, 16***

1.5 Maintenance of bridges, culverts and other structures

The County Council is responsible for most footbridges, but where a public footpath or bridleway crosses a bridge, over which there are private agricultural/ vehicular rights the landowner may also be responsible for maintenance and repairs. The County Council may consider a discretionary grant towards these works. If such a bridge is washed away, or has to be demolished for reasons of safety, then the County Council may agree with the landowner to replace it with a footbridge or bridle bridge, as appropriate if vehicular use is no longer required. The County Council would be wholly responsible for the new structure.

Repair/replacement and provision of new minor structures will be prioritised on the basis of risk and public demand (except in so far as is necessary to comply with its legal maintenance duties), or those, which form strategic links as identified in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).

Repair/replacement/provision of significant structures will be prioritised primarily on the basis of structural condition and the risk of danger to the public. Missing bridge locations compared to existing dangerous structures do not pose as great a danger to the public, therefore missing bridges will be treated as low priority. However, examples of discretionary considerations in prioritising significant structural works include the relative impact it is having on the local network, public use, heritage value, and whether early intervention will be financially beneficial in the long term.

The Rail Authority, Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Land Drainage Boards and Canal & Rivers Trust retain maintenance liability for many of their structures.

The County Council would make no contributory grant to such bodies for maintenance of these structures but would still retain responsibility for the surface of the path over these structures.

Other lawful structures necessary to safeguard the availability of a PRow requiring maintenance works may receive a contributory grant from the County Council dependent upon other private interests in the structure.

Highways Act 1980 sections 91, 92, 328(2) & 146

1.6 Drainage and flood alleviation works

Somerset County Council shall comply with Highways Act 1980, section 100 regarding drainage on and off all public rights of way.

In responding to flood alleviation schemes that cause a PRow to flood more frequently or significantly increase the current depth of flooding, the County Council will request that provision be made to protect the rights of the public to the use and

enjoyment of PRow. This may be achieved through engineering works, provision of bridges or a diversion of the way.

Agreement will be sought that the future maintenance liability of any new structure resulting from this provision and all associated costs will rest with the organisation carrying out the flood alleviation project.

Where the County Council considers the affect of any such flood alleviation schemes to be of a de minimis nature, no further provision for the ways may be required.

Highways Act 1980, section 100

1.7 Surveys and inspections

Inspections of the rights of way network will occur in two ways:

1.7.1 Ease of use surveys, covering a 10% sample of the RoW network length each year. (2.5% of the network to be surveyed in May, August, November and February). Over a 10 year period, the whole network will have been surveyed, therefore the default path inspection programme is once every 10 years.

1.7.2 In addition to the above, enforcement and maintenance inspections will take place reactively as a result of a report or complaint. These will be geographically restricted to the vicinity of the occurrence and will be prioritised on risk assessment basis of route category and level of risk posed to the public.

1.8 Cycle racing and motor vehicle trials on Public Rights of Way

Somerset County Council will permit such events over PRow assuming full compliance by organisers and participants to section 31 & section 33 of Road Traffic Act 1988 (RTA 1988). Authorisation may be withheld in cases where a trial has previously failed to fulfil their duties under RTA 1988, or where other good reasons for doing so exist.

Road Traffic Act 1988 sections 31 & 33

1.9 Dogs on Public Rights of Way

In instances where the County Council has been made aware of dogs worrying livestock, dog fouling or any other issues involving dogs on PRow, signs will be provided to landowners requesting users to keep their dogs under close control, or requesting the dog owner to remove dog faeces. Where significant problems arise, liaison with District Councils as to the possible introduction of byelaws will take place.

No existing stile/gate provision will be changed to allow access for dogs onto PRow, consideration will be made in cases where both the relevant landowners and users have requested it. However projects carried out through the RoWIP will encourage landowners to permit new dog gates in areas close to population in order to improve access and prevent damage to existing path furniture.

See RoW Enforcement Policy, section 2.7

1.10 Dangerous land adjoining a Public Right of Way

From time to time the County Council encounters unfenced dangers on adjoining land, which present hazards to path users. Local Authorities have a duty to protect path users from such dangers. The District Council has the first obligation to take action under section 165 Highways Act 1980. If it does not do so the County Council may act in default.

The County Council will request the owner of the adjacent land to remove or adequately fence the danger, a contribution may be offered. The County Council can require the owner of the dangerous land to carry out the necessary works by service of notice. If the owner does not comply with the notice, the Council may carry out the work and recover the costs from the owner.

Highways Act 1980 section165.

1.11 Funding of maintenance works & improvements

Routine maintenance work will be funded by the Rights of Way maintenance budget. Structures and bridges over 6m are funded through Capital monies.

Improvement schemes and non-statutory works will be addressed through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) or through other sources of funding. The Council will not contribute to the improvement and repair of private roads (except in so far as is necessary to comply with its legal maintenance duties) over which there are also rights of way, unless the damage has been caused due to lawful public use of the way (excluding public use of BOATs)

The Council will not, unless it is necessary in the highway interest, contribute to the provision or maintenance of new fencing on or adjacent to PRow. Improvement schemes addressed through the RoWIP may include the provision of fencing works.

1.12 Endorsement of promoted trails

All new promoted routes in which the County Council is involved will require road junction and crossings to be inspected and approved by SCC Highways Development Control Team prior to their publication.

The RoW Service will require evidence of agreement of permissive paths which form part of a promoted trail for a period of a minimum of 10 years from date of endorsement, and be satisfied with the terms of any such agreement.

Routes developed by individuals/organisations without prior consultation with the Highway Authority will not be endorsed for inclusion on O.S maps, and unauthorised waymarking may be removed. Individuals and organizations will be encouraged to discuss such ideas with the RoW Service in the first instance to assess how their proposal fits in with the strategic RoWIP.

Highways Act 1980 section132

1.13 Historical and Archaeological considerations

When PRow maintenance or improvement works may conflict with sites recorded on Somerset Historic Environment Record liaison must be undertaken in consultation with the Historic Environment Service.

1.14 Ecological/Biodiversity aspects

Rights of Way maintenance and Improvement schemes will comply with guidelines as set out in the Somerset Highways Biodiversity Action Plan.

Any use of herbicides to comply with the Somerset Highways Biodiversity Action Plan.

1.15 Environment and Planning

When physical maintenance or improvement works are proposed, it is important to consider the visual impact of such proposals on the wider landscape, particularly within the boundary of any special environmental designation such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Special Landscape Areas (SLA)s and Exmoor National Park. Consultation with Local Planning Authorities will be made on cases where planning permission may be required for new routes.

1.16 Contractors/Tenders

The RoW department will comply with the Contract Standing Orders concerning the letting of contracts included in the County Councils constitution.

1.17 Cycling.

The County Council may permit the development of cycleways over existing PRow assuming consent has been sought from all relevant landowners/occupiers, and provided that this does not adversely affect existing public rights. Where suitable the County Council will require new cyclepaths to be available for multi use (i.e wheelchair and equestrian use)

1.18 Permissive Path Agreements

The County Council may enter into Permissive Path Agreements with landowners where it considers there is an apparent benefit to the public in doing so. Permissive Path Agreements will vary in terms and conditions dependent on each case.

Agreements may also be considered as part of a RoWIP proposal.

Where the County Council has a policy as outlined above it will consider in appropriate cases whether an exception should be made to it on its merits.

Rights of Way Enforcement Policy

2. Protection of Public Rights

Somerset County Council will carry out their duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are highway authority as per Highways Act 1980 section 130. For prioritisation of maintenance and removal of obstructions from PRow please refer to section 1.1.

Land managers will be notified of their obligations as soon as any obstruction is identified. If their voluntary cooperation in removing obstructions is not forthcoming appropriate enforcement action will be taken, this may include immediate removal of the obstruction concerned, the service of a statutory notice and/or the prosecution of the persons responsible. The Council will seek to recover costs of action from the person causing the obstruction.

The main statutory offences relevant to Public Rights of Way are:

Highways Act 1980 sections 131(1)(b), 131(1)(c), 131(2), 131A, 132, 134, 137, 137ZA inserted by CRow, 137A, 148(c), 164, and schedule 12A.

2.1 Ploughing and Cropping

Somerset County Council will comply with s134 & s137A Highways Act 1980. Where a footpath or bridleway is ploughed, it must be reinstated within 14 days beginning from when the surface is first disturbed, and 24 hours for any further disturbance such as harrowing and drilling.

Where a crop (other than grass) has been planted or sown on land crossed by a public right of way and renders it inconvenient, the occupier has a duty to ensure that the line on the ground of the public right of way is indicated to not less than the minimum width. Additionally, the occupier has a duty to prevent the crop from encroaching within that width throughout the growing season.

The County Council will normally take direct action to remove crops or to reinstate paths where landowners have failed in the duties imposed on them by the Highways Act 1980 s134 and s137A. The appropriate enforcement action contained in the Highways Act 1980 will be followed or the Council will take action under its common law powers. Consideration will be given to prosecuting repeat offenders. All reasonable costs will be reclaimed.

2.2 RoW reinstatement widths

Somerset County Council will assume the minimum widths of PRowWs as defined in Highways Act 1980, schedule 12A, it will consider evidence to the contrary on a case by case basis.

If the width of a way is recorded e.g. by inclusion in the statement accompanying the definitive map, that width is the minimum width. If it is not recorded the minimum width is:

- cross field footpath 1.0m
- headland footpath 1.5m
- cross field bridleway 2m
- headland bridleway or carriageway (whether cross field or headland) 3 metres

If the path is deemed unusable or inconvenient to the public a greater width may be sought. If it is demonstrated to the County Council's satisfaction that disturbance has occurred, but it is not materially affecting the path or the rights of users, and a convenient alternative route has been provided the County Council may consider this as acceptable and take no further action.

Highways Act 1980 section 134 & 137A and schedule 12a

2.3 Obstructions and Encroachment

The County Council has a statutory duty to remove all obstructions and encroachments to PRow, *Highways Act 1980 section 130*. It has various powers under the Highways Act 1980 to serve notice on persons responsible for obstructions and to take other enforcement action.

The County Council also has a common law right to remove anything that it believes constitutes an obstruction, or encroachment on the public highway without consultation with any other party.

Land managers will be notified of their obligations as soon as any obstruction is identified. Should they fail in their duty appropriate enforcement action will be taken where possible. Consideration will be given to prosecuting repeat offenders. All reasonable costs will be reclaimed. (Obstructions include unauthorised stiles, gates, etc)

If it is demonstrated to the County Council's satisfaction that encroachment has occurred, but it is not materially affecting the path or the rights of users, the County Council may take this into account in deciding what priority should be given in securing its removal. Persons responsible will be warned of the position and the consequences of any further encroachment.

Highways Act sections 148(c), 143, 137 & 137ZA

2.4 Bulls and dangerous animals

Land managers will be notified of their obligations under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 59, following any report. Consideration will be given to prosecuting repeat offenders. All reasonable costs will be reclaimed.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 59

2.5 Electric and barbed wire fences adjoining a Public Right of Way

If, in the opinion of the County Council, any electric or barbed wire fence alongside a public right of way is a danger or nuisance, then the County Council will ask the owner to make the fence safe for members of the public using the path. If the owner refuses or fails to do so, the County Council will serve legal notice requiring the owner to remove the source of danger within a specified time; there is a right of appeal to the Magistrates Court. Failure to comply with the Notice may result in the Council taking Court proceedings.

Highways Act 1980 sections 164 & 148(c)

2.6 Firearms on Public Rights of Way

Following any report landowners and occupiers will be notified of their obligations under section 161 Highways Act 1980 and section 19 Firearms Act 1968 to ensure that no public nuisance occurs

The County Council will, where it is concerned for the safety of the public using the right of way, refer complaints to the police and consider whether any other enforcement action can be taken.

Highways Act 1980 section 161 and Firearms Act 1968 section 19.

2.7 Hedges and trees adjacent to Public Rights of Way

The County Council will ensure that landowners and occupiers adjacent to any public rights of way meet their responsibilities under Highways Act 1980 section 136 and 154. Failure to do so may result in the County Council taking action to remove overhanging vegetation, or to secure its removal by the landowner. Where formal notice is served all reasonable costs will be reclaimed.

Highways Act 1980 section 136 & 154

2.8 Intimidating dogs

It is an offence to keep a dangerous or intimidating dog on a public right of way. It may also be considered a 'public nuisance'. If it is out of control in a public place it is an offence under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

The County Council will request the landowner or occupier to take action so that the dog no longer deters members of the public from using the right of way and consider any further enforcement action that might be taken. The County Council may also inform the police and will advise complainants to notify the police directly.

Public nuisance under common law and Dangerous dogs Act 1991

2.9 Intimidation or threatening behaviour intended to deter use of a Public Right of Way

Following any report of intimidation or threatening behaviour the County Council will seek to address any underlying issues which have led to the situation arising. Consideration will be given as to what enforcement action might be taken and/or whether complaints should be referred to the police.

Public Order Act 1986 section 4

2.10 Misleading signs and notices affecting Public Rights of Way

Following a report of a misleading sign erected on a PRow, land managers will be notified of their obligations under Highways Act 1980 section 132 and National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 section 57. The County Council may request landowners to remove any misleading signs or notices, failure to do so may result in the County Council taking direct action and/or prosecution: all reasonable costs will be reclaimed when possible.

Highways Act 1980 section 132 & National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 section 57, Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 section 69

2.11 Single Payment Scheme, Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

All offences of non-compliance of obligations under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition 8 (Public Rights of Way) will be reported to Rural Payments Agency as stated in Single Payment Scheme Cross Compliance Handbook for England 2005 Edition.

'Single Payment Scheme Cross Compliance Handbook for England 2005 Edition' RPA & defra

2.12 Protection of Identity

The names and addresses of members of the public who report obstructions and other difficulties confidentially will not be revealed without the prior consent of the person concerned unless the Council is required to do so by law.

Where the County Council has a policy as outlined above it will consider in appropriate cases whether an exception should be made to it on its merits.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix C: Network Assessment August 2005-refreshed 2014

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RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

NETWORK ASSESSMENT

August 2005 (refreshed 2014)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The network assessment is a vital part in producing an effective Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). It will help to determine the areas of the County that require network improvement. In this instance network improvement relates to the addition, regrading and extinguishment of public rights of way as this report is considering network provision only. The conclusions of the network assessment in conjunction with the consultation findings and existing knowledge will help to formulate policies and priorities.

Since the network assessment in 2005, the rights of way network in Somerset has not significantly changed so the majority of the information contained in the network assessment has not been amended. The document has been updated to take into account recent applications to modify the Definitive Map and also the impact of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 in relation to former Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs), Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS)

1.1 Local Rights of Way

The Statutory Guidance for RoWIPs (Nov 2002) refers to 'local rights of way'. In this context this is taken to mean footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways within the authority's area and the ways within the authority's area which are shown in a Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) as restricted byways or byways open to all traffic. Therefore it is not just the DMS but also cycle tracks.

1.2 Definitive Map & Statement

The DMS is the legal record of public rights of way. The DMS for Somerset is held by the County Council and was completed in September 1972. The changes in agricultural practice, employment demographics and society in general has led to a remarkable difference in the way a majority of the rights of way network is used today. Although many rights of way are still used for utility purposes (especially in urban areas), the majority of rural paths that were once church, school or farm workers' paths are now used solely for recreational purposes.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 states that DMS should be under continuous review through modification orders, diversions, creation agreements, creation orders and extinguishment. Somerset County Council currently has approximately 289 modification applications and several diversions awaiting processing. It should be noted that if all these applications were to be resolved immediately, the network would look somewhat different, especially for cyclists and horse riders. However, the current backlog of applications is such that it will be a significant number of years before these claims are resolved.

1.3 Network Condition

The condition of rights of way since 2002/03 has been measured using 'ease of use' criteria (formerly Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178). Although no longer a national indicator, the survey methodology remains a useful management tool in assessing the condition of the network and the state of path furniture and surfaces. Every year trained volunteers survey a 10% sample of the network which also forms part of the inspection programme.

2 WALKING

2.1 Network Provision

Walking is the one activity that the vast majority of people undertake at some point in their life. Walking can essentially be broken down into two types, utility and recreational. Whether for getting to work, school or the shops, or for going on a weekend hike or stroll the actual routes used can often be the same.

2.1.1 Public Rights of Way

Walkers are allowed on all categories of rights of way. These are;

- public footpaths,
- public bridleways,
- restricted byways,
- and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs).

2.1.2 Other Access

There is a vast array of other means of walking access available to the public in the urban and rural environments that are not classified as public rights of way. They are;

- county roads and adopted footways,
- cycleways / cycle tracks,
- open access land (including registered commons),
- public open space,
- beaches
- permissive routes free at point of access [provided by landowners, Woodland Trust, National Trust, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts, Environment Agency, Environmental Stewardship (DEFRA), RSPB, , Crown Estate, Local Authorities, Bristol Water, Wessex Water]
- permissive routes where a fee (or subscription) is charged (provided by landowners, National Trust, RSPB),
- unrecorded routes .

Permissive access varies from very informal to a formal agreement between the landowning body and the Highway Authority/other organisation being in place.

2.2 Map-based Assessments

2.2.1 Public rights of way and UUR density map

To provide an initial assessment of the network provision for walkers a parish-based density map of all the public rights of way and unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs) has been produced. UURs have been included in this assessment because with suitable maintenance regimes in place they could serve as a valuable addition to the public rights of way network; being lightly (if at all) trafficked, unmetalled roads suitable for all rights of way users. This map can be found at Appendix A-1.

The main findings from this exercise are detailed in the table below.

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING
Whole of Somerset	All parishes have at least a density of 400m of PRoW/UUR per sq. km.
Urban areas	All well served apart from areas to the east of Bridgwater and Burnham and to south and east of Yeovil.
Mid north Exmoor	To the mid-north of Exmoor there is a high density of RoW & UURs however this is in contrast to the south and west of Exmoor where the density is low.
Mid-north Mendip, northern Quantock Hills, Minehead area, and the south west of Yeovil and west and east of Wincanton.	Particularly well served by RoW & UURs.
Levels and Moors and Exmoor.	Largest areas with a lower density of PRoW/UUR.

The outstanding modification applications have been overlaid with the density map to see whether they would make any difference. In the main, they are all in areas that are well served apart from 3 or 4 that are in the South Somerset, the south east of Taunton Deane and Exmoor.

The following table shows the top and bottom 5 parishes with regard to density of PRoW & UURs.

TOP 5	DENSITY m/sq.km	BOTTOM 5	DENSITY m/sq.km
Norton sub Hamdon	6805	Exmoor	579
Coleford	4797	Bratton Seymour	565
Holcombe	4672	Bridgwater Without	540
Shipham	4238	Cricket St Thomas	523
Chilton Trinity	4158	Othery	445

2.2.2 Multi-layer map

In addition to the density map assessment the following layers have been compiled to provide a cartographical representation of where the public have the right to walk - Appendix C-1

- all public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, BOATs),
- all county roads and adopted footways,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs),
- all land classified under Countryside & Rights of Way Act as Open Access Land or Registered Common Land,
- Sustrans National Cycle Network,
- Certain cycleways,
- all Forestry Commission land that is open to the public,
- all known permissive paths (free at point of access),

- all known access agreements under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme,
- possible areas of severance-trunk roads and motorways managed by the Highways Agency,
- all relevant modification applications are shown to highlight potential changes to the network if the applications are successful.

By looking at all these layers on the countywide map (Appendix C-1) it is possible to identify where there are a lack of walking routes and also perhaps where there is an unnecessary surplus. The following findings are the result of this exercise for Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
M5, all A roads and railway lines, main rivers and drains.	Will cause severance to a greater or lesser extent.	Requires more detailed assessment.
A39 to south of Minehead.	Possible severance of population to network south of A39.	Only one bridleway meeting A39 on south side at Periton.
A38 (& M5) to south of Wellington.	Possible severance of population to network south of A38 & M5.	Two footpaths and two unclassified roads to the south of A38.
M5 to east of Bridgwater.	Possible severance of population to network east of M5.	Cul de sac footpath and unclassified lane. Only one footpath (footbridge over M5). Further south there are footpaths alongside River Parrett and Taunton/Bridgwater canal that go under M5.
A3088 to south-west of Yeovil.	Possible severance of population as well as a lack of network.	Area is more industrial estate as opposed to residential.
A303 to south of Wincanton.	Possible severance of population to network south of A303.	Two cul-de-sac footpaths.
Exmoor.	Fewer routes and poorer connectivity.	Plenty of Open Access land that may compensate this.
Elworthy area.	Area with no RoW.	Forestry Commission access at Combe Sydenham Country Park to compensate this.
Just north of Ilminster.	Area with no RoW.	The presence of Merryfield Airfield
Somerset Levels and Moors.	Fewer routes and poorer connectivity although the Poldens	Many droves are used on a de facto basis as a substitute for RoW.

	are relatively well served either side of the A39.	Many public rights probably already acquired.
Area to the north of Wells.	Few RoW with little connectivity combined with many B & C roads.	There is some Open Access land that may compensate for this.

2.3 Condition

Due to the fact that the map based assessment is a desk exercise, it is unable to take into account the actual condition of all the routes and areas used for the assessment. The most recent information available from the 2012/13 'ease of use' survey reveals that 77.7% of the public rights of way network is 'easy to use', based on a 10% sample of the network. The condition of the existing network could have an actual consequence on the demands of users in relation to route development and further assessment shall be required in the future.

2.3.1 Geography

The geography of an area not only has an influence on the condition of the walking routes but also affects the desirability to walk them. The geology and relief will affect the drainage of land and thus impact on how readily routes become poached or rutted. The relief of land will also have an impact on condition through erosion but also on how easy it is to walk. Appendix D is a map of Somerset coloured according to the height of the land. It provides at a glance an idea of the topography of Somerset. The main areas of elevation are Exmoor and the Quantock, Blackdown, Brendon, and Mendip Hills. The remainder of Somerset is fairly flat e.g.: the Somerset Levels and Moors. The Vale of Taunton Deane is also relatively flat.

2.3.2 Severance & safety

Severance can be divided into two types; that which is physical severance of the walker's access, i.e.: footpath that stops at a parish boundary or the motorway, and that which is severance as a result of safety concerns. When the M5 was constructed many rights of way became cul-de-sacs, whereas with trunk roads like the A303, side-road orders diverted rights of way but left unpleasant and dangerous stretches of walking and road crossings. This is also in part due to the growth in volume and speed of traffic. Many public rights of way finish on a county road with no connecting right of way for many hundreds of metres therefore forcing the user to walk on the road. This situation can often result in the right of way not being used due to the danger of walking on certain roads.

Analysis of all recorded road traffic accidents involving pedestrians between 2009-2013 shows that there were 726 accidents involving pedestrians (19 fatal, 155 serious and 552 slight), resulting in 752 pedestrian casualties (19 fatal, 104 serious and 576 slight).

The following points also arose from the analysis:

- 2.5% of all pedestrian casualties were fatal
- 20.9% of all pedestrian casualties were serious
- 76.6% of all pedestrian casualties were slight

Pedestrian casualties by age group:

16 – 30 years: 180 pedestrian casualties (4 fatal, 34 serious & 142 slight), this represented 24% of all pedestrian casualties for this period

31 – 50 years: 163 pedestrian casualties (6 fatal, 35 serious & 122 slight), this represented 22% of all pedestrian casualties for this period

50+ years: 226 pedestrian casualties (7 fatal, 63 serious & 156 slight), this represented 30% of all pedestrian casualties for this period

- 34% of all accidents involving pedestrians occurred on A class roads, 11% occurred on B class roads and 55% occurred on unclassified roads.
- 33% of all accidents involving pedestrians occurred between the hours of 8am and 1pm, 28% occurred between 3pm and 6pm.
- 34% of all accidents involving pedestrians occurred on a Thursday or Friday and 21% occurred on a Saturday or Sunday

Urban and Rural:

In this case the queries run on the database relate to “urban” as roads having a speed limit of 30 mph or less (which is most often the case in residential areas). All casualties occurring on roads with speed limits of 40mph or more will be classified as “rural”.

Urban – speed limit 30 mph or less:

- There were 631 accidents involving pedestrians (9 fatal, 125 serious, 497 slight)
- These accidents resulted in 652 pedestrian casualties (9 fatal, 127 serious, 516 slight)

Rural – speed limit 40 mph or more:

- There were 95 accidents involving pedestrians (10 fatal, 30 serious, 55 slight)
- These accidents resulted in 100 pedestrian casualties (10 fatal, 30 serious, 60 slight)

Open Access Land does not necessarily represent all land that can be safely accessed. The nature of terrain and the presence of shake holes and other geographical features is likely to put a lot of walkers off accessing some of the Open Access Land with the likelihood being that most walkers will stick to the existing public rights of way.

2.3.3 Boundary issues

Somerset has a county boundary some 356km in length, bordering 5 other Local Authorities. When assessing the provision at the edges of the county, especially where there are large settlements it is essential to consider the access provision on the edge of the neighbouring authorities. There are also areas of recreational/landscape designation overlapping the Somerset border, i.e.: Mendip Hills AONB, Blackdown Hills AONB, Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB and Exmoor National Park, thus requiring greater coordination between local authorities and the dedicated staff for each area. The following table contains the findings from looking at the access provision for walkers at the boundary of Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET (bordering County)	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Brean/Uphill. (North Somerset)	No routes across the River Axe to North Somerset.	
Bleadon to Lympsham/Eastertown. (North Somerset)	No links apart from A370.	
Farleigh Hungerford. (B&NES)	Cul-de-sac route.	County boundary
A36 near boundary with Wiltshire. (Wilts)	Lack of route connectivity.	
From A303 south to southeast of Cucklington. (Dorset)	No RoW going into Dorset.	Cucklington itself is well served.
A30 either side of Milborne Port. (Dorset)	Poor connectivity.	
Southeast Yeovil. (Dorset)	No network going into Dorset between Trent and Yeovil Junction.	The railway and River Yeo are the main factors in this as well as the administrative boundary.
A37 (Dorset)	Poor connectivity.	
Clapton to Devon boundary. (Dorset)	Severance of routes.	Caused by River Axe
West of Wambrook. (Devon)	Cul-de-sac route.	County boundary.
Yarcombe to Bishopswood. (Devon)	Severance of network.	Caused by River Yarty and A303.
Bishopswood to Churchinford. (Devon)	No network.	
Blackdown Hills Ridge Road. (Devon)	Poor connectivity.	
Skilgate. (Devon)	Cul-de-sac route.	County boundary.
Either side of Exebridge. (Devon)	Severance of network.	River Exe.
East Anstey. (Devon)	Poor connectivity.	

2.3.4 Individuality and commonality

One of the biggest parameters when assessing the network provision is the individual taste of members of the public in terms of what they like most out of a walk, however there are certain things that most walkers have in common, e.g: preferring circular walks to linear walks.

2.3.5 Visitor attractions

There are elements of the landscape that will always attract walkers, whether they are local residents or tourists. It is important that these attractors are as accessible as possible whilst not compromising the actual attraction or the interests of the landowner.

The County Council, Mendip Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park Authority record and monitor the level of use of certain routes and more work will need to be done in areas of high visitor pressure where the accessibility is poor and/or the environment (ecological or historical) is being compromised.

2.3.6 Population density

When looking at route development, any proposal should represent value for money in terms of benefiting the most number of people. Appendix B-1 shows dots representing 100 people overlaid with the PRoW & UUR density. Although a percentage of the population will choose to take transport to walk in other areas of the county (and outside of the county) we should at least be providing a network and encouraging the use of such a network on the fringes of main urban areas. By looking at Appendix B-1 it would appear that east of Bridgwater, east and south of Burnham-on-Sea and east of Yeovil are areas adjacent to high population areas that have a relatively low PRoW & UUR density. All other urban areas and market towns have a relatively high density of routes. Although, the groups of parishes on the Levels and Moors that have low densities of PRoW & UURs do not contain any major urban areas, the population is still considerable.

Any potential improvements would have to be assessed against RoWIP prioritisation criteria which would not necessarily exclude a proposal on the basis that it did not benefit a large number of people.

2.3.7 Completeness of data

Due to the nature of public access being made up of several different categories it is difficult to ensure that when undertaking such desk exercises that all the necessary information is available. One of the main data layers missing from the assessment was the public open space and amenity land that is owned/managed by the County/District Councils. This information was requested from the District Councils, however most of them were not in a position to give such data. Other missing information is permissive access provided by charities such as Woodland Trust and RSPB.

2.3.8 Long Distance Trails

There are three regional trails in Somerset promoted by the County Council- one of these is the West Somerset Coast Path which runs from Steart to Minehead. This will be incorporated into The England Coast Path National

Trail which runs along the coast of most of Somerset between Brean Down and Minehead where it connects to the South West Coast Path National Trail. In addition to this there are a number of other trails promoted by other organisations and individuals. Most areas of the county are covered by these trails apart from the area of Sedgemoor between Burnham-on-Sea and Wells.

2.4 Key findings

- Walkers are well served in all parishes in terms of density of walking routes with the lowest being 445m / sq.km.
- Modification applications (if confirmed) would improve areas of lower density in South Somerset, south east Taunton Deane area and some of Exmoor.
- Severance by principal roads would appear to be an issue on the edges of Burnham, Bridgwater, Wellington, Minehead, Yeovil and Wincanton.
- Severance at the county boundary is an issue often caused by major rivers or lack of connecting routes.
- Provision of network could be improved to the east of Burnham and Bridgwater and to the east of Yeovil.
- Further assessment of urban areas and principal road network will be required.

Although this exercise has identified areas that may require route development or issues for further investigation, more work is needed to gauge the current or future level of use/demand.

3 IMPAIRED MOBILITY

Those with impaired mobility, whether it is as a result of visual impairment, arthritis, spinal injury or a whole range of other disabling conditions, have a reduced length of local rights of way available to them due to many different factors,

- condition of access route,
- gradient of access route,
- width restrictions,
- type and standard of path furniture, e.g. stiles
- lack of suitable facilities at start/end points (car park, accessible toilets),
- lack of information.

3.1 Network Provision

Little is known about the location and level of provision for those with impaired mobility. It is believed the majority of accessible paths in Somerset are provided through private landowning bodies, charitable or otherwise on permissive routes, e.g.: National Trust (Fyne Court). Enquiries to gather such information from landowning bodies have been unsuccessful. Provision will be addressed through the Accessibility Policies in the Future Transport Plan.

3.2 Map-based Assessment

Due to the lack of knowledge of existing network provision it is of no benefit to do a map-based assessment until further research has been undertaken.

The following table is a provisional guide to routes that are already known about.

ROUTES AVAILABLE TO THOSE WITH IMPAIRED MOBILITY	
ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY	PERMISSIVE
Palace Fields, Wells	Fyne Court (all ability trail)
Ham Hill Country Park	North Hill, Bossington
R. Parrett Trail at Langport	Cheddar reservoir
Trull to Taunton	Charterhouse, Mendip AONB
East Huntspill	Staple Plain
River/canal paths, Taunton	Webber's Post, Dunkery Hill
Kilve	Robber's Bridge, Brendon area
Cothelstone Hill	
Wimbleball reservoir	
Ilminster to Peasmarsh	

3.3 Key Findings

- More information needs to be gathered on what provision actually exists before any judgement can be taken as to how and where route development takes place.

4 CYCLING

4.1 Network Provision

As with walking, cycling can be broken down into two types, utility and recreational. However, there are many more sub-groups, which are linked to the different categories of route status that cyclists can use. On-road cycling is addressed through the Future Transport Plan's Cycling Strategy, therefore for the purposes of this assessment only off-road cycling will be considered. Off-road cycling can be separated into two sub-groups, flat cycling along purpose built trails such as parts of Sustrans National Cycle Network, towpaths, disused railway lines, etc., and mountain biking.

4.1.1 Public Rights of Way

Cyclists are allowed on the following categories of public rights of way:

- public bridleways,
- restricted byways,
- and BOATs.

4.1.2 Other Access

Cyclists are probably more reliant on other access provision than walkers and horse riders, with the reason for this relating to the fact that cyclists were not taken into account when the Definitive Map was created. It was only through the Countryside Act 1968 that cyclists were given the right to ride on bridleways. Further legislation in 1984 (Cycle Tracks Act) enabled public footpaths to be converted to cycle tracks although there is no requirement to show these routes on the Definitive Map. Other access for cyclists, apart from public rights of way, is as follows,

- county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs),
- cycleways and trails,
- permissive routes free at point of access (provided by landowners, , Local Authorities, Forestry Commission, etc.)
- permissive routes where a fee (or subscription) is charged (provided by landowners),
- unrecorded routes.

4.2 Map-based Assessments

4.2.1 Public rights of way and UUR density map

To provide an initial assessment of the network provision for cyclists a parish-based density map of all the public rights of way (excluding footpaths) and unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs) has been produced (Appendix A-2).

The main findings from this exercise are detailed in the following table.

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING
Quantock & Brendons Hills, Exmoor, Minehead area, northwest Mendip, and main urban areas of Taunton and Bridgwater.	Relatively well served.
Frome & Wellington	Relatively well served
Langport through to Puckington and Norton Fitwarren to Nynehead.	Groups of four or more parishes where there are no cycling routes.
Rest of Somerset	Poorly served with sporadic patches with no provision.

The outstanding modification applications for bridleway, Restricted Byway or BOAT have been overlaid with the density map to see whether they would make any difference (see Appendix A-2). The applications are mostly in South Somerset District and south east Taunton Deane and may make a difference in some parishes with low density. Otherwise there are some applications in Exmoor which are in high density areas. It should be borne in mind that these routes may only be suitable for mountain biking and even then may not be desirable to most mountain bikers due to a lack of gradient or too many gates.

The following table shows the top five parishes for off-road cycling route density.

TOP 5	DENSITY m/sq.km
Over Stowey	2645
Minehead	2626
Shipham	2564
Holford	2186
East Quantoxhead	1934

45 parishes had no routes at all.

4.2.2 Multi-layer map

In addition to the density map the following layers have been compiled to provide a cartographical representation of where the public have the right to cycle-, Appendix C-2

- all public bridleways, restricted byways, BOATs,
- all county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs),
- Sustrans National Cycle Network,
- certain cycleways,
- all known permissive cycleways (free at point of access),

- possible areas of severance-trunk roads and motorways managed by the Highways Agency,

- all relevant modification applications are shown to highlight potential changes to the network if the applications are successful.

By looking at all these layers on the countywide map (Appendix C-2) it is possible to identify where there are a lack of off-road cycling routes and also perhaps where there is any unnecessary surplus. The following findings are the result of this exercise for Somerset County, with the second half relating to mountain biking provision:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Chard – Ilminster, Mells – Radstock, Taunton – Bridgwater, Glastonbury, Cheddar – North Somerset.	National Cycle Network inter-urban link trails (with some on-road sections).	Very much for the flat off-road cyclist as opposed to mountain bikers.
Taunton & Bridgwater.	Only two urban areas that are well served with off-road cycleways.	The flat topography of both areas is perhaps the main reason behind this.
Yeovil.	Poorly served by cycleways for such a big urban area.	
Exmoor National	Well served with	Not necessarily suitable

Park, Black Down (Mendip Hills), and Quantock Hills.	bridleways with good connectivity.	for flat cycling and probably more suited to mountain bikers.
Rest of Somerset.	Little if any provision for flat cycling and mountain biking is limited on a fragmented bridleway network.	Mountain biking and flat cycling are predetermined largely by the relief of an area and it is clear that the majority of the National Cycle Network has been developed in the flattest areas of Somerset with the west of Somerset having very few routes for flat cycling.

4.3 Condition

As for walkers (see 2.3) apart from the additional fact that the number and nature of gates/barriers on a cycling route will impact on the desirability of a route.

4.3.1 Geography

As for walkers (see 2.3.1).

4.3.2 Severance & safety

The issue of severance and safety is largely the same as for walkers (see 2.3.2), however whereas walkers will often be able to walk on a pavement/verge beside a carriageway (where a right of way meets a road), cyclists will have to ride on the road exposing them to greater danger from vehicular traffic. The issue of safety will prevent many cyclists (particular young families) from riding on a road and therefore the connectivity of routes is an issue.

Analysis of accidents reported in the years 2009-2013 involving a pedal cyclists shows that there were 673 accidents involving pedal cyclists (8 fatal, 106 serious and 559 slight), resulting in 666 pedal cyclist casualties (19 fatal, 104 serious and 576 slight).

The following points also arose from the analysis:

- 1.2% of all pedal cyclist casualties were fatal
- 15.6% of all pedal cyclist casualties were serious
- 83.2% of all pedal cyclist casualties were slight

Pedal cyclist casualties by age group:

16 – 30 years: 183 pedal cyclist casualties (1 fatal, 19 serious & 163 slight), this represented 27% of all pedal cyclist casualties for this period

31 – 50 years: 226 pedal cyclist casualties (2 fatal, 39 serious & 185 slight), this represented 34% of all pedal cyclist casualties for this period

50+ years: 136 pedal cyclist casualties (4 fatal, 32 serious & 100 slight), this represented 20% of all pedal cyclist casualties for this period

- 39% of all accidents involving pedal cyclists occurred on A class roads, 9% occurred on B class roads and 52% occurred on unclassified roads.
- 18% of all accidents involving pedal cyclists occurred between the hours of 7am and 8 am 20% occurred between 4pm and 6pm.
- 36% of all accidents involving pedel cyclists occurred on a Tuesday or Wednesday and 21% occurred on a Saturday or Sunday

Urban and Rural:

Urban – speed limit 30 mph or less:

- There were 524 accidents involving pedal cyclists (3 fatal, 68 serious, 453 slight)
- These accidents resulted in 520 pedal cyclist casualties (3 fatal, 66 serious, 451 slight)

Rural – speed limit 40 mph or more:

- There were 149 accidents involving pedal cyclist (5 fatal, 38 serious, 106 slight)
- These accidents resulted in 146 pedal cyclist casualties (5 fatal, 38 serious, 103 slight)

Severance will also occur due to ‘change of status’ anomalies that occur at administrative boundaries, e.g.: bridleway turns into a footpath.

4.3.3 Boundary issues

The following table contains the findings from looking at the access provision for cyclists at the boundary of Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
River Axe, Brean. (North Somerset)	NCN Route 26 returns to the road to enter Somerset.	
Cheddar to Winscombe/Shipham. (North Somerset)	Lack of any routes in between.	If Strawberry Line extension is implemented this will improve the network in the general area with potential links to the wider network.
Bleadon to Lymsham. (North Somerset)	No off-road routes – A370 is only crossing of River Axe.	
Blagdon to East Harptree and east of Norton St Philip.	No routes.	

(B&NES)		
East of Litton. (B&NES)	Cul-de-sac bridleway.	County boundary.
A36 near boundary. (Wilts.)	Network lacking connectivity.	
Longleat area. (Wilts.)	Change of status from footpath to bridleway.	County boundary.
South of Longleat. (Wilts.)	Limited network.	May be compensated by permissive access in woodland.
Beckington/Rode Parish boundary. (Wilts)	Missing link as well as a change of status.	
From A303 south to southeast of Cucklington. (Dorset)	No cycling RoW going into Dorset.	Cucklington itself is well served.
Cucklington to Purse Caundle. (Dorset)	Only footpaths at boundary.	
A30 either side of Milborne Port. (Dorset)	Poor connectivity.	
Southeast Yeovil. (Dorset)	No network going into Dorset between Trent and Yeovil Junction.	The railway and River Yeo are the main factors in this as well as the administrative boundary.
A37. (Dorset)	Poor connectivity.	
Clapton to Devon boundary. (Dorset)	Severance of routes.	Caused by River Axe
Yarcombe to Bishopswood. (Devon)	Severance of network.	Caused by River Yarty and A303.
Bishopswood to Churchinford. (Devon)	No network.	
Blackdown Hills Ridge Road. (Devon)	Poor connectivity.	
Skilgate. (Devon)	Cul-de-sac route.	County boundary.
Either side of Exebridge. (Devon)	Severance of network.	River Exe.
East Anstey. (Devon)	Poor connectivity.	

4.3.4 Individuality and commonality

As for walkers (see 2.3.5)

4.3.5 Population density

Appendix B-2 shows dots representing 100 people overlaid with the density of PRow of bridleway status or above including UURs and cycle routes. The major urban areas of Taunton and Bridgwater appear to be well served. The Quantock Hills and West Somerset have the highest concentrations of

cycling routes, which are mainly comprised of rights of way and are more suited to mountain bikers as opposed to flat off-road cycling. The Quantocks Hills are relatively close to two of the main populated areas, Bridgwater and Taunton. There is a lack of/low density of routes between Wellington and Taunton, and the density of routes surrounding the urban areas of Burnham-on-Sea, Frome, Street and Wellington could be improved. Using cycling route density in this instance could be misleading, especially where there are big parishes, and particularly if considering flat off-road cycling as the PRow (that are largely unsuitable for this kind of cycling) will skew the density.

4.3.6 Completeness of data

Compiling a definitive list of routes where the public have the right to cycle is as complicated for walkers if not more so. Since the establishment of Sustrans and the development of the National Cycle Network there has been much confusion over rights and responsibilities for such routes. SCC highways Information Team compiled the layer used in the multi-layer assessment based on the Best Value Code of Good Practice, however the layer is by no means definitive.

4.3.7 Long Distance Trails

There are currently 5 active/proposed routes of the NCN going through Somerset (3, 24, 25, 26, & 33) as well as Regional Route 30. The routes are at various stages of development. These routes will be developed in association with Sustrans and other stakeholders as funding and opportunities allow. There are also promoted mountain bike routes around the county as well as on-road routes.

4.4 Key Findings

- Difficult to make firm conclusions due to the unknown condition and suitability of bridleways for normal flat cycling. However it is important to include bridleways as cyclists have the right to use them and with minimal expense a bridleway could be made suitable (where deemed necessary), without the legal process of creating a new route.
- The presumption is that the majority of bridleways are only suitable for mountain biking.
- Exmoor, Minehead area, Brendon, Quantock, and Mendip Hills all have relatively high density of bridleways for mountain biking.
- Taunton and Bridgwater have relatively good density of cycling routes.
- Although Yeovil would appear to have a good density of cycling routes, closer inspection shows that there are few cycle routes within the urban area.
- The National Cycle Network is helping to connect urban areas.
- Principal roads and rivers are the main issues at the boundary of Somerset.
- Outside of the good mountain biking areas, Taunton, Bridgwater and the NCN, provision is poor.
- The Future Transport Plan (2011-16) is supplemented by modal strategies, including a cycling strategy. As part of this strategy, Cycle

Network Development Plans and Network Development Maps will be developed for the main urban areas and market towns. The network plans and maps will build upon previous work undertaken to set out the aspirations for future cycle networks across the county.

5.0 HORSE RIDING

5.1 Network Provision

Horse riding nowadays is very much a recreational pursuit with a few isolated cases where it is still for utility purposes. Horses require exercising on a regular basis and in many cases this is done so on the wider highway network (roads and rights of way).

5.1.1 Public Rights of Way

Horse riders are allowed on the following categories of public rights of way,

- public bridleways,
- restricted byways,
- BOATs.

5.1.2 Other Access

As a result of the growth in the numbers and the use of private motor vehicles, supplementary access to the existing rights of way riding network is crucial for many horse riders. The other access available for horse riders is as follows,

- county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs),
- some open access land with de facto rights
- some registered commons
- some beaches
- permissive routes free at point of access [provided by landowners, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Environmental Stewardship (DEFRA), Local Authorities, Bristol Water, Wessex Water, etc.]
- permissive routes where a fee (or subscription) is charged (provided by landowners, National Trust, etc), i.e.: toll rides,
- unrecorded routes

5.2 Map-based Assessments

5.2.1 Public rights of way and UUR density map

To provide an initial assessment of the network provision for horse riders a parish-based density map of all the public rights of way (excluding footpaths) and unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs) has been produced-Appendix A-3

The main findings from this exercise are detailed in the table below

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING
-------------------------	----------------

Whole of Somerset.	Density levels are far lower than those for walkers.
Quantock and Mendip Hills and Exmoor.	Relatively high density of riding routes.
South-east of Somerset.	Relatively high density in places although there are pockets with no riding network
Rest of Somerset.	Patchy density with a approximately a sixth of parishes with no riding routes.
Between Taunton and Wellington, Bridgwater area (excluding Quantock Hills & Chedzoy/Middlezoy), north and mid-east Sedgemoor, east of Chard heading northwards, and north-eastern edge of Somerset.	Low density if not lacking in riding routes completely.

The outstanding modification applications for bridleway, restricted byway or BOAT have been overlaid with the density map to see whether they would make any difference (see Appendix A-3). The majority of potential upgrades to bridleway are in the South Somerset and, to a lesser extent, Exmoor and Taunton Deane areas. If the orders are confirmed, these applications could make a difference in a lot of low density South Somerset and Taunton Deane parishes but not much difference in the Exmoor parishes most of which are high density.

The following table shows the top 5 parishes for riding route density.

TOP 5	DENSITY m/sq.km
Over Stowey	2645
Minehead	2626
Shipham	2564
Holford	2186
East Quantoxhead	1934

55 parishes had no riding PRow/UUR routes at all.

5.2.2 Multi-layer map

In addition to the density map the following layers have been compiled to provide a cartographical representation of where the public have the right to ride,- Appendix C-3

- all public bridleways, restricted byways, BOATs,
- all county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs),
- all known permissive bridleways (free at point of access),
- possible areas of severance-trunk roads and motorways managed by the Highways Agency,
- all relevant modification applications are shown to highlight potential changes to the network if the applications are successful.

By looking at all these layers on the countywide (Appendix C-3) map it is possible to identify where there are a lack of horse riding routes and also perhaps where there is any unnecessary surplus. The following findings are the result of this exercise for Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Around Taunton & towards Wellington, between Bridgwater, Quantock Hills and the coast, and Somerset levels & moors.	Off-road riding network non-existent apart from the Neroche Herepath and a small number of bridleways to the east of Bridgwater.	Possibly off-set by unrecorded routes.
Quantock Hills, Black Down (Mendip Hills), Exmoor from Minehead south to Dulverton.	Well served with riding routes with good connectivity.	
North-east of Shepton Mallet and beyond to the border, eastern edge of Somerset, and around Chard.	Very sparse network with little connectivity.	
Very west of Somerset.	Relatively well served but possible issues of connectivity.	Possibly off-set by unrecorded routes.
Border with neighbouring authorities.	Several riding routes terminate at the border.	Change of status, poor bridge maintenance, etc. could act as severance to further network.
A398 from Devon north towards A39 and then A39 westwards to Devon border, and A37 from A303 towards Shepton Mallet.	Severance of existing networks either side of the roads.	Danger of main roads may result in adjoining bridleways not being used thus reducing the size of the local network.

5.3. Condition

As for walkers (see 2.3) but in addition, as with cyclists, the number and nature of gates along a route will have a large impact on the desirability of a route.

5.3.1 Geography

As for walkers (see 2.3.1).

5.3.2 Severance & safety

As for walkers (see 2.3.2) and cyclists (see 4.3.2). Two of the main determinants in where horse riders go to ride are (apart from network that is

available); the experience of the rider, and the character of the horse, and combined, these factors can reduce the network available to riders due to a lack of suitably connected routes.

Analysis of accidents reported in the years 2009-2013 involving a ridden horse shows that there were 10 accidents, these were all slight accidents. These accidents resulted in 10 slight injuries to horse riders. The following points also arose from the analysis:

The ages of the horse riders injured were:

- 16-30 years – 4 slight casualties
- 31 – 50 years – 3 slight casualties
- 51 years or over – 3 slight casualties

2 of the accidents occurred on B class roads and 8 occurred on unclassified roads.

8 of the accidents occurred on roads with speed limits of 40mph. Although the other 2 accidents occurred on roads with speed limits of 30mph or less, they were both away from a residential area.

5.3.3 Boundary issues

The following table contains the findings from looking at the access provision for horse riders at the boundary of Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Cheddar to Winscombe/Shipham. (North Somerset)	Lack of any routes in between.	If Strawberry Line extension is implemented this will improve the network in the general area with potential links to the wider network.
Bleadon to Lymsham. (North Somerset)	No off-road routes – A370 is only crossing of River Axe.	
Blagdon to East Harptree and east of Norton St Philip. (B&NES)	No routes.	
East of Litton. (B&NES)	Cul-de-sac bridleway.	County boundary.
A36 near boundary. (Wilts.)	Network lacking connectivity.	
Longleat area. (Wilts.)	Change of status from footpath to bridleway.	County boundary.
South of Longleat. (Wilts.)	Limited network.	May be compensated by permissive access in woodland.

Beckington/Rode Parish boundary. (Wilts.)	Missing link as well as a change of status.	
From A303 south to southeast of Cucklington. (Dorset)	No riding RoW going into Dorset.	Cucklington itself is well served.
Cucklington to Purse Caundle. (Dorset)	Only footpaths at boundary.	
A30 either side of Milborne Port. (Dorset)	Poor connectivity.	
Southeast Yeovil. (Dorset)	No network going into Dorset between Trent and Yeovil Junction.	The railway and River Yeo are the main factors in this as well as the administrative boundary.
A37 (Dorset)	Poor connectivity.	
Clapton to Devon boundary. (Dorset)	Severance of routes.	Caused by River Axe
Yarcombe to Bishopswood. (Devon)	Severance of network.	Caused by River Yarty and A303.
Bishopswood to Churchinford. (Devon)	No network.	
Blackdown Hills Ridge Road. (Devon)	Poor connectivity.	
Skilgate. (Devon)	Cul-de-sac route.	County boundary.
Either side of Exebridge. (Devon)	Severance of network.	River Exe.
East Anstey. (Devon)	Poor connectivity.	

5.3.4 Parish based horse & rider census

Unlike walkers, the density of riding rights of way cannot be compared with population density. For this reason the parish-based horse and rider census, initiated by South Somerset Bridleways Association in the early 1990s has been expanded to cover the whole of Somerset. Collection of the census data is ongoing and updated when new information is received. It provides a picture of the numbers of horses, riders (adult/child split), and carriage drivers per parish as well as the location of any livery/stable yards or riding centres in parishes that have five or more horses. This will prove a useful aid in determining the location of route development but will not be the only consideration especially as the demographics of the horse population is subject to change all the time

Investigations have been made to extract this kind of data from the National Equine Database (held by DEFRA, following the introduction of the horse passport), however it was felt that this would fall short of what we require and may only give locations of the registered keepers and not necessarily where the horses are kept.

5.3.5 Individuality & commonality

As for walkers (see 2.3.4).

5.3.6 Completeness of data

The layers used for the multi-layer assessment only provide part of the network used by horse riders. Due to the fragmented nature of the bridleway network there are many informal permissive riding routes that are not known about as well as many routes with possible public rights that are not recorded as such on the DMS. Many of these routes will be modification applications as well as by the numerous suggestions for additions and regradings that were submitted as a result of the consultation process.

5.3.7 Long Distance Trails

The Coleridge Bridle Way is a 33 mile linear route from Nether Stowey to Exford. The only other longer distance route for horse riders is the Neroche Herepath-a 13.7 mile circular route on the Blackdown Hills.

5.4 Key Findings

- Density levels are far lower than for walkers with a approximately a sixth of parishes having no PRow/UUR routes.
- Quantock and Mendip Hills, Exmoor and southeast Somerset are the main areas of relatively high density of riding routes.
- The areas lacking riding routes are between Taunton and Wellington, Bridgwater area, north and mid-east Sedgemoor, east of Chard heading north and the northeast edge of Somerset.
- Only some of the modification applications will improve areas where there are no existing routes.
- Areas with average riding provision will have issues of connectivity and riders will be forced to ride on roads in places.
- A398 and A39 would appear to pose the greatest severance of a dense riding network and could be a main safety concern.
- Issues of cul-de-sac, change of status and severance by road and river at Somerset boundary.

6.0 NON-MECHANICALLY PROPELLED VEHICLES

6.1 Network Provision

The term non-mechanically propelled vehicles is a catchall to cover anything that is not a motorised vehicle. In this chapter this refers to carriage drivers, which are not allowed on public bridleways but which are allowed on restricted byways.

6.1.1 Public Rights of Way

The public rights of way available to NMPVs are as follows,

- restricted byways,
- BOATs.

6.1.2 Other Access

Alternative routes available to NMPVs are as follows,

- county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs)
- permissive routes (provided by landowners free of charge),
- permissive routes (where a fee/subscription is paid),

6.2 Map-based Assessments

6.2.1 Public rights of way and UUR density map

To provide an initial assessment of the network provision for NMPV users a parish-based density map of all restricted byways, BOATs and unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs) has been produced (Appendix A-4).

The main findings from this exercise are detailed in the table below

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING
Whole of Somerset.	Density levels are far lower than those for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
West Somerset & Exmoor, Quantock and Mendip Hills, and south Mendip into east South Somerset.	Relatively well served.
Most of Somerset.	Sporadic density of routes with many parishes having no restricted byway/BOAT/UUR routes.

The outstanding modification applications for restricted byway or BOAT have been overlaid with the density map to see whether they would make any difference (see Appendix A-4). The applications are mostly in South Somerset District, south east Taunton Deane and Exmoor. If successful these will increase density in some South Somerset parishes where there is no provision and to a lesser extent in the Taunton Deane and Exmoor parishes

The following table shows the top 5 parishes for NMPV route density.

TOP 5	DENSITY m/sq.km
West Bagborough	737
Carhampton	672
Middlezoy	654
Compton Dundon	611
Barrington	568

93 parishes had no PRow/UUR for NMPV users.

6.2.2 Multi-layer map

In addition to the density map the following layers have been compiled to provide a cartographical representation of where the public have the right to go and to show any issues of severance-Appendix C-4

- all restricted byways and BOATs,
- all county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs),
- possible areas of severance-trunk roads and motorways managed by the Highways Agency,
- all relevant modification applications are shown to highlight potential changes to the network if the applications are successful.

By looking at all these layers on the countywide map (Appendix C-4) it is possible to identify where there are a lack of off-road routes for NMPVs. The following findings are the result of this exercise for Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
North of Wellington towards Quantock Hills.	Well served with UURs.	Dense network of unclassified roads to help with connectivity.
Bruton area and to the south.	Well served with UURs.	Fairly dense unclassified road network although many of the routes are cul-de-sacs.
Rest of Somerset	Sparse and fragmented provision.	Connectivity would appear to be the main issue for NMPV users.

6.3 Condition

As for walkers (see 2.3).

6.3.1 Geography

As for walkers (see 2.3.1).

6.3.2 Severance & safety

As for walkers (see 2.3.2) and horse riders (see 5.3.2). In the past 5 years there was only one accident involving a horse and cart. This occurred on a Sunday in the centre of Shepton Mallet (speed limit 30mph). The 48 year old driver was seriously injured and the 43 year old passenger was slightly injured.

6.3.3 Boundary issues

The following table contains the findings from looking at the access provision for NMPV users at the boundary of Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Whole of Somerset boundary.	Generally poor network provision for NMPVs.	Exceptions to this and other findings are below.

6.3.4 Individuality and commonality

As for walkers (see 2.3.4)

6.3.5 Parish based horse & rider census

Once complete, the census data should give a good idea of the numbers of carriage drivers as well as an approximate location.

6.3.6 Completeness of data

As with horse riders the network for NMPV users is fragmented and varied across the county with many users relying on informal permissive routes and those routes that may have public rights but are not recorded as such on the DMS.

6.4 Key Findings

- Density of routes is far lower than that for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- The best served areas are Exmoor-West Somerset, Quantock and Mendip Hills, south Mendip, and southeast Somerset.
- Successful modification applications would only improve the situation in the parts of Taunton Deane and South Somerset area.

7.0 VEHICULAR

7.1 Network Provision

Many rights of way do have vehicular rights of way over them, however these are largely private and are either agricultural access rights to fields or private access to homes. This section will deal with the provision of public vehicular rights and in particular those rights that exist off the normal county road network.

7.1.1 Public Rights of Way

The public rights of way that are known to be available to vehicular users are as follows,

- BOATs

7.1.2 Other Access

The following also provide access for vehicular users,

- county roads,
- all known unsurfaced, unclassified roads (UURs)
- permissive routes (provided by landowners free of charge),
- permissive routes (where a fee / subscription is paid),

7.2 Map-based Assessments

7.2.1 Public rights of way and UUR density map

The density map for vehicular users is shown at Appendix A-5. This map shows all BOATs and unsurfaced unclassified roads (UUR)s.

The main findings from this exercise are detailed in the table below.

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING
Whole of Somerset.	Density levels are far lower than those for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
Most of Somerset.	Sporadic density of routes with many parishes having no BOAT/UUR routes.

The outstanding modification applications for BOAT have been overlaid with the density map to see whether they would make any difference. The applications are mostly in Taunton Deane and Exmoor-West Somerset with one or two in the rest of the county. If successful these will increase density in some Exmoor-West Somerset and Taunton Deane parishes.

7.2.2 Multi-layer map

In addition to the density map the following layers have been compiled to provide a cartographical representation of where the public have the right to go-Appendix C-5

- BOATs,
- all county roads,
- all known unsurfaced unclassified roads (UURs)
- possible areas of severance-trunk roads and motorways managed by the Highways Agency,
- all relevant modification applications are shown to highlight potential changes to the network if the applications are successful.

By looking at all these layers on the countywide map (Appendix C-5) it is possible to identify where there are a lack of off-road routes for vehicular users. The following findings are the result of this exercise for Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
All of Somerset.	Minimal provision with only a few parishes having high density	

7.3 Condition

As for walkers (see 2.3).

7.3.1 Geography

As for walkers (see 2.3.1).

7.3.2 Boundary issues

The following table contains the findings from looking at the access provision for vehicular users at the boundary of Somerset County:

AREA OF SOMERSET	FINDING	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
Whole of Somerset boundary.	Generally poor network provision for vehicular users.	Exceptions to this and other findings are below.

7.3.3 Individuality and commonality

As for walkers (see 2.3.4).

7.3.4 Completeness of data

The low number of BOATs in Somerset means that there are very few off road routes for vehicles in Somerset .

7.3.5 Statutory guidance

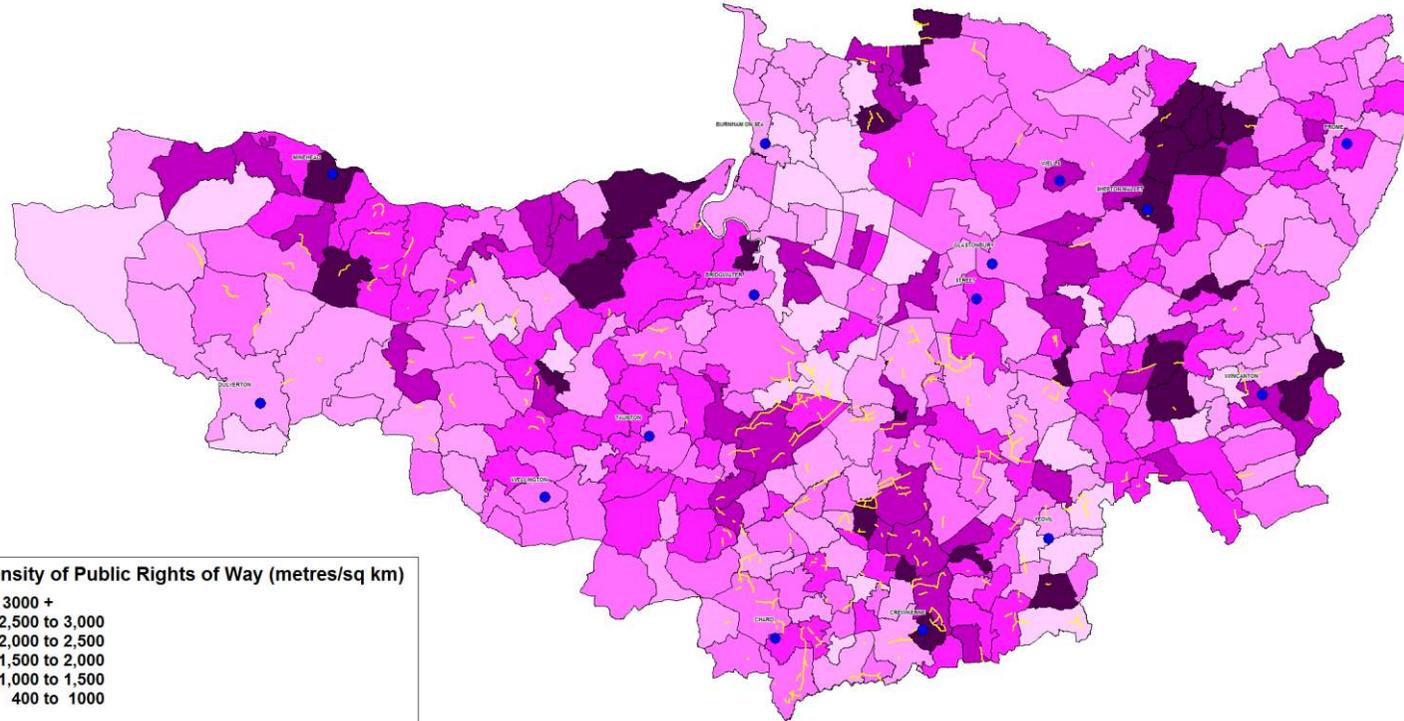
The statutory guidance for Rights of Way Improvement Plans places no emphasis on improving the local rights of way network for vehicular users.

7.4 Key Findings

- There is no emphasis on improving the rights of way network for vehicular users in the Statutory Guidance for RoWIPs. If the modification applications for BOAT are successful it will make little difference to the provision of off-road driving in Somerset.

APPENDIX A -1

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (Including UURs)
SHOWING ALL MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS



Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

3000 +
2,500 to 3,000
2,000 to 2,500
1,500 to 2,000
1,000 to 1,500
400 to 1000

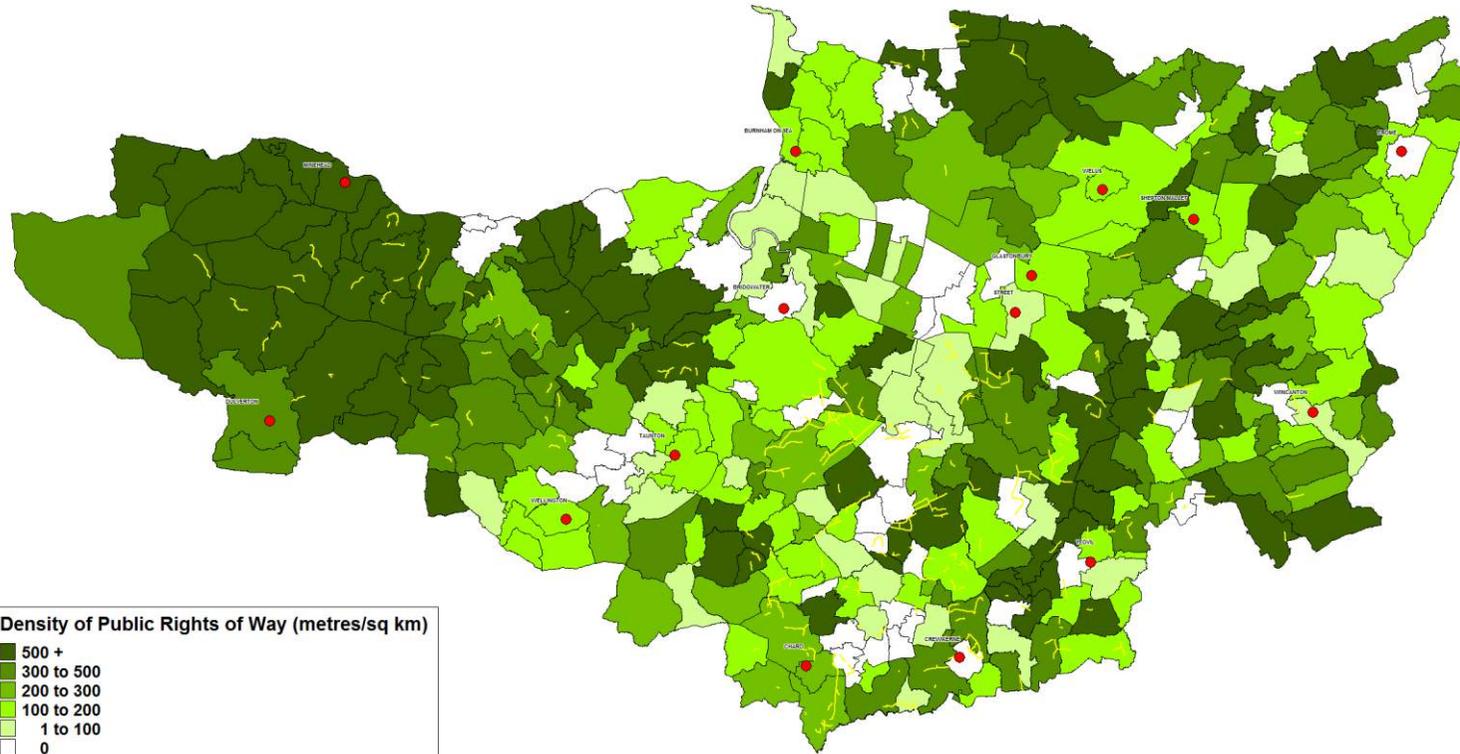
Density Ranges:
Min = 493 m/sqkm
Max = 6448 m/sqkm

— MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS

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APPENDIX A - 3

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OF BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY AND BOAT'S (Including UURs)
SHOWING MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT



Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

500 +
300 to 500
200 to 300
100 to 200
1 to 100
0

Density Ranges:
Min = 0 m/sqkm
Max = 2692 m/sqkm

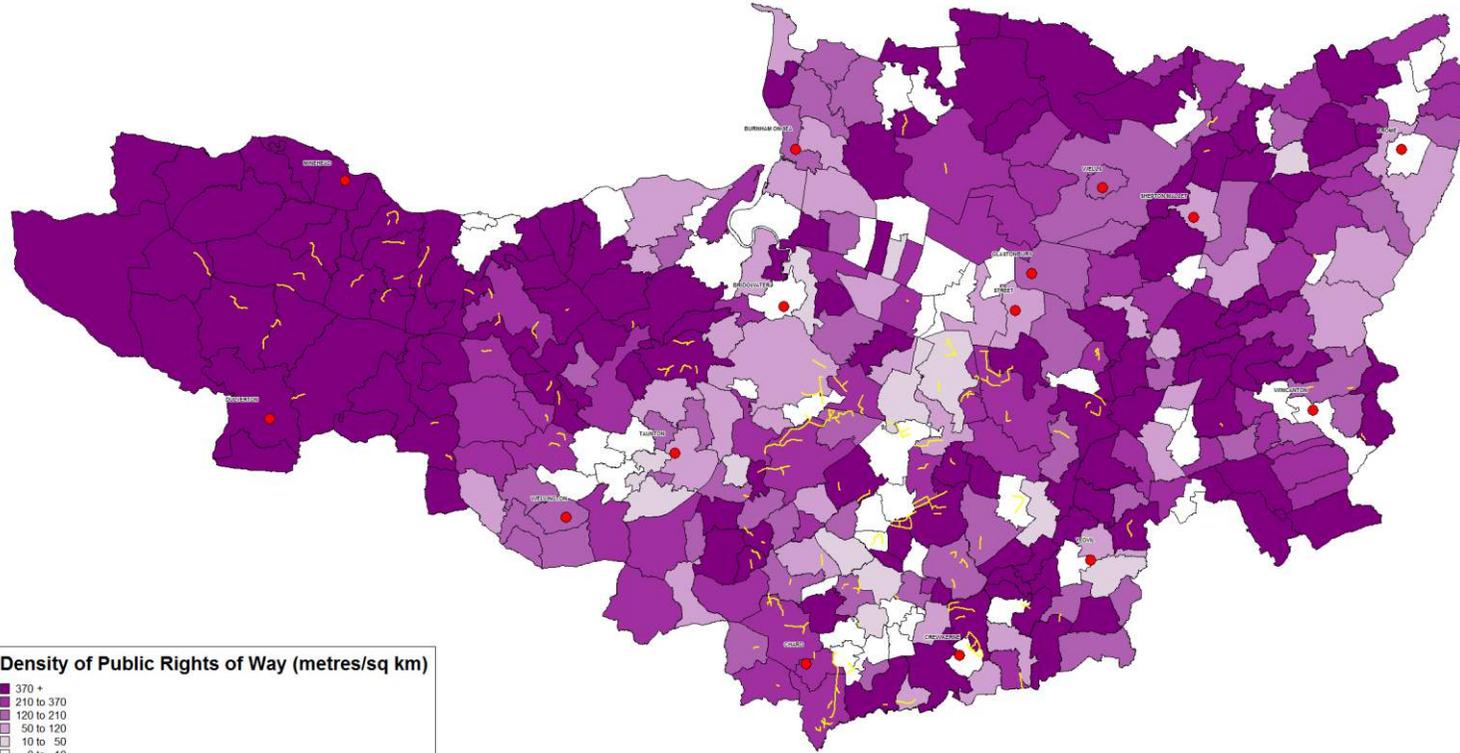
— MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT

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APPENDIX A - 4

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OF RESTRICTED BYWAY AND BOAT'S (Including UURs)
SHOWING MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT



Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

370 +
210 to 370
120 to 210
50 to 120
10 to 50
0 to 10

Density Ranges:
Min = 0 m/sqkm
Max = 2692 m/sqkm

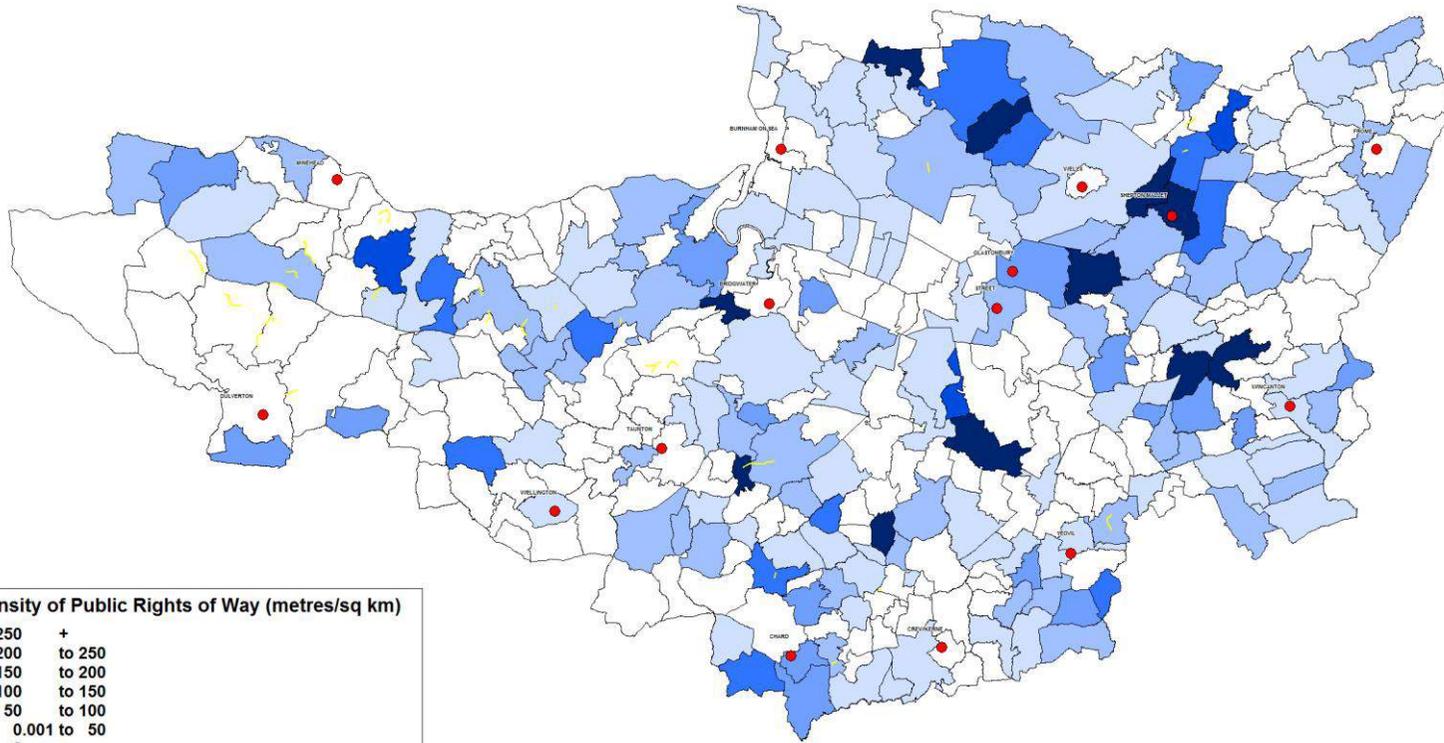
— MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT

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APPENDIX A - 5

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY THAT ARE OF BOAT OR UUR STATUS
SHOWING MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR BOAT



Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

Dark Blue	250 +
Blue	200 to 250
Light Blue	150 to 200
Very Light Blue	100 to 150
Lightest Blue	50 to 100
White	0.001 to 50
White	0

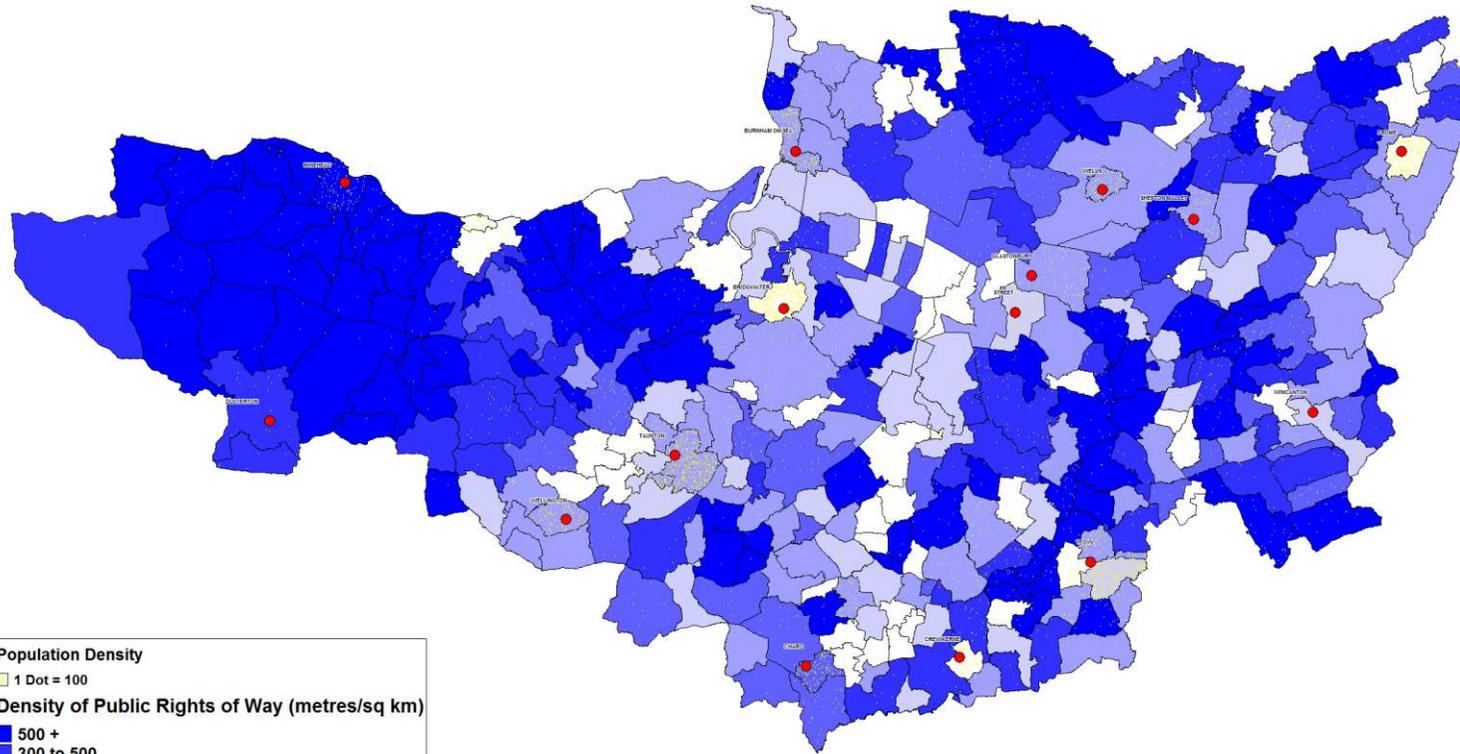
Density Ranges:
Min = 0 m/sqkm
max = 752 m/sqkm

— MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR BOAT's (Byway Open to All Traffic)

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APPENDIX B - 2

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OF BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY AND BOAT (Including UURs)



Population Density
1 Dot = 100

Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

Dark Blue	500 +
Medium Blue	300 to 500
Light Blue	200 to 300
Very Light Blue	100 to 200
Lightest Blue	1 to 100
White	0

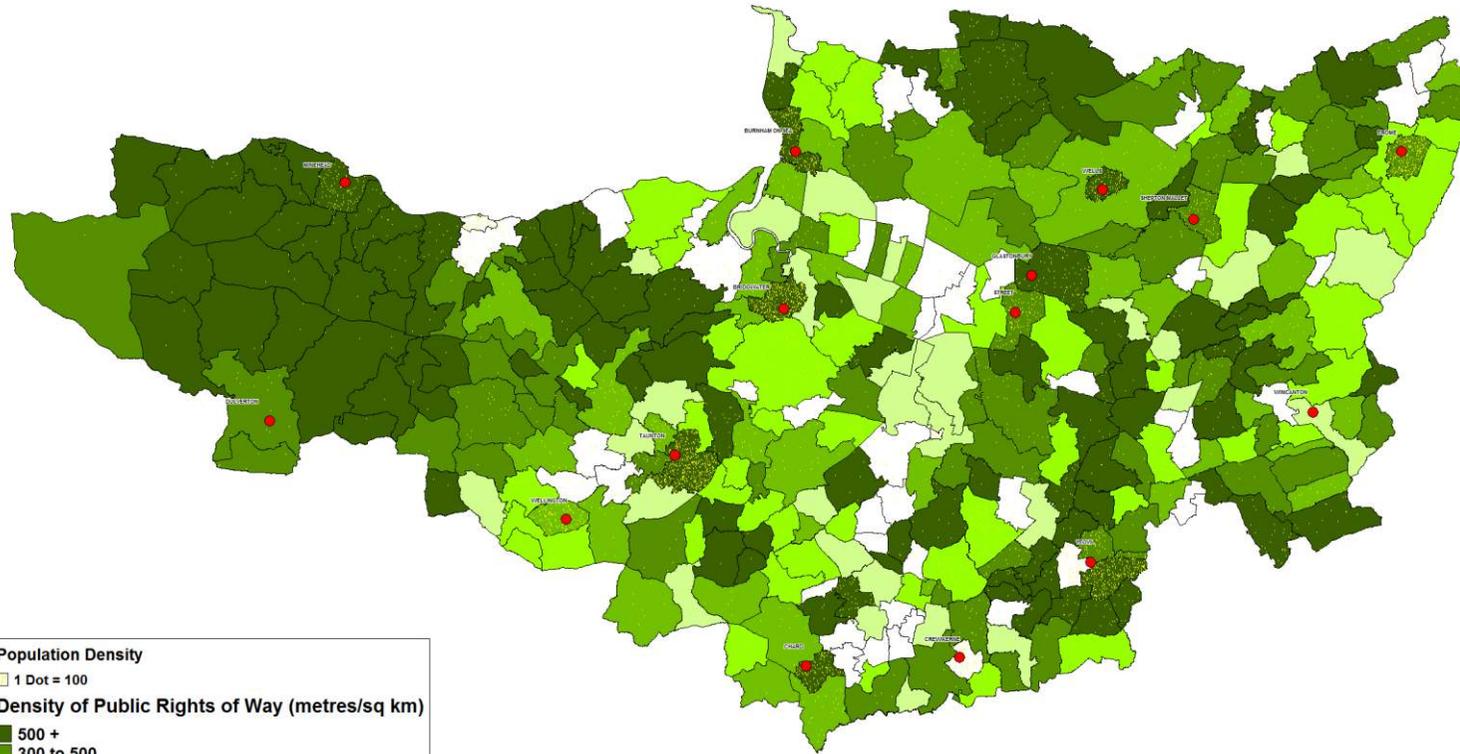
Density Ranges:
Min = 0 m/sqkm
Max = 2692 m/sqkm

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APPENDIX B - 3

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OF BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT AND CYCLE ROUTES (Including UURs)



Population Density
1 Dot = 100

Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

Dark Green	500 +
Medium Green	300 to 500
Light Green	200 to 300
Very Light Green	100 to 200
White	1 to 100
White	0

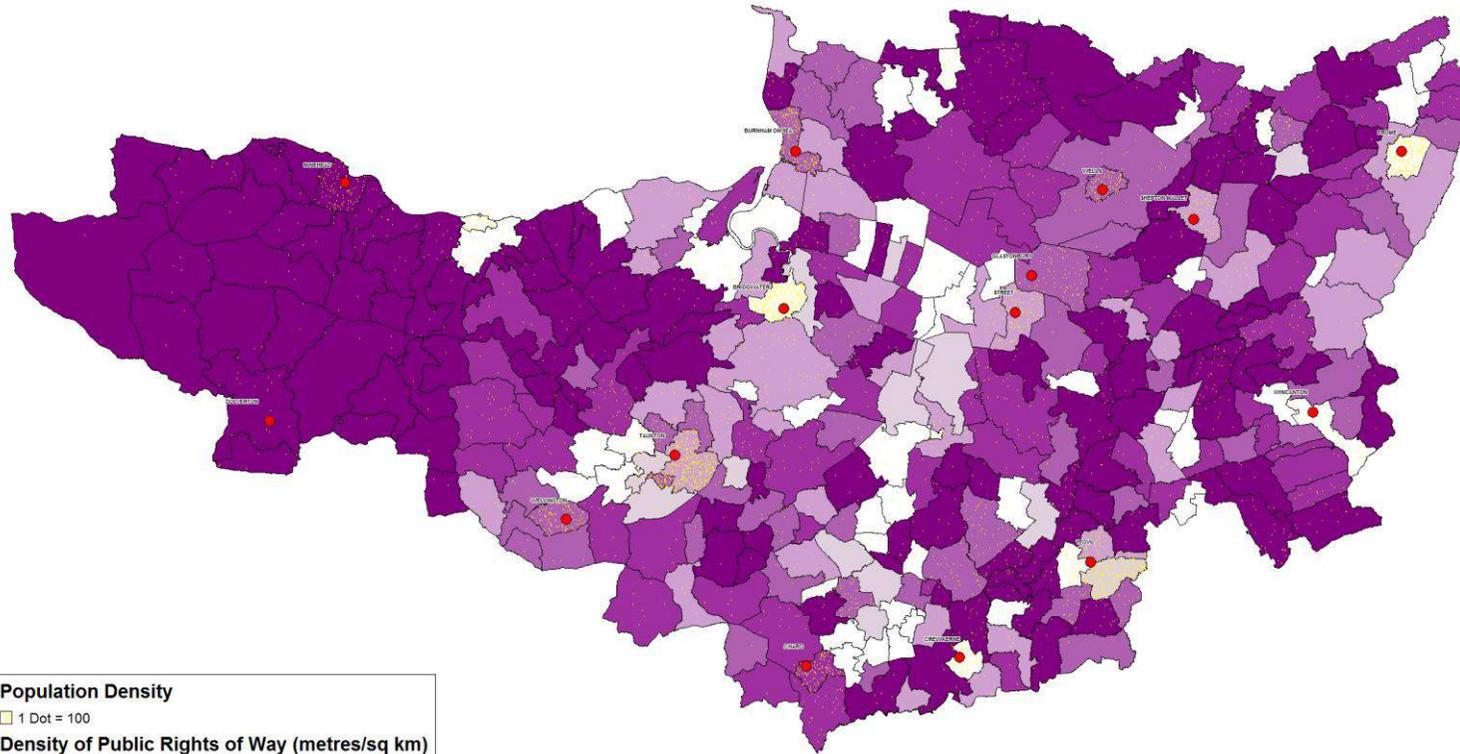
Density Ranges:
Min = 0 m/sqkm
Max = 2692 m/sqkm

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APPENDIX B - 4

DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY OF RESTRICTED BYWAY AND BOAT'S (Including UURs)
SHOWING MODIFICATION APPLICATIONS FOR RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT



Population Density
1 Dot = 100

Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

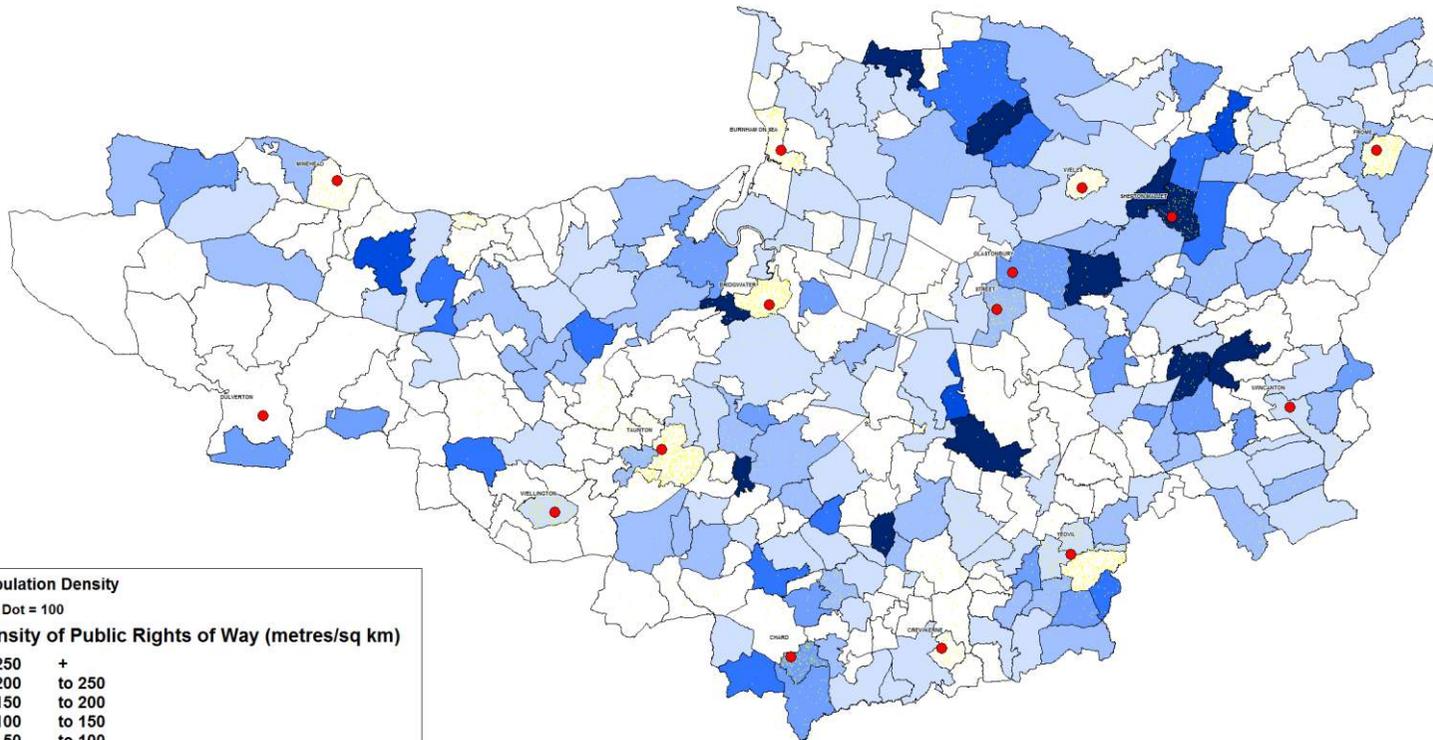
Dark Purple	370 +
Medium Purple	210 to 370
Light Purple	120 to 210
Very Light Purple	50 to 120
Lightest Purple	10 to 50
White	0 to 10

Density Ranges:
Min = 0 m/sqkm
Max = 2692 m/sqkm

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APPENDIX B - 5
DENSITY OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY THAT ARE OF BOAT OR UUR STATUS
WITH POPULATION DENSITY



Population Density
 1 Dot = 100

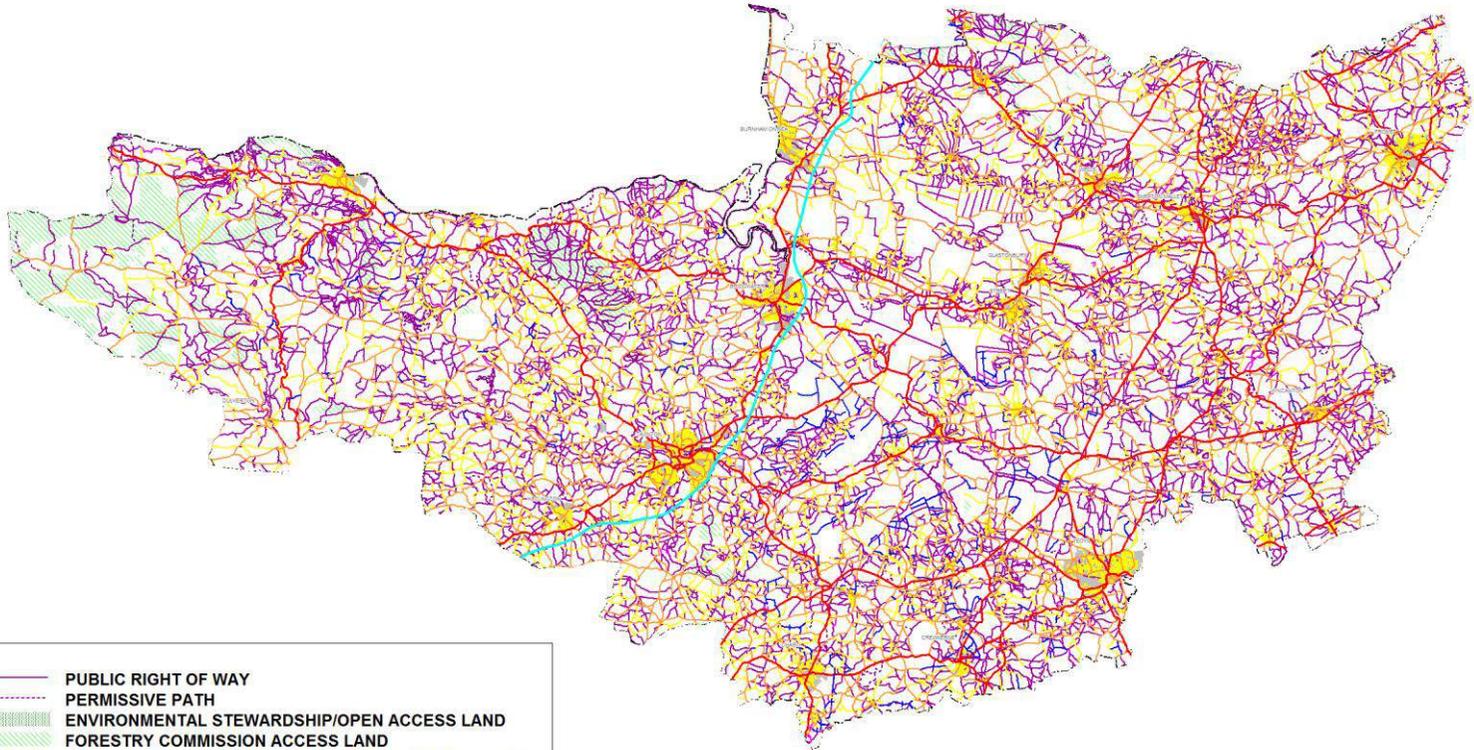
Density of Public Rights of Way (metres/sq km)

■	250	+
■	200	to 250
■	150	to 200
■	100	to 150
■	50	to 100
■	0.001	to 50
□	0	

Density Ranges:
 Min = 0 m/sqkm
 max = 752 m/sqkm

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APPENDIX C - 1
SOMERSET COUNTY WALKING ASSESSMENT

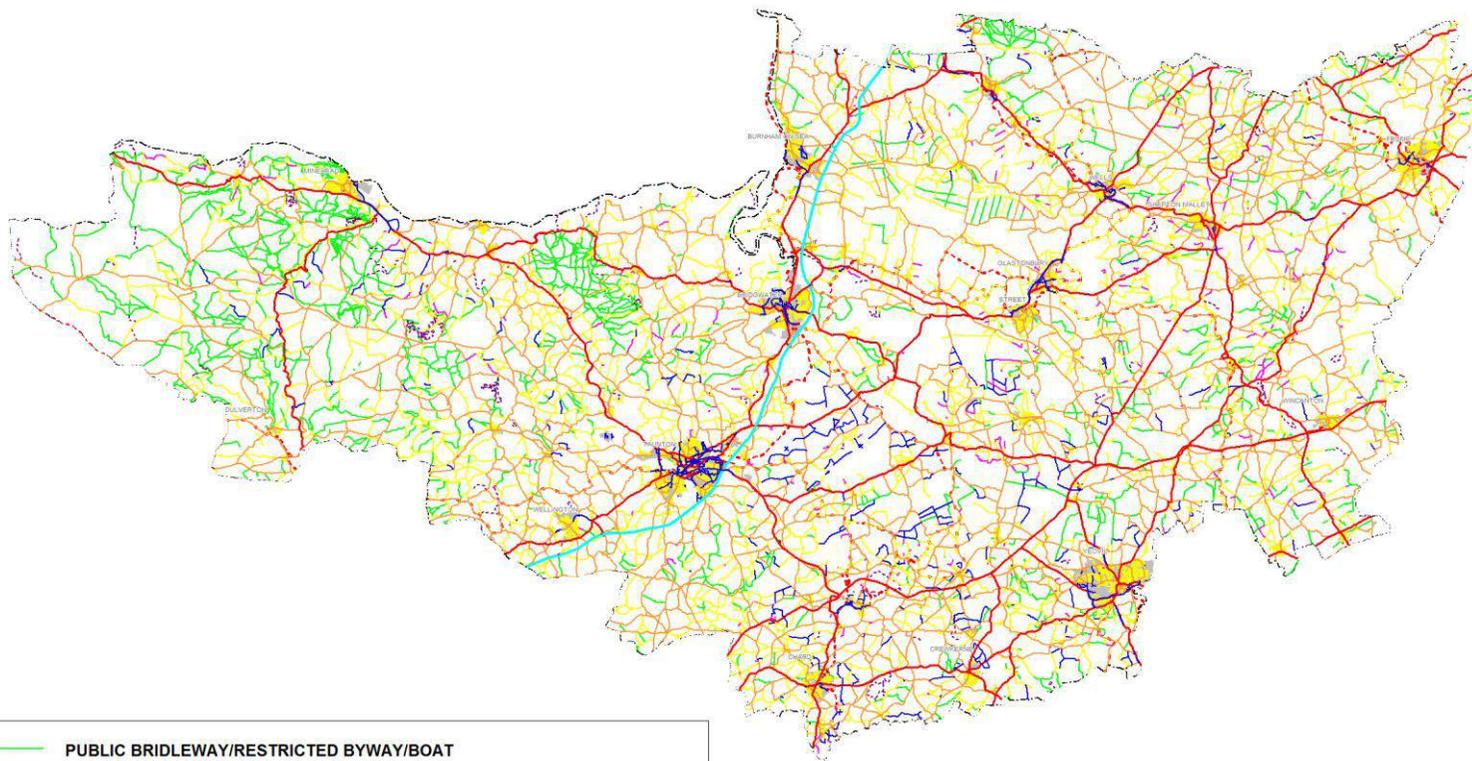


-  PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
-  PERMISSIVE PATH
-  ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP/OPEN ACCESS LAND
-  FORESTRY COMMISSION ACCESS LAND
-  MODIFICATION APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
-  M5 MOTORWAY
-  A ROAD
-  B/C ROAD
-  UNCLASSIFIED ROAD
-  UNSURFACED UNCLASSIFIED ROAD (UUR)
-  TOWN/VILLAGE
-  SOMERSET COUNTY BOUNDARY

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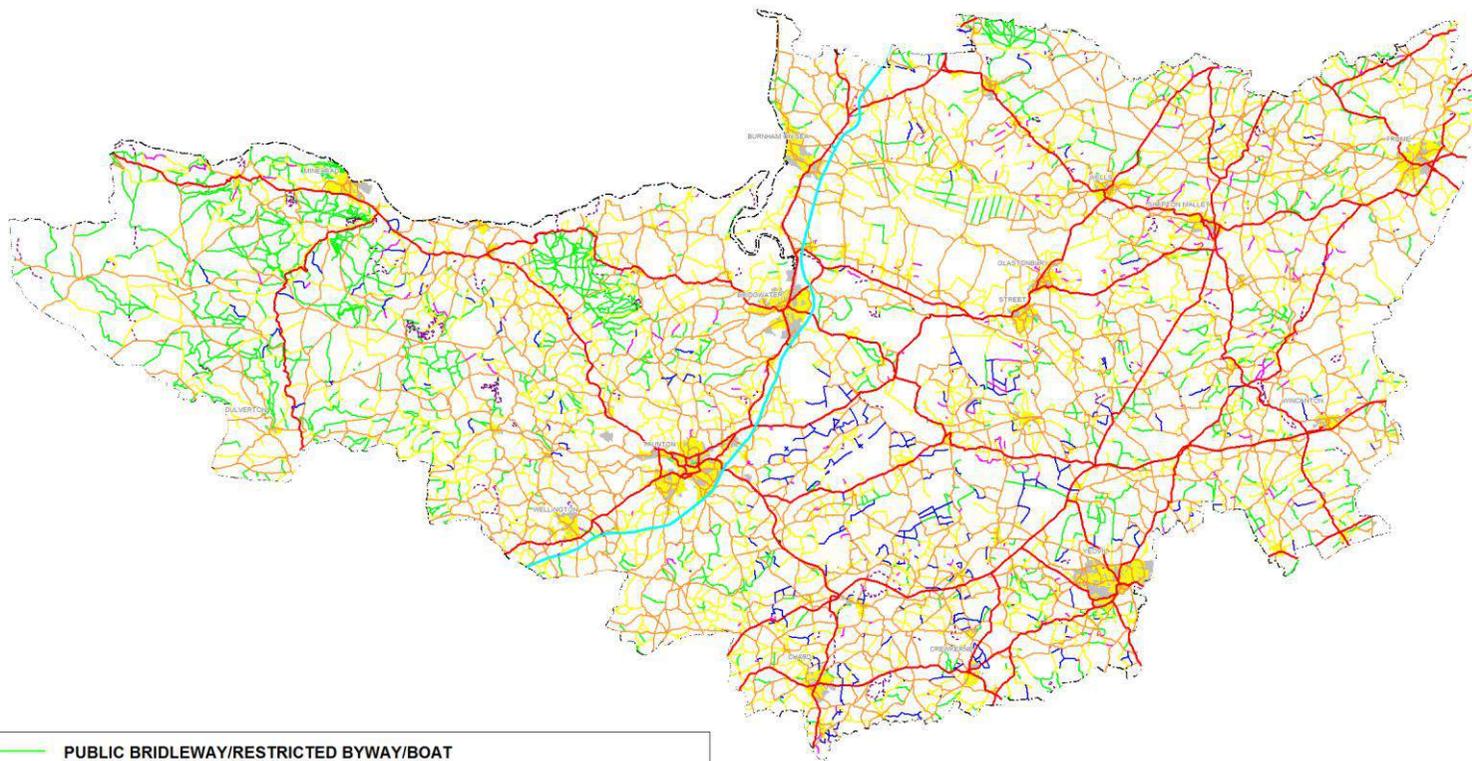
APPENDIX C - 2
SOMERSET COUNTY RIDING/CYCLING ASSESSMENT



-  PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT
-  PERMISSIVE BRIDLEWAY
-  CYCLEWAY INCLUDING NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK
-  MODIFICATION APPLICATION FOR BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY OR BOAT
-  M5 MOTORWAY
-  A ROAD
-  B/C ROAD
-  UNCLASSIFIED ROAD
-  UNSURFACED UNCLASSIFIED ROAD (UUR)
-  TOWN/VILLAGE
-  SOMERSET COUNTY BOUNDARY

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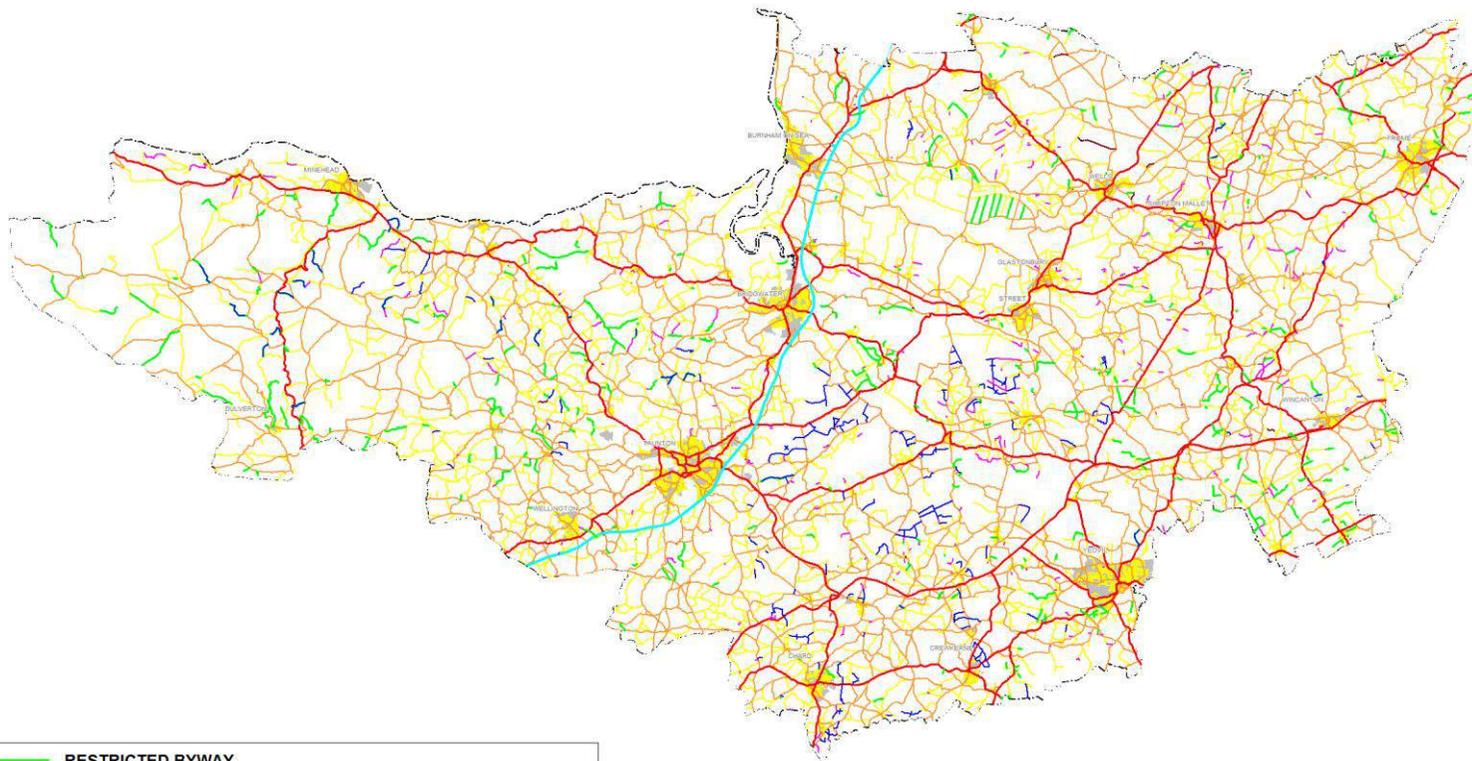
APPENDIX C - 3
SOMERSET COUNTY RIDING ASSESSMENT



-  PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT
-  PERMISSIVE BRIDLEWAY
-  MODIFICATION APPLICATION FOR BRIDLEWAY/RESTRICTED BYWAY OR BOAT
-  M5 MOTORWAY
-  A ROAD
-  B/C ROAD
-  UNCLASSIFIED ROAD
-  UNSURFACED UNCLASSIFIED ROAD (UUR)
-  TOWN/VILLAGE
-  SOMERSET COUNTY BOUNDARY

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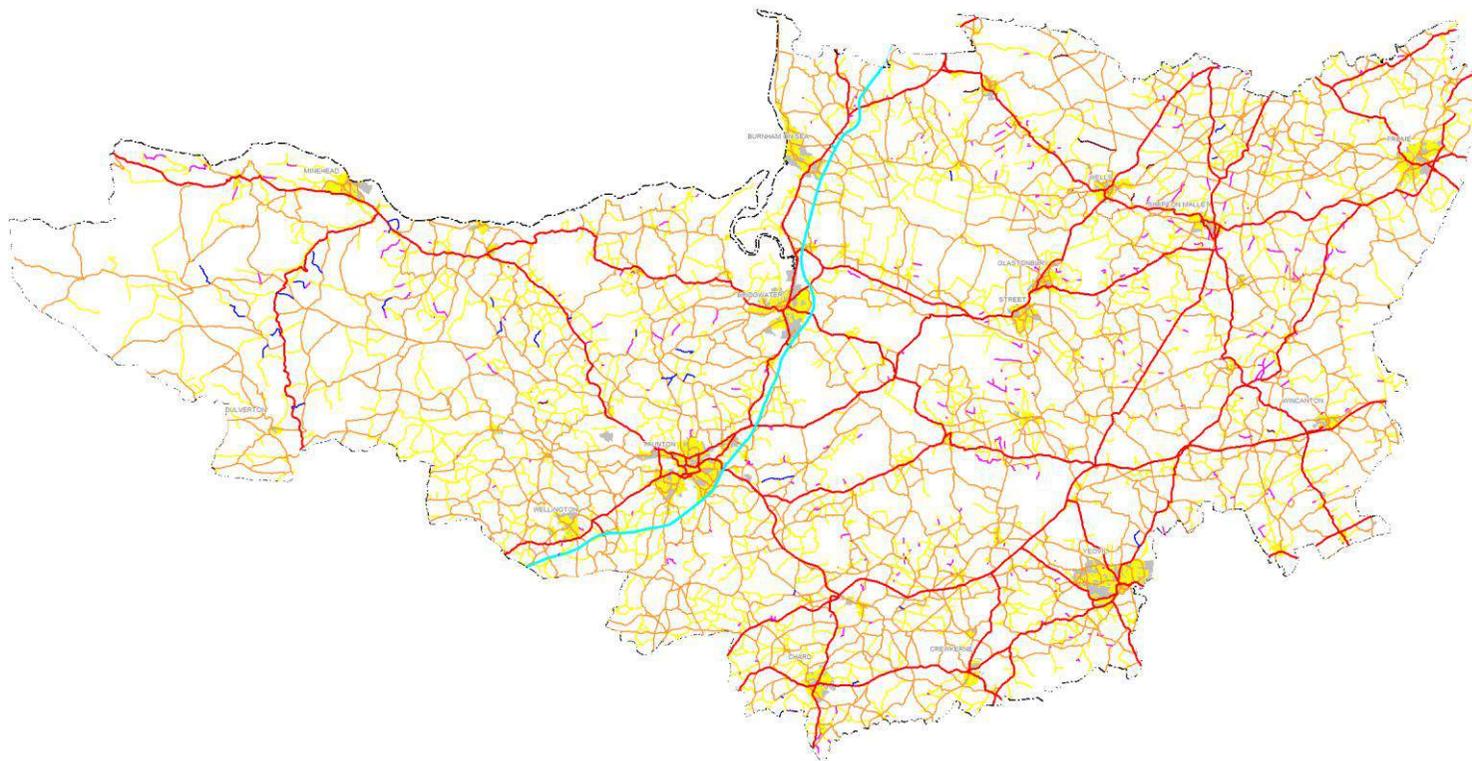
APPENDIX C - 4
 SOMERSET COUNTY NON MECHANICALLY PROPELLED VEHICLE (MPV) ASSESSMENT (EXCLUDING CYCLING)



- RESTRICTED BYWAY
- BOAT (BYWAY OPEN TO ALL TRAFFIC)
- UNSURFACED UNCLASSIFIED ROAD (UUR)
- + — MODIFICATION APPLICATION FOR RESTRICTED BYWAY/BOAT
- M5 MOTORWAY
- A ROAD
- B/C ROAD
- UNCLASSIFIED ROAD
- TOWN/VILLAGE
- SOMERSET COUNTY BOUNDARY

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APPENDIX C - 5
SOMERSET COUNTY VEHICULAR ASSESSMENT



-  BOAT (BYWAY OPEN TO ALL TRAFFIC)
-  UNSURFACED UNCLASSIFIED ROAD (UUR)
-  MODIFICATION APPLICATION FOR BOAT
-  M5 MOTORWAY
-  A ROAD
-  B/C ROAD
-  UNCLASSIFIED ROAD
-  TOWN/VILLAGE
-  SOMERSET COUNTY BOUNDARY

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Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix D: Quantitative consultation
March 2005

WWW.SOMERSET.GOV.UK



This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.



RNID typetalk

RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN QUANTITATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT

March 2005

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The consultation process for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan began in February 2003 with initial letters being sent to Parish Councils, user groups, landowning bodies, and key stakeholders. However, the majority of the survey-based quantitative consultation was carried out in 2004. The consultation carried then (summarised below) is by no means exhaustive and does not preclude further consultation being conducted at a later date, however Somerset County Council considers that it is still relevant for the purposes of producing second Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2).

Target Audience	Format of Consultation	Date undertaken
General Public	Questionnaire Your Somerset newspaper	Jan/Feb '04 Jun '04
User groups (RA, BHS, TRF, etc)	Letter Interview	Feb '03 Nov '04
Landowning bodies	Letter	Feb '03
Horse riders/ carriage drivers	Questionnaire	Oct/Nov '04
Cyclists/ mountain bikes	Questionnaire	Oct/Nov '04
Parish Councils	Letter Questionnaire	Feb '03 Oct/Nov '04
Key stakeholders	Letter	Feb '03
Landholders (eg: farmers)	Questionnaire	Dec '04 – Feb '05
Local Access Forum	Letter Meetings	Jun '03 Ongoing
Somerset County Council Depts	Letter/ memorandum Meetings	Jun '03 Ongoing
Somerset County Councillors	Letter Annual reports	Jun '03 Oct '03 & Oct '04
Schools	Questionnaire	Sep '04
District Council Officers	Meeting Letter Interview	Mar '03/ ongoing Jun '03 Nov '04
Countryside Agency	Letter	Jun '03
Neighbouring Highway Authorities	Letter Questionnaire	Jun '03 Jan '05
Exmoor National Park	Meetings	Ongoing
AONBs	Letter Interview	Jun '03 Jan '05
People with visual/mobility problems	Focus Groups	Nov '04
Levels & Moors parishes	Parish cluster meetings followed by public meetings.	Spring '03 (ongoing)

2.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

2.1 Method

The public consultation was carried out in conjunction with Somerset County Council's Consultation Unit. It was decided to do a questionnaire split into two parts; 'We want Your Views' and 'About You'

This questionnaire was then sent with a covering letter to 1400 members randomly selected from the Somerset Influence residents panel on 4th February 2004 and also posted on the Somerset County Council website. The random selection had an age and gender distribution similar to that of Somerset as a whole and also had a good geographical representation across the county. Details of the Internet survey link were issued to various organisations in Somerset and surrounding counties. The period for consultation was four weeks.

2.2 Results & Analysis

A total of 880 responses were received, 802 postal (62.8% return rate) and 78 from the website. Out of the 78 filled out online, only 3 were filled out by visitors (ie: non-Somerset residents). For the purposes of analysis, the paper and website responses were considered together and because there were only 3 visitor responses it was decided to include these as well as opposed to analysing them separately.

Part I: We want Your Views

Q1. How important is this to you?

The question provided eight options relating to rights of way, each one to be ranked High, Medium or Low. There was also a box where respondents could add other priorities that had not been listed. The table below summarises the top three answers for the High, Medium and Low categories.

High Priorities	Medium Priorities	Low Priorities
1. Signing @ roadsides	1. Regional walking and cycling routes	1. Information about routes from website
2. Ease of use for walking etc.	2. Information about using countryside paths	2. Regional walking and cycling routes
3. Local paths, bridleways and cycle tracks	3. Circular routes	3. Circular routes

A large number of the literal responses related to specific maintenance problems or improvement proposals and existing statutory duties. Other topical issues that respondents felt should be priorities include; restrictions/controlling of mountain bike and vehicular use, increased access and information for those with mobility problems, better

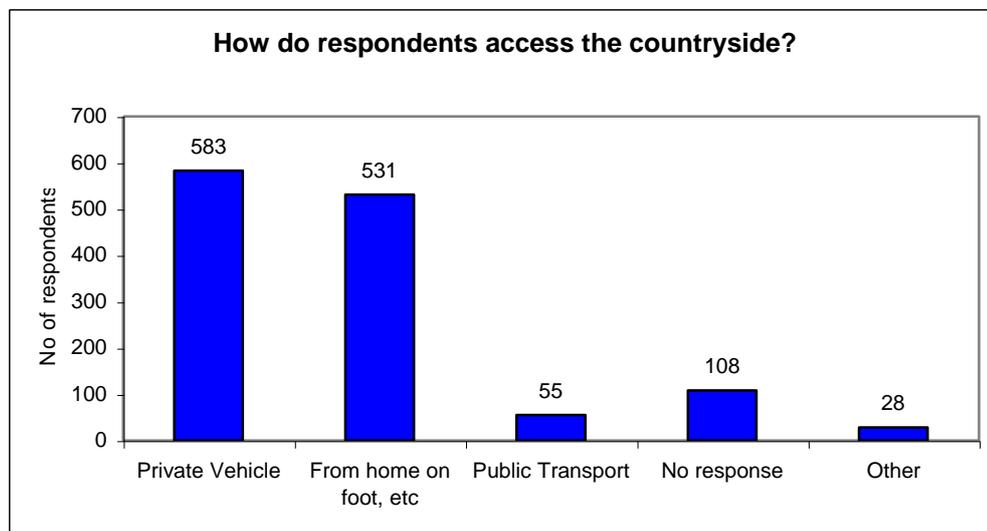
information in all media about routes and associated facilities; control of dogs and dog fouling as well as better provision for dog walkers (dog stiles), and better provision for cycling (on-road and off-road).

Q2. How satisfied are you with...

The same eight options were used for question two to gauge respondents' satisfaction with each option. 72.8% of respondents were satisfied with all of the eight options, however 24.4% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (almost a quarter of respondents).

Q3. How do you normally access the countryside?

The column chart below shows that the majority of respondents access the countryside by the use of a private vehicle and by foot, bike, or horse from home. It is clear from the figures that people ticked more than one option and therefore it is not possible to determine which means of access respondents use the most.



Q4. What are the main reasons why, and how often do you 'use' or visit the countryside?

Thirteen different options were given of activities undertaken in the countryside and people were asked the frequency of their undertaking. The table below summarises the top three activities for each frequency.

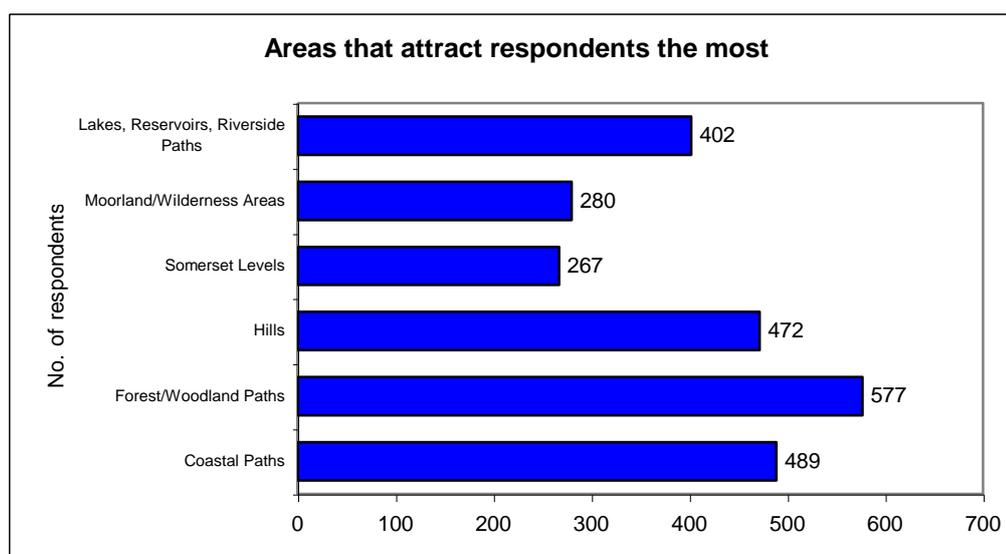
Top 3	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	Never
1	Walking	Walking	Visiting attractions	Picnicking	Off-road vehicular activity
2	Dog walking	Landscape appreciation	Landscape appreciation	Visiting attractions	Horse riding
3	Health & fitness	Health & fitness	Nature study	Nature study	Part of a group

An overall score was given for each activity based on the number of responses across all frequencies. Walking is ranked number one and off-road vehicular activity ranked 13.

Rank	Activity	Rank	Activity
1	Walking	8	Children's recreation
2	Landscape appreciation	9	To get to work/school/shops
3	Visiting attractions	10	Dog walking
4	Picnicking	11	As part of a group activity
5	Health and fitness	12	Horse riding
6	Nature study	13	Off-road vehicular activity
7	Cycling		

Q5. Which of the following areas attracts you most?

The bar chart below summarises the responses to question five. Respondents ticked more than one category again. The Somerset Levels is the least popular area while forest and woodland paths are the most popular with the respondents. A few 'other' responses included; all of the categories, beaches and canals.



People are often attracted to areas that are nearest to them and therefore the results could be influenced by the residential distribution of the respondents and it would be inadvisable to analyse the results to any great depth. However it could be concluded that forest/woodland paths are more popular because they often offer a barrier free and stock free walk/ride. The opposite could also be true for the Somerset Levels.

Q6. What would attract you to 'use' or visit these areas by priority?

Given ten categories to rank, almost half of the respondents cited 'unspoiled landscape, without facilities' as a high priority. Not far behind was car parking viewed by over forty percent of respondents as a high priority.

High Priorities	Medium Priorities	Low Priorities
1. Unspoiled landscape without facilities 2. Car parking 3. Heritage and archaeology sites	1. Historic monuments 2. Information boards 3. Heritage and archaeology sites	1. Access for the disabled 2. Art features 3. Public transport links

Overall, access for the disabled was a number one low priority, however amongst the respondents who considered themselves to have a disability (Q14) it was considered to be a high priority by 45% of these respondents. The reason this percentage wasn't higher could be attributed to respondents' perception of the difference between 'access for the disabled' and 'do you consider yourself to have a disability'.

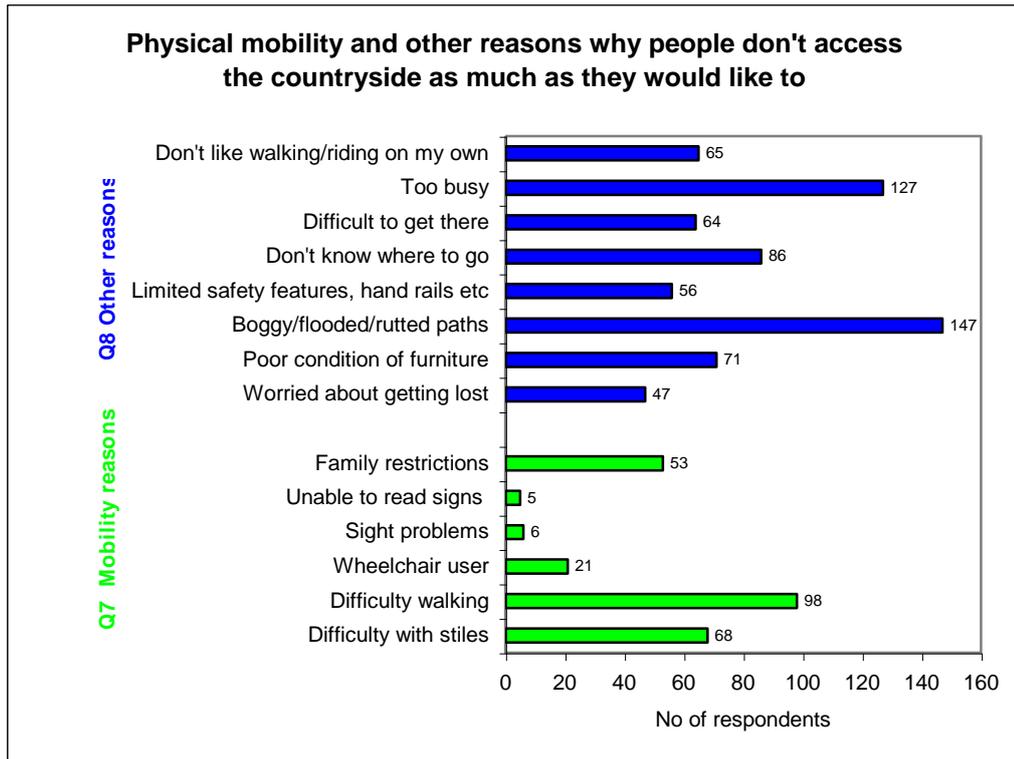
If you never 'use' or visit the countryside, or don't go as often as you would like to, are there any particular reasons for this?

Q7 Mobility/Disability reasons

The most common mobility reason cited by respondents for not going as often as they would like to the countryside was difficulty walking. Other popular reasons included difficulty using stiles and family restrictions (pushchairs).

Q8 Other reasons

The main other reason for respondents not going as often as they would like to the countryside was the surface condition of the paths, ie: 'boggy/flooded/rutted paths'. Another main reason was respondents were 'too busy'. Other popular responses that are worth noting include; 'don't know where to go' and 'poor condition of furniture'. Responses to Q7 and Q8 are summarised in the bar chart below.



Part II: About You

Q9 Are you?

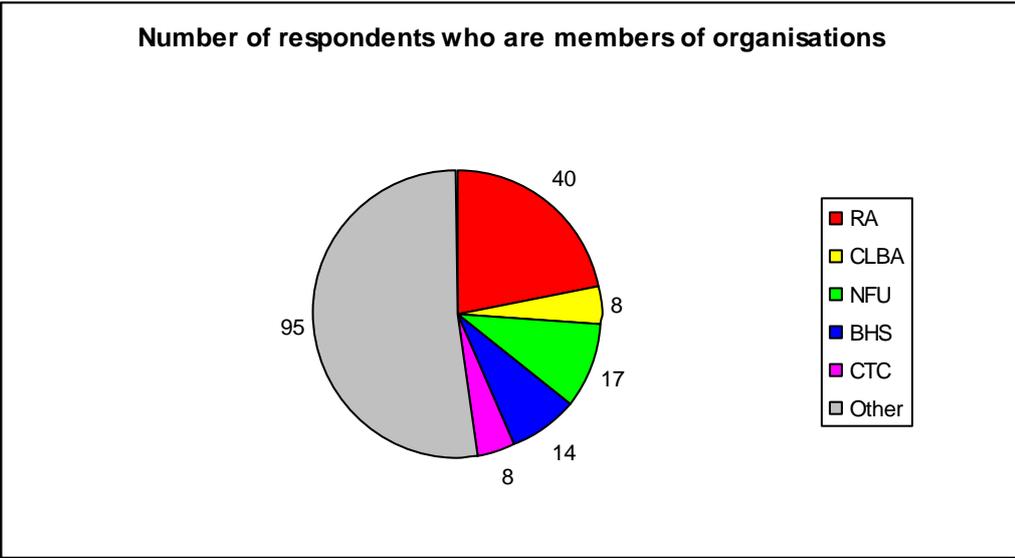
98.4% of respondents were residents of Somerset. 7% of these owned land in Somerset with over half of these landowners having rights of way on their land.

Q10 Are you a member of a walking, riding, cycling, landowning or other group?

159 (18.1%) respondents answered yes to this question.

Q11 If yes please indicate.....

The response to this question is summarised below in a pie chart form. Responses to 'other' outnumbered the organisations listed, however the Ramblers' Association was the most subscribed to out of those that were listed. The 'other' responses included the National Trust, wildlife charities, hunts and local walking groups to mention but a few.



Q12 Are you male or female?

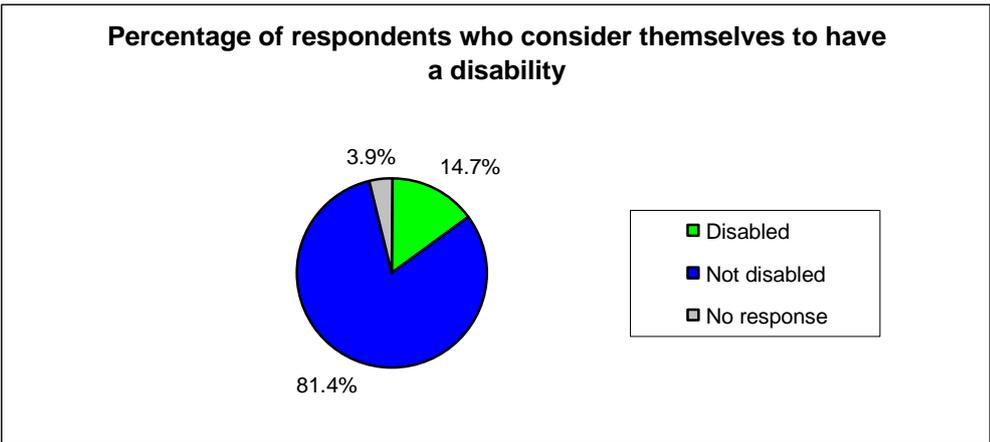
The gender split of respondents was very even, therefore no analysis was carried out on the responses for each gender.

Q13 Which age group do you belong to?

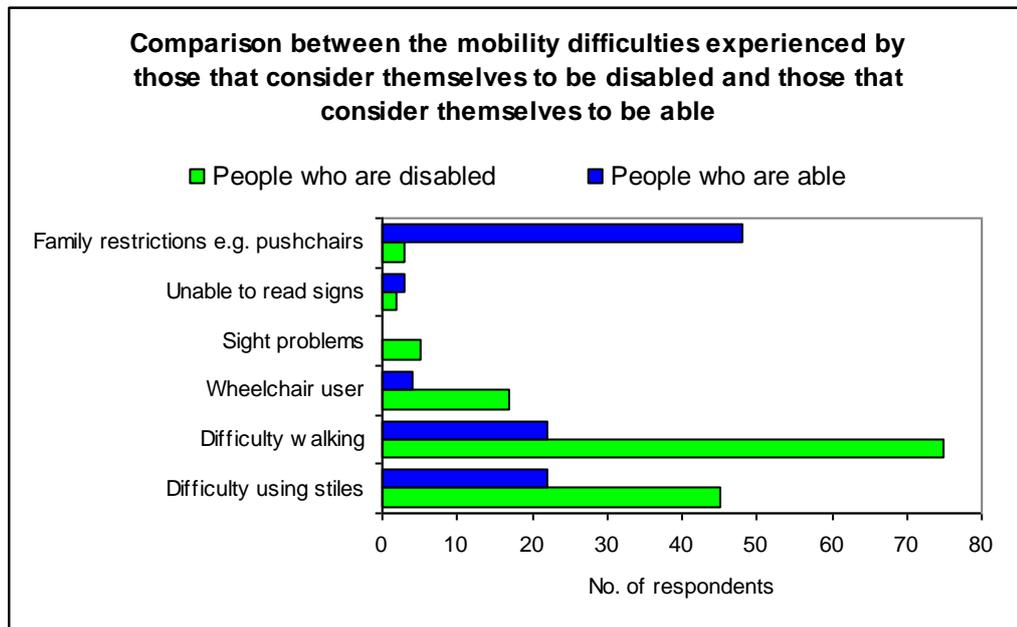
Of the respondents who returned the paper based questionnaire only 24.3% were under the age of 45 compared with 35.9% of respondents to the website based survey.

Q14 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Out of those who responded, over 15% said they considered themselves to have a disability. The percentage of the UK population registered disabled is 14%.



Q7 cross-tabbed with Q14



The above bar chart shows the difference between the difficulties experienced by those that are disabled and those who are able. The results are what you would expect. The majority of those that have difficulty walking, using stiles or who are wheelchair users consider themselves to be disabled. The difficulty mainly experienced by those that don't consider themselves to be disabled was family restrictions, e.g.: pushchairs.

2.3 Conclusions

This consultation was intended to obtain the views of visitors to Somerset (as recommended by the Statutory Guidance, 2002) through the website based survey. The response from visitors was extremely poor (3) and could be as a result of ineffective communication with external organisations and other authorities to encourage the promotion of the website based survey. However, the views of visitors are always going to be extremely hard to obtain without a large amount of financial resource.

The response rate from the Somerset Influence residents panel was very good, although the age distribution of respondents was predominantly over 45. The website responses were fewer but were of a more balanced age distribution. This would suggest that those residents on the panel over 45 years of age not only have more disposable time to fill out surveys but also that they may have more of an interest in rights of way.

Although overall respondents were satisfied with the rights of way network, they were dissatisfied with the ease of use, signing and maintenance.

2.4 Key findings

- Local paths are important to people as are the statutory duties of signing and maintenance of public rights of way.
- Information on rights of way and circular routes are the highest non-statutory priorities for the public.
- Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with rights of way matters
- Use of public transport to access the countryside is very low at 6.3%, less than a tenth of the level of car use.
- Walking is the most popular activity.
- Unspoilt landscape, car parking and heritage interest are the main attractors for the public when visiting the countryside.
- The surface condition of rights of way is the main reason for people not going to the countryside as often as they would like to.
- Almost 15% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability.
- The majority of respondents were from the Somerset Influence residents panel and were predominantly over 45. It has to be considered whether the results are a true reflection of the general public in Somerset.

3.0 PARISH COUNCIL CONSULTATION

3.1 Method

An initial letter was sent to Parish/Town Councils in February 2003 that outlined the new duty placed upon Highway Authorities to produce a RoWIP and asked them to submit any specific problems or proposals regarding the rights of way within their parish that would be suitable for inclusion in the RoWIP.

In September 2004 Parish/Town Councils were written to again with a Satisfaction & Priority Questionnaire regarding eleven elements of rights of way ranging from statutory duties to regional long distance routes and information provision. Parishes completely within Exmoor National Park were excluded from this consultation. Following discussion with the relevant officer at Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) it was felt that the Parish Councils within ENP were already suffering from consultation fatigue and were unlikely to welcome a further questionnaire about rights of way.

3.2 Results & Analysis

The response rate to the initial letter was poor, however this could largely be due to a lack of awareness from Parish Councils about the RoWIP process. This improved over the course of 2004 (especially through the consultation conducted by the Level & Moors Partnership) with a steady trickle of enquiries and responses. The majority of responses are regarding specific routes or proposals and are too numerous to include in this document. It is anticipated that these will be added as a data layer on the new database. Typical proposals include diversions around farmyards, extinguishments, additions, regradings, etc.

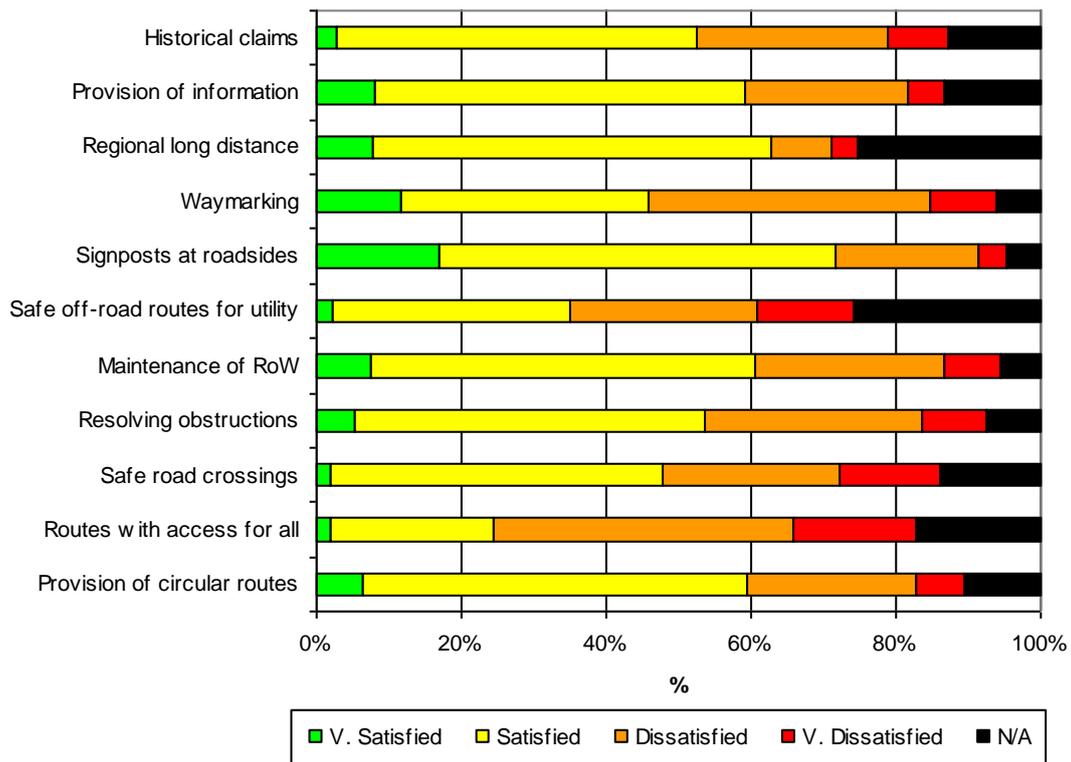
The response rate to the questionnaire exceeded expectation at over 62%. The breakdown of the response rate is detailed in the table below.

	District/Borough Council					Total
	Mendip	Sedgemoor	Taunton Deane	South Somerset	West Somerset	
No. of parishes written to	62	54	43	113	28	300
No. of responses	32	32	32	70	21	187
% response rate	51.6	59.3	74.4	61.9	75.0	62.33

Satisfaction results

The following stacked percentage bar chart illustrates how satisfied Parish/Town Councils were with each aspect of rights of way as listed on the questionnaire.

Parish/Town Council Consultation - Satisfaction Summary



The aspect Parish/Town Councils were most satisfied with was signposting at roadsides with over 70% of those who responded being either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’. The aspect that Councils were least satisfied with was the provision of routes that allowed access for all with over 58% of those who responded being either ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’. Whilst waymarking came second in the ‘very satisfied’ category, it also came second as an aspect that Councils were least satisfied with, with over 48% of those who responded being either ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’.

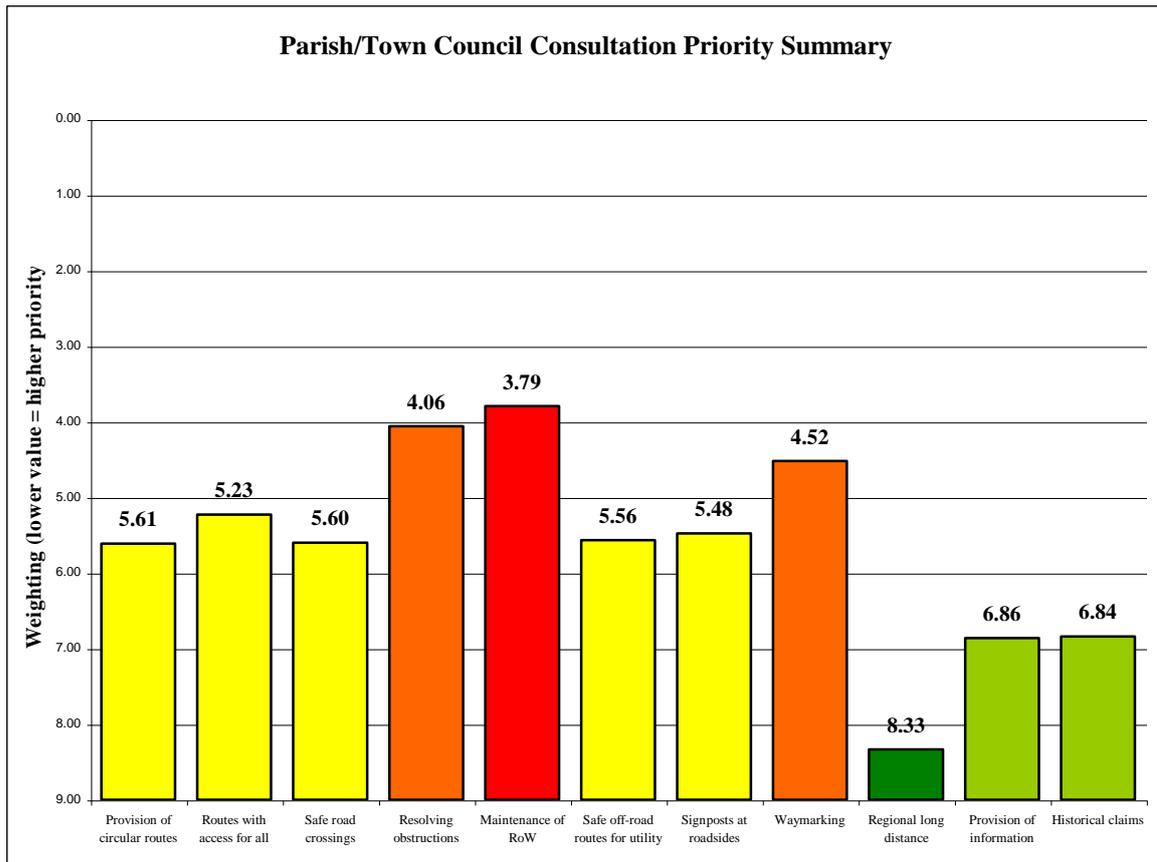
Regional long distance routes attracted the least dissatisfaction from parishes that responded, however it also had one of the highest no response rates at just over a quarter of parishes deciding that this aspect was ‘not applicable’ to them. Safe off-road routes for utility purposes also had just over a quarter of parishes deciding it was ‘not applicable’ to their parish. This aspect also had a relatively high percentage of dissatisfaction.

Upon closer inspection of the results, some differences between responses across the five district/borough councils can be seen. For the provision of circular routes, not one Sedgemoor parish said they were ‘very satisfied’ and 15.6% said they were ‘very dissatisfied’. This is over double the overall percentage suggesting that for a particular reason Sedgemoor is not well served by circular routes. Two responses for West Somerset also stand out from the other

districts/borough. Not one West Somerset parish who responded said they were ‘very dissatisfied’ with the signposting or waymarking of routes. Over 78% of parishes that responded in Taunton Deane were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the provision of information. This was far higher than any other district with South Somerset being the closest with just over 65%.

Priority results

The column chart below summarises how Parish/Town Councils prioritised the eleven aspects.



The lower the value an aspect has, the higher the priority it has been given. Not all Councils ranked the eleven aspects 1 to 11, preferring to leave some out or give two or three aspects the same priority. Where this occurred they were entered into the spreadsheet as such.

There are two aspects those Councils who responded felt should be given the highest priority. The first of these was the maintenance of structures (gates/stiles/bridges) on rights of way (including clearance of undergrowth), which came out as the top priority. The second priority for Councils overall was resolving obstructions with waymarking of routes not far behind in third. Medium priorities included; routes allowing access for all, signposts at roadsides, safe off-road routes for utility purposes, safe road crossings and provision of circular routes. Provision of information and historical claims were of a low priority to

Councils with regional long distance routes being the lowest priority of all.

3.3 Conclusions

Signposting of public rights of way where they leave a metalled road is a duty under Countryside Act 1968. At that time the 5% network survey (for the purposes of BVPI 178 'ease of use') highlighted that many rights of way fail the 'ease of use' test, as they were not signed at both ends. Therefore you would not expect signposting to be the aspect that Councils are most satisfied with. There are three possible reasons for this. Firstly, a newsletter was sent out with the questionnaire, which contained an article regarding extra funding to improve the signposting of rights of way and this may have subconsciously impacted on the Councils views. Secondly, the local Councillors are familiar with the local rights of way and therefore don't need signposts to know where they are, and thirdly, the rights of way that are used on a regular basis may be satisfactorily signposted, however the routes that have fallen out of regular use may not be signed and not considered necessary to be so by the Council. The signposting programme (using money from the Local Transport Plan) began in December 2004, which was after the consultation period and therefore would not have had any influence on Councils' opinion of signposting.

It is of no surprise that regional long distance routes had a high level of satisfaction and also no responses, as Councils are usually more concerned with their locality and their local rights of way. This is also reflected by the fact it was ranked as the lowest priority. Other factors that would influence this are that long distance routes are usually maintained to a high standard and many parishes will be void of any long distance routes.

Routes allowing access for all received the lowest satisfaction response suggesting that more needs to be done in this area. This conclusion is also reinforced by the fact it was ranked fourth for priority. The level of no response to the safe off-road routes for utility purposes aspect suggests that many parishes (perhaps the more rural ones without any shops) do not feel they need any provision, however where there is provision it is unsatisfactory more than it is satisfactory. A misunderstanding of what the aspect referred to may also be a reason for the low response rate in this particular case.

The eleven aspects chosen were purposefully a mixture of statutory duties and possible areas of improvement, not only to see how satisfied Councils were with how the statutory duties are currently carried out but also to see how they would prioritise duties with improvements. The two main duty aspects that are essential to the ease of use of rights of way not surprisingly came top of the priority list. The high dissatisfaction levels for waymarking and access for all were

also reflected in the priority scores, coming third and fourth respectively. The reason waymarking has been prioritised so highly could be due to the fact that people like to be able to go out for a walk/ride without having to take a map and still feel confident that they are not trespassing onto private land.

Historical claims and provision of information were ranked comparatively as low priorities. The review of the definitive map and processing of claims under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 is a duty, however Councils do not consider this to be of a high priority. Reasons for this could be due to the lengthy and potentially costly process of amending the definitive map and also the perhaps that historical routes that have no recorded public status sometimes do not represent useful or attractive routes in the modern landscape. The provision of information is perhaps understandably ranked as a low priority because Councils are often best placed to have a high level of existing knowledge about their area and rights of way.

The response rate to this consultation was surprisingly high, considering the amount of paperwork Parish/Town Councils receive on a daily basis. In hindsight, there is one aspect that was omitted from the questionnaire that may have been useful, which is the diversion of rights of way. The questionnaire was intended to be filled out by the Parish/Town Council, to represent the views of the Council as a whole and not just the opinion of the Clerk, Chairman or appointed footpath liaison officer. Judging from the responses received it is clear that this was not always the case. Some were filled in on the basis of collating all the Councillors views and others were filled in by one individual. Also there were obvious extremes of opinion from Councils that were positive towards public rights of access and others that were very negative. The results of this consultation will never truly represent the views of all the residents of each parish although it does give an indication of the views and priorities of Parish/Town Councils and therefore should be used with this fact borne in mind.

3.4 Key findings

- Councils are satisfied with signposting and don't consider it a high priority.
- Councils are most dissatisfied with routes with access for all and waymarking.
- Regional long distance routes are not a priority for Councils.
- The main priorities for Councils are the maintenance and freeing of obstructions of rights of way.
- Waymarking and access for all are other high priorities.
- These findings are only representative of Parish/Town Councils and in some cases individual Councillors and should be used with caution.

4 HORSE RIDING/CARRIAGE DRIVING CONSULTATION

4.0 Method

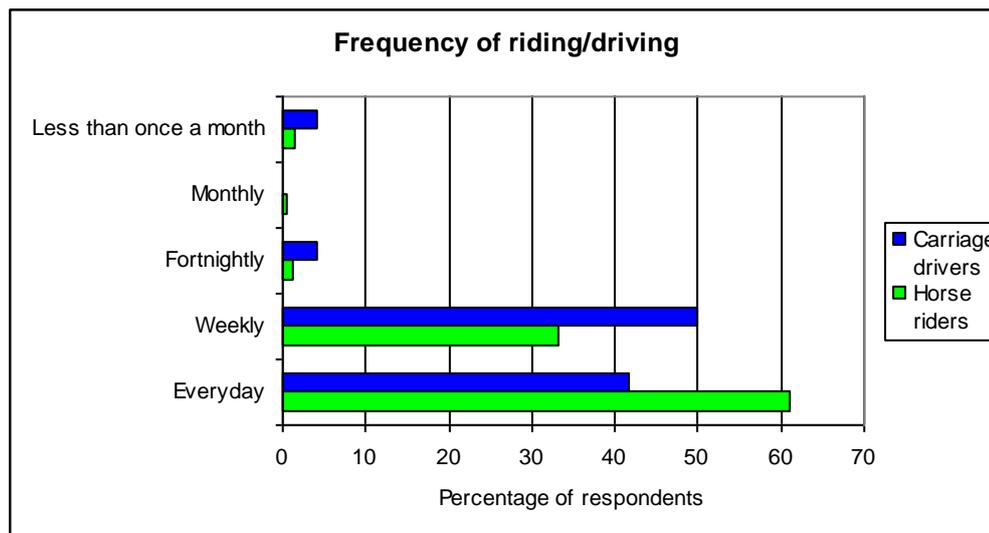
The end of September 2004 saw the launch of the horse riding and carriage-driving questionnaire. The questionnaire was produced in conjunction with SCC's Consultation Department and distributed through existing contacts and equine establishments such as riding centres, livery yards, tack/feed shops, etc. For this consultation it was important to know where people were riding/driving (Q3). It was therefore decided to divide the County into nine different areas; the National Park and the three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty followed by the five districts/borough. The closing date for submitting completed questionnaires was 30th November 2004. The questionnaire was available on the SCC Rights of Way website and equinetourism.co.uk and a press release was issued to encourage participation.

4.1 Results & Analysis

A total of 671 responses were received (including electronic responses). Only 24 of these were carriage drivers (Q1). As the sample size of carriage drivers is so small they have been included with the horse riders responses where there was no particular difference in the response percentages. Where there was a significant difference separate analysis has been undertaken.

Q2 How often do you ride/carriage drive?

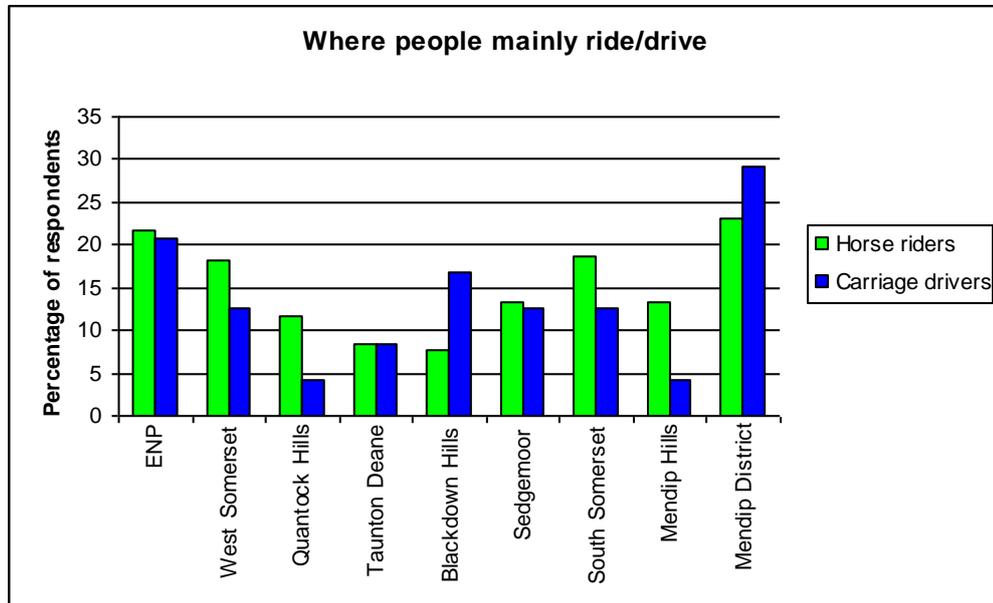
The following bar chart illustrates the percentage respondents and their frequency of riding/carriage driving.



The majority of riders and carriage-drivers undertake their activity either everyday or weekly. Over 61% of respondents ride everyday half of carriage drivers drive on a weekly basis.

Q3 Where do you mainly ride/drive when exercising your horses in Somerset?

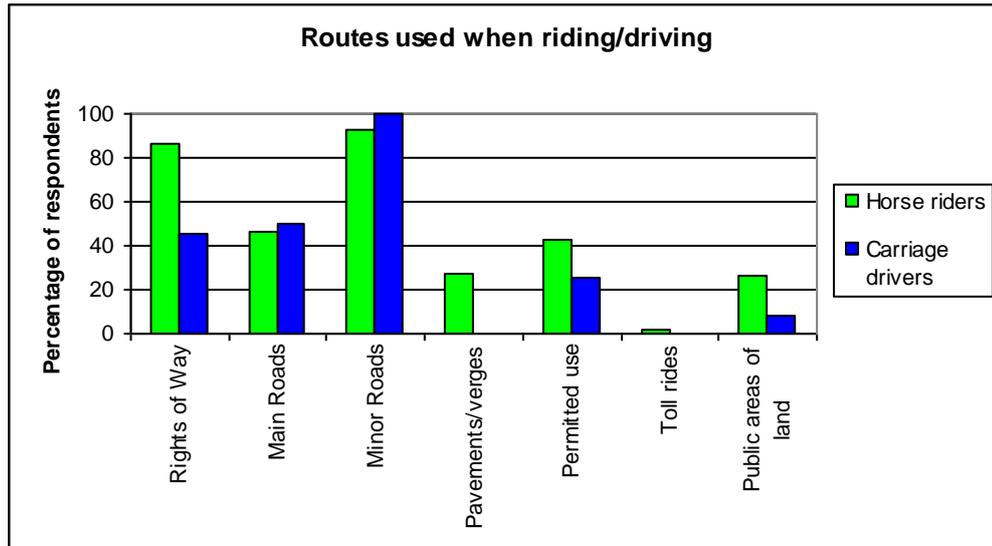
The following column chart illustrates the response to this question.



Horse riding and carriage driving occurs in all areas of Somerset. As respondents are likely to ride/drive in the vicinity of their residence/livery, this should not be interpreted as the level of riding/driving for each area but as the approximate distribution of those who responded to the questionnaire.

Q4 When you ride/drive, which of the following routes do you use?

The following column chart illustrates the percentage of respondents who use various different routes for riding/driving.

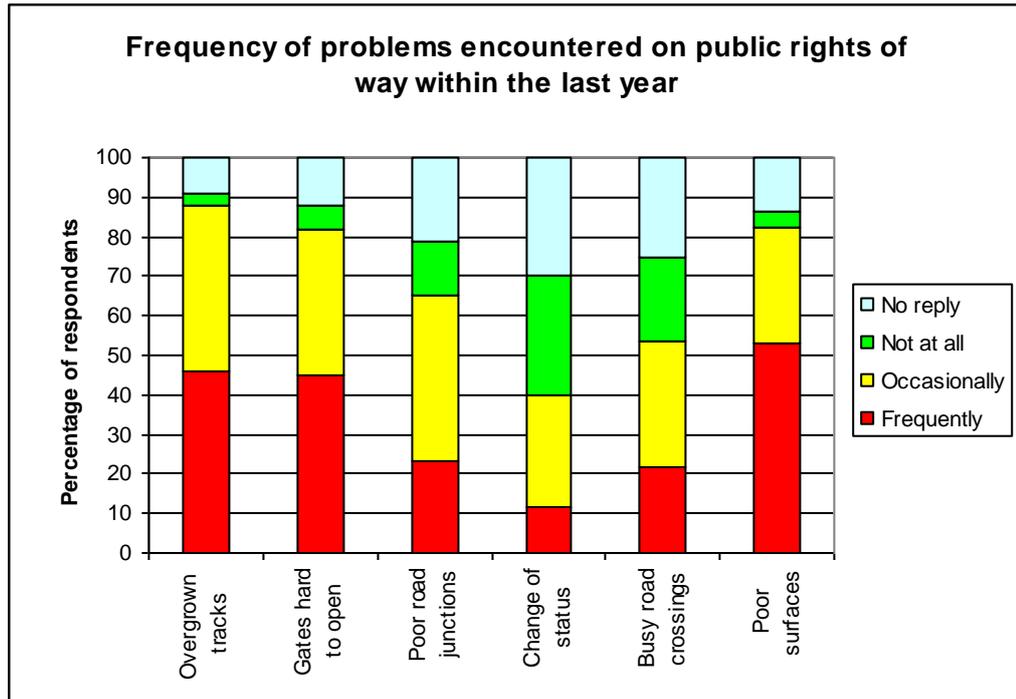


Over 86% of horse riders use rights of way compared to only 46% of carriage drivers. Around half of riders/drivers use main roads and almost all riders use minor roads. All carriage drivers use minor roads. A relatively high percentage of riders/drivers use private land with permission and over a quarter of riders use pavements or verges. Less than 2% of riders use toll rides and no carriage drivers use pavements/verges or toll rides.

A literal box was provided on the questionnaire for 'other' responses. Drove was the only literal response.

Q5 Have you encountered any of the following when using public rights of way in the last year (1999)?

The following column chart illustrates how often respondents encountered various problems on rights of way within the last year.

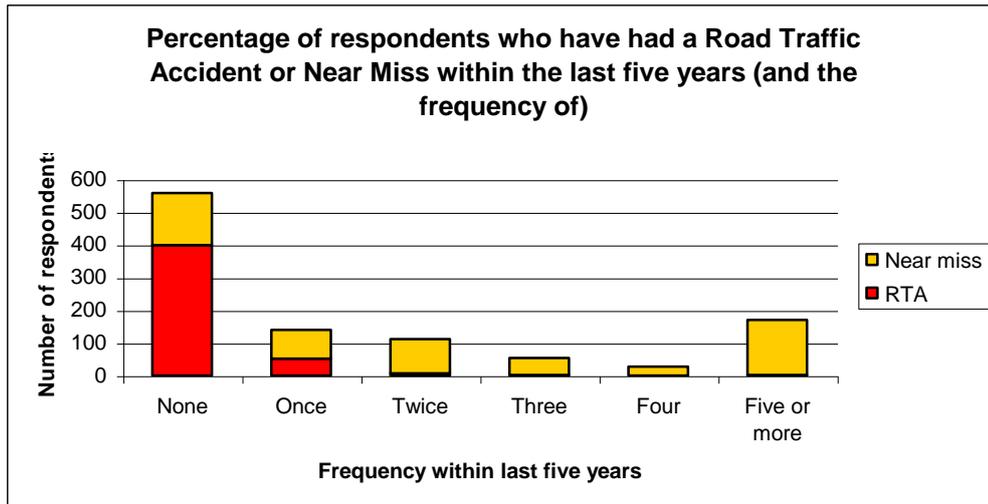


The problem encountered most frequently by over half of riders/drivers was poor surfaces, however overgrown tracks were encountered by the most number of riders/drivers. Change of status was encountered the least. 82% of riders/drivers found gates hard to open and over 21% frequently encountered poor road junctions and rights of way that force you to cross busy roads.

Literal responses of other problems included; other users, broken gates and electric fences.

Q6 Have you ever had a Road Traffic Accident (RTA) that has resulted in an injury and/or damage to you/your horse/carriage or near miss whilst horse riding/carriage driving on or alongside roads? If you have how many times in the last five years (1999-2004)?

The following column chart illustrates the number of respondents who have had RTAs or near misses during the stated period..

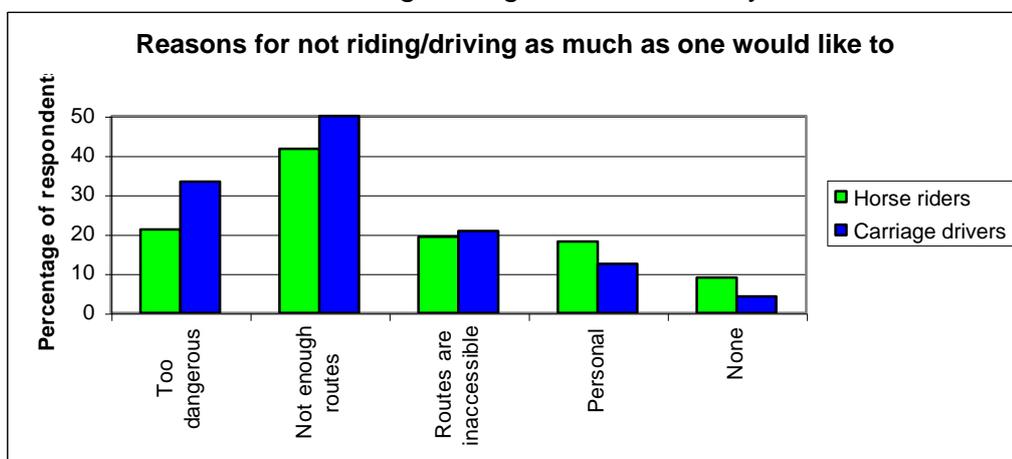


399 (59.5%) of respondents have not had an RTA and 160 (23.8%) have not had a near miss, in that time. Over 9% of respondents have had one or more RTAs and over 65% have had one or more near misses in the years 1999-2004. The greatest frequency of near misses was 'five or more' with a quarter of respondents.

By comparing this data with the routes people use we see an above average use of main roads in those respondents who have had one or more RTAs. However only 54% of those that have had one, two or three RTAs use main roads, therefore 46% of respondents have had their RTAs on minor roads. Similarly 48% of those that have had one or more near misses do not use main roads and therefore their near misses must have occurred on minor roads

Q7 If you do not ride/carriage drive as often as you would like what is stopping you?

The following column chart illustrates the percentage of respondents and their reason for not riding/driving as much as they would like.

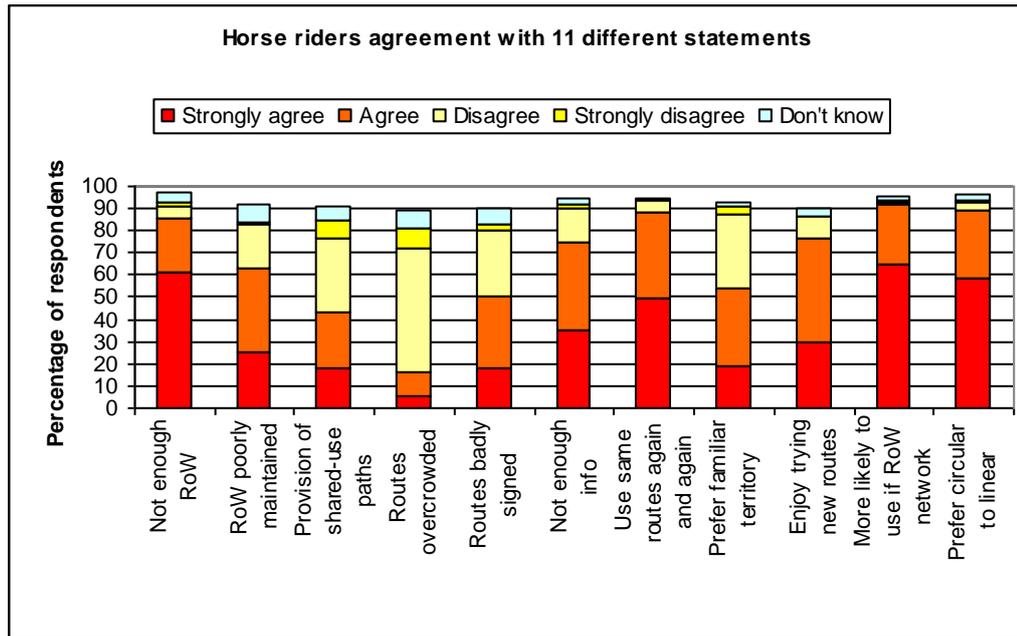


The most common reason for both riders and carriage drivers was 'not enough routes'. The second most common reason was 'too dangerous' closely followed by 'routes are inaccessible'.

Q8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Horse riders

The following stacked column chart shows how horse riders agreed with the eleven statements.



An overwhelming majority of horse riders were in agreement with the following:

- there are not enough public rights of way for horse riders in Somerset
- if the public rights of way network were to be improved I am more likely to use it
- I tend to use the same routes time and time again
- I prefer circular routes to linear.

75% of riders were in agreement that:

- there is not enough information available about bridleways/tracks
- I enjoy planning and trying out new routes.

The majority of riders also agreed that:

- the equestrian public rights of way in Somerset are poorly maintained
- the public rights of way are badly signed/waymarked.

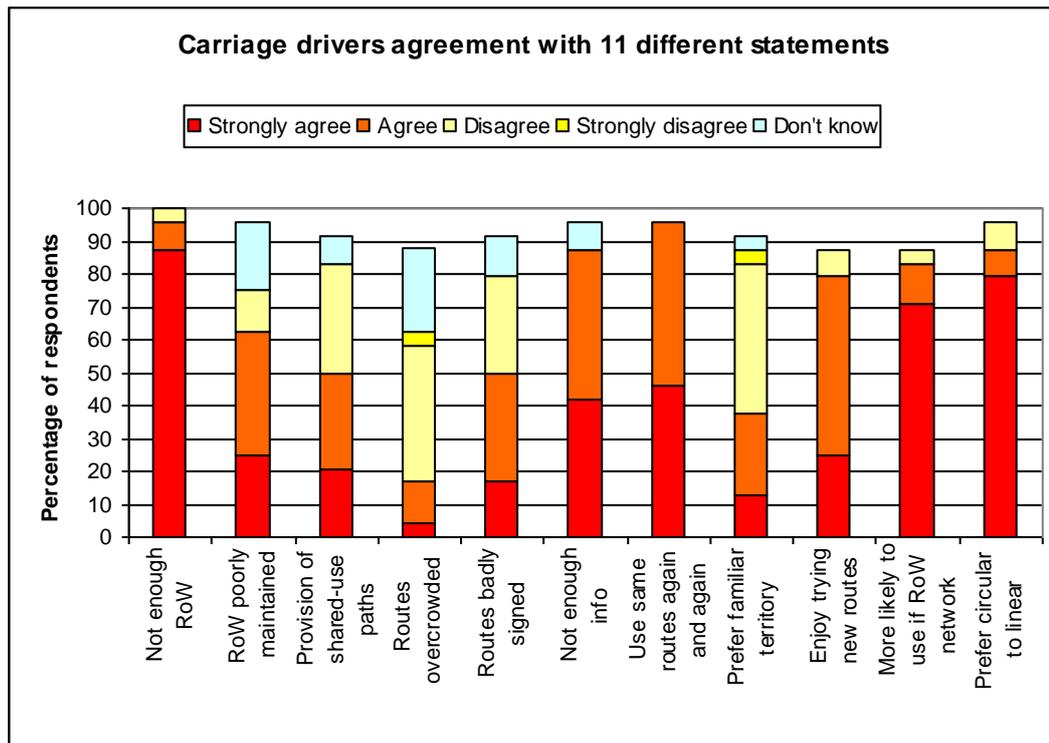
The only statement where a majority of riders disagreed was:

- the bridleways and tracks in Somerset are over-crowded

Views were divided over 'there should be separate/segregated paths for different users'.

Carriage drivers

The following stacked column chart shows how carriage drivers agreed with the eleven statements.



An overwhelming majority of carriage drivers were in agreement with the following:

- there are not enough public rights of way for horse riders in Somerset
- if the public rights of way network were to be improved I am more likely to use it
- I tend to use the same routes time and time again
- I prefer circular routes to linear routes
- there is not enough information available about bridleways and tracks
- I enjoy planning and trying out new routes.

The majority of carriage drivers also agreed that:

- the equestrian public rights of way in Somerset are poorly maintained.

Almost 50% of carriage drivers agree that:

- there should be separate/segregated paths for different users

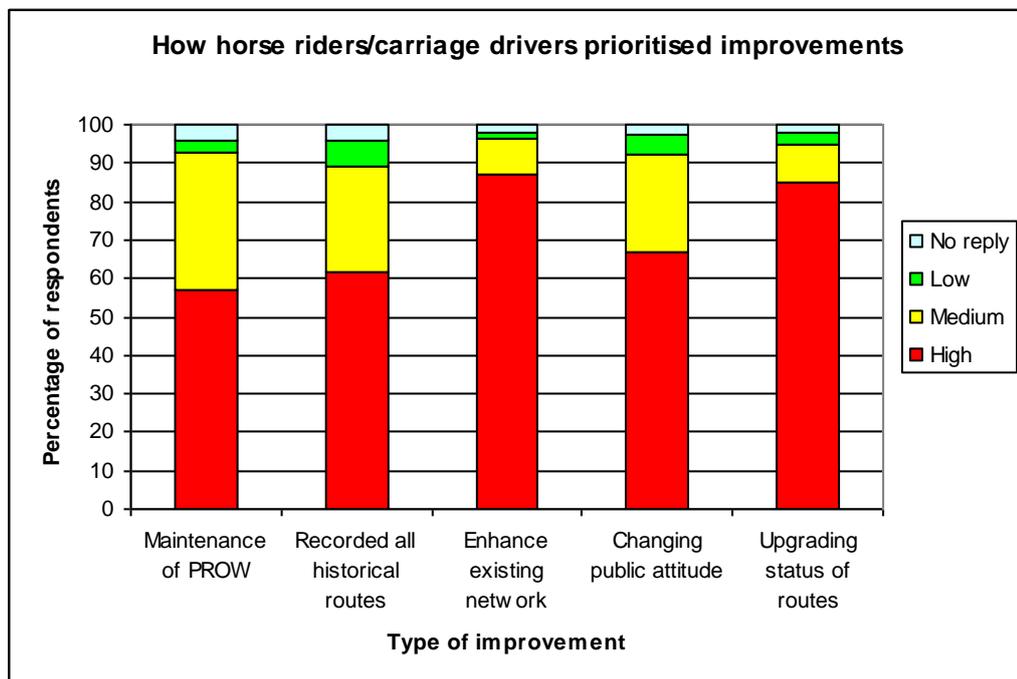
- the public rights of way are badly signposted/waymarked.

The only statements where carriage drivers disagreed more than they agreed were:

- the bridleways and tracks in Somerset are over-crowded
- I am more at ease riding/driving on familiar territory.

Q9 Please prioritise which of the following improvements you would like to see

The results for horse riders and carriage drivers were very similar and are illustrated by the column graph below.



All the improvements were considered to be a high priority by the majority of respondents. The improvements prioritised 'high' by the highest percentage of respondents were:

- enhancing the existing network e.g.: by creating linkages to form circular routes and improving road crossings
- upgrading routes so that more people can use them e.g.: footpaths to bridleways.

Changing the publics' attitude towards equestrians and their needs was the third highest priority.

Disparities identified between areas

By cross-tabbing question three with other questions it is possible to identify where particular areas of the County are worse or better than other areas. The areas are listed in descending difference from the average.

Q3 x Q5

- 'Overgrown tracks, e.g: low branches' are an above average problem for Quantock Hills, South Somerset District and West Somerset District
- 'Gates that are difficult to open' are an above average problem for Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills.
- 'Poor sight lines at junctions with roads' is an above average problem for South Somerset.
- 'Public rights of way that force you to cross busy roads' is an above average problem for Blackdown Hills.
- 'Surfaces' are an above average problem for Taunton Deane District and Quantock Hills.

Q3 x Q6

- South Somerset had the highest frequency of RTAs, however as a percentage of respondents it was comparable to West Somerset District, Quantock Hills and Sedgemoor District.
- The Mendip Hills, South Somerset District, Mendip District, and Taunton Deane District all had an above average percentage of respondents who have had five or more near misses. Exmoor National Park and West Somerset District had well below average percentage of respondents who have had five or more near misses.

Q3 x Q7

- 'Too dangerous' was an above average percentage response for respondents not riding/driving as much as they would like in Blackdown Hills and Taunton Deane District.
- 'Not enough routes' was an above average percentage response for respondents not riding/driving as much as they would like in Taunton Deane District, Mendip Hills, South Somerset District, Blackdown Hills.
- 'Routes are inaccessible' was an above average percentage response for respondents not riding/driving as much as they would like in Blackdown Hills.
- Only Exmoor National Park had a significant below average percentage response to the above three reasons; too dangerous, not enough routes and routes are inaccessible.

Q3 x Q8

- In all areas over 80% of respondents agreed that there are not enough public rights of way for riders/drivers apart from in Exmoor National Park where only 60% agreed. The strongest agreement was in Taunton Deane District, Mendip District, South Somerset District, Sedgemoor District.
- Strongest agreement with equestrian rights of way in Somerset being poorly maintained was in Blackdown Hills, West Somerset, Taunton Deane and Quantock Hills. Strongest

disagreement with this was in Mendip Hills, Mendip District and Exmoor National Park.

- Over a quarter of riders/drivers in South Somerset agree that bridleways/tracks are overcrowded, more than any other area in Somerset. The highest disagreement with this was in West Somerset.
- The highest agreement with the rights of way being badly signed/waymarked was in South Somerset and the lowest was in Exmoor national Park.
- The highest agreement with there not being enough information available about bridleways and tracks was in Blackdown Hills and the lowest agreement was in Exmoor National Park.
- The highest disagreement with the statement 'I tend to use the same routes time and time again' was in Quantock Hills and Exmoor National Park.
- The only areas to disagree with the statement 'if the public rights of way network were to be improved I am more likely to use it' were Quantock Hills, Exmoor National Park and West Somerset.

Q3 x Q9

- West Somerset had the highest percentage response for prioritising 'maintaining the existing network of public rights of way in a better condition at present'.
- Mendip District had the highest percentage response for prioritising 'enhancing existing network e.g.: by creating linkages to form circular routes and improving road crossings' and 'upgrading routes so that more people can use them'.

4.2 Conclusions

On the whole the results of the horse rider/carriage driver questionnaire are very pleasing however it was hoped that a higher response rate would have been achieved particularly for the carriage drivers. With a sample size of 24 for carriage drivers the results will have to be used with caution.

Question 3 was designed so that respondents would only tick one area where they *mainly* ride/drive. This would then enable analysis across the areas. However many respondents ticked all areas where they ride/drive, e.g.: somebody who lives in West Somerset and rides on Exmoor and the Quantock Hills would probably tick all three areas. With a paper based survey it is very hard to ensure that this type of question is answered correctly. As a result the analysis of question 3 with other questions is not entirely valid and any conclusions drawn from this analysis should be done with caution. For example when question 3 is cross-tabbed with question 6 (RTA/near misses), if a respondent ticked more than one area it is impossible to determine within which area the RTA/near miss took place. Although this is not ideal, the data is not completely flawed and can be used to give an indication of differences between different areas. Another

disadvantage of question 3 is that responses could be very subjective. If someone rides solely in Exmoor National Park they might tick Exmoor National Park and West Somerset District as the Park falls within West Somerset. Therefore, results for West Somerset could well be indicative of results for Exmoor National Park and the Quantock Hills. This could also be true for the other areas as well. Therefore, when looking in detail at the results of questions for one particular area it is important to look at the other overlapping areas where respondents may also have ticked.

The questionnaire also resulted in many respondents giving their contact details, which will prove useful if any form of consultation is undertaken in the future.

4.3 Key findings

- The majority of horse riders ride everyday.
- Carriage-drivers drive mostly on a weekly basis but also on a daily basis.
- Over 46% of riders use main roads and almost all riders use minor roads.
- Half of carriage drivers use main roads and all use minor roads.
- Over 80% of riders/drivers encountered 'poor surfaces', 'overgrown tracks' or 'gates hard to open' either frequently or occasionally on rights of way.
- 65% of riders/drivers encountered poor sight lines at rights of way junctions with roads either frequently or occasionally and have had one or more near misses in the last five years.
- 25% of riders/drivers have had five or more near misses with motorised vehicles in the last five years.
- 42% of respondents cited a lack of routes as the reason they don't go riding as much as they would like. Over a fifth of respondents cited that it was too dangerous as another reason.
- Both riders and drivers are in agreement that there are not enough rights of way and the existing ones are poorly maintained. They are also agreed that they; use the same routes again and again, like circular routes, would use the network more if it was improved and that there is not enough information available on routes.
- Enhancing the existing network through; links to form circular routes, improved road crossings and upgrading routes so that more people can use them were the highest priorities for respondents.
- Across the areas the results for Exmoor National Park, West Somerset and the Quantock Hills were often more favourable than the other 6 areas. Areas in need of particular attention would appear to be South Somerset and the Blackdown Hills.

5.0 CYCLING (EXCLUDING MOUNTAIN BIKING) CONSULTATION

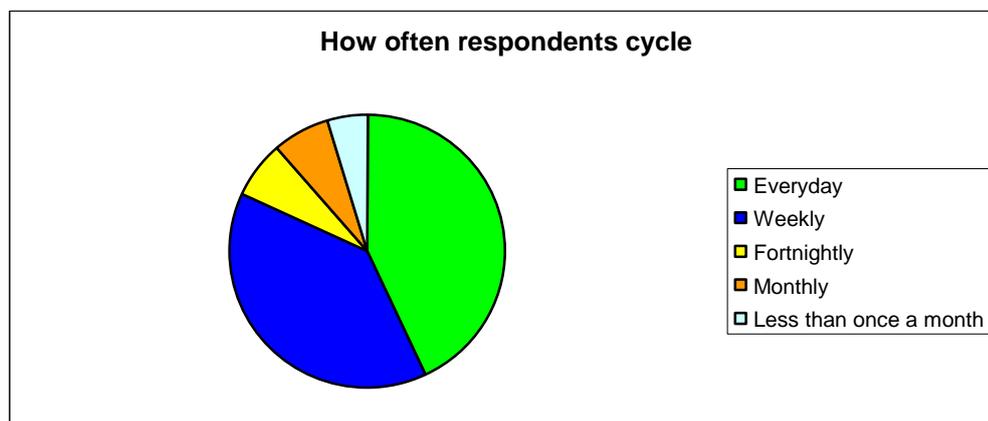
5.1 Method

The cycling consultation was carried out at the same time as the horse riding/carriage driving questionnaire in conjunction with SCC's Consultation Department (September – November 2004). The consultation was a double-sided A4 questionnaire. The first side was purely for non-mountain biking cycling and the reverse side related to mountain biking cycling (see Section 6). Respondents who did both activities were asked to fill in both sides. Questionnaires were distributed to Cycle Shops, cycling groups/contacts and staff at Somerset County Council, UK Hydrographic Office and Westlands. The questionnaire was also available on the SCC Rights of Way website as well as hyperlinks on mountain biking websites. Once again a press release was issued to encourage participation. DCCycleworks was also employed to carry out face-to-face completion and delivery of the questionnaire at popular cycling and mountain biking areas at weekends. As with horse riders/carriage drivers it was important to know where the cycling was occurring and therefore the same nine areas of the County were used.

5.2 Results & Analysis

A total of 434 (paper and electronic) people responded to the questionnaire as non-mountain biking cyclists.

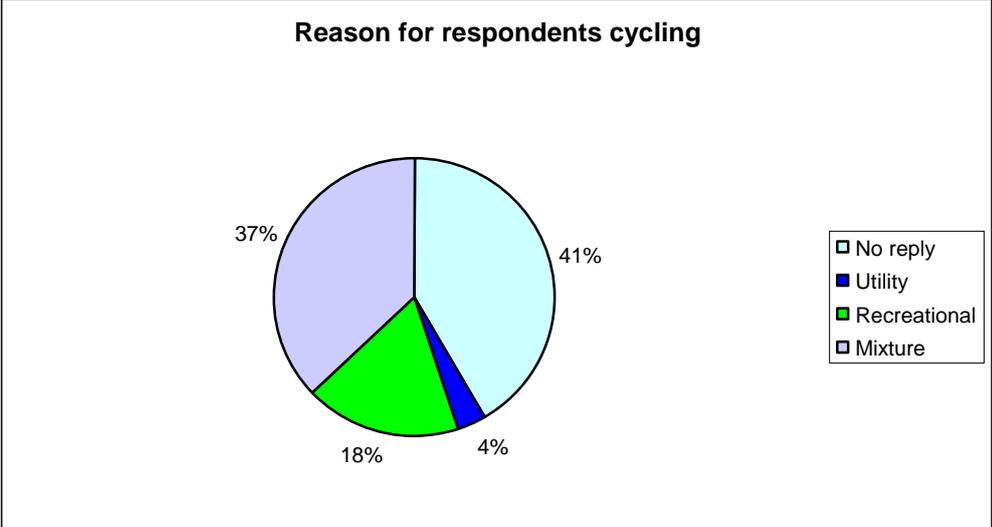
Q1 How often do you cycle?



The above pie chart illustrates how often respondents cycle. Over 81% of respondents cycle on a daily or weekly basis. Over 13% of respondents cycle less regularly on fortnightly or monthly basis.

Q2 Why do you cycle?

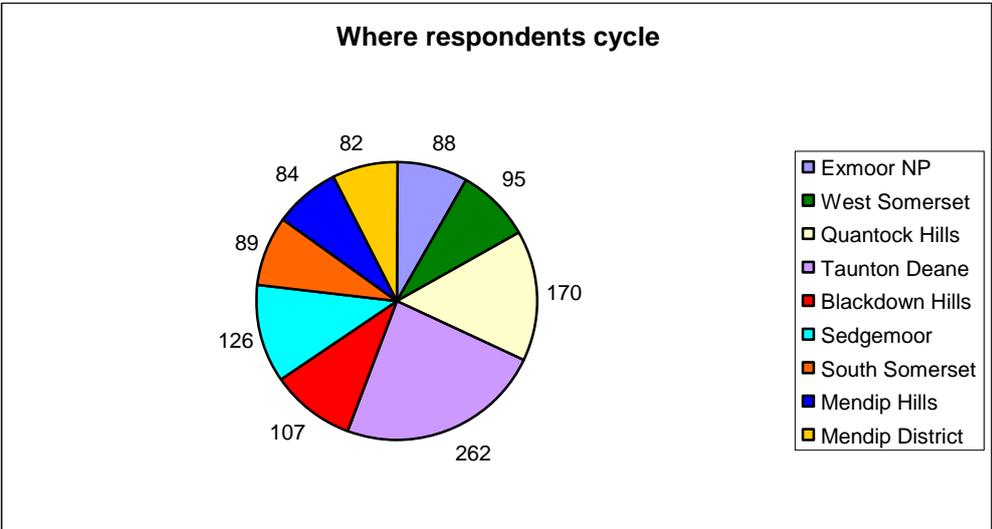
The below pie chart shows the reasons for respondents cycling.



Over 40% of respondents to the questionnaire chose not to answer this question. Of those that did answer; 31% cycle purely for recreational purposes, 6% for getting to work/shops/school/etc and 63% for a mixture of both. Therefore, it can be said that 94% of respondents cycle for recreational purposes.

By cross-tabbing questions 1 and 2 it can be concluded that those that cycle purely for utility trips cycle mainly on a daily basis, whereas those that cycle purely for recreation do so mainly on a weekly basis.

Q3 Where do you mainly cycle?

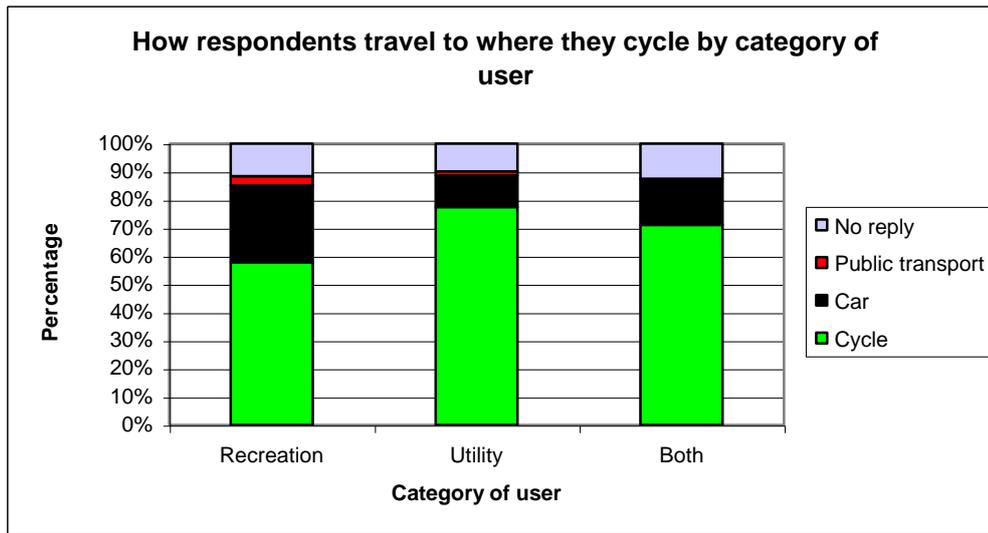


The above pie chart illustrates the distribution across Somerset of where respondents cycle. Taunton Deane and the Quantock Hills were the most popular areas, although this could be due to the location of where respondents live.

This question was not only split into areas but also into 'on-road' and 'off-road (flat leisure)'. Analysis of this split led to spurious results and therefore they have not been used.

Q4 How do you normally travel to get to where you cycle?

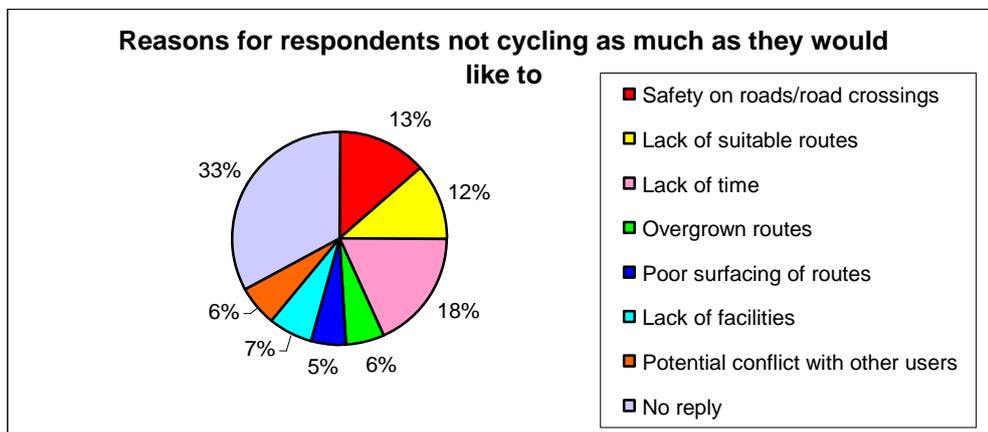
The column chart below illustrates how different categories of user normally travel to get to where they cycle.



The majority of respondents cycle to get to where they cycle. However, the lowest percentage of respondents so doing were those that only cycle for recreation. Over 27% of recreational cyclists use a car to get to where they cycle. The respondents use of public transport to get to where they cycle was very minimal.

There were several literal responses to this question as well. Some respondents wrote that it depends on how far away the cycle ride is and others pointed out that a certain train company's bike policy isn't very inclusive.

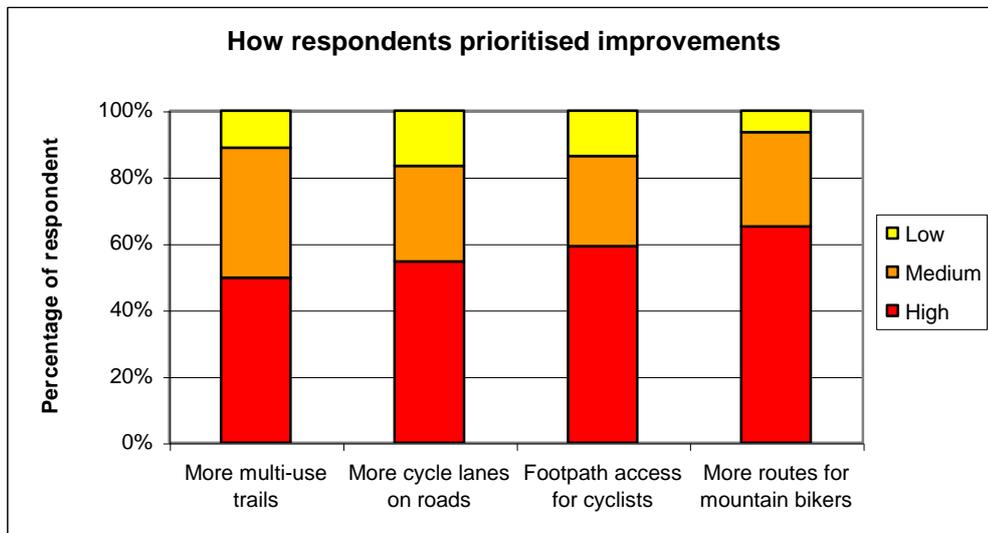
Q5 If you don't cycle as much as you would like, what are the reasons for this?



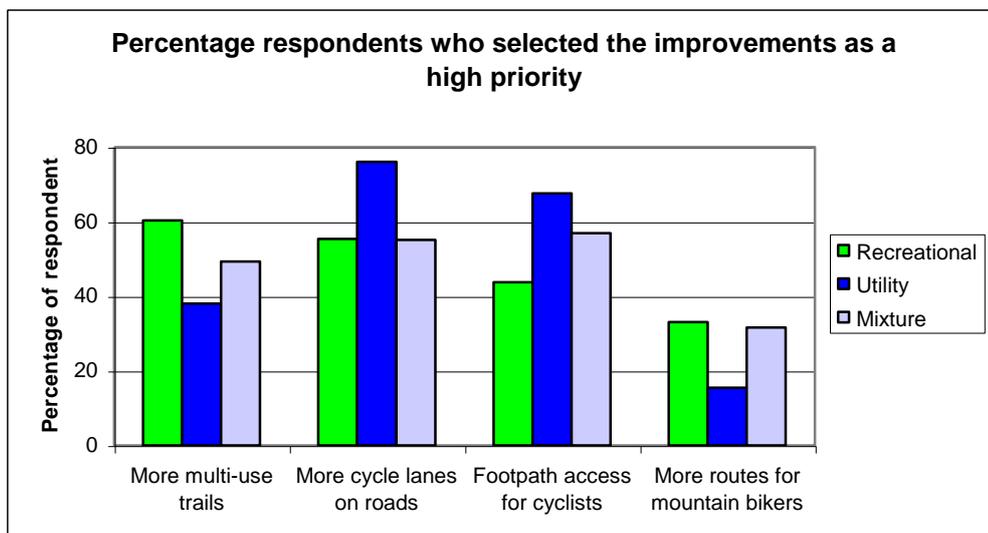
The above pie chart shows the reasons why respondents couldn't cycle as much as they would like. Disregarding the 'no replies' and 'lack of time' the main reasons are 'safety on roads/road crossings' and 'lack of suitable routes' at 20% and 17% of respondents to question 5 respectively.

Q6 Please prioritise which of the following improvements you would like to see

The column chart below illustrates the level of priority given to improvements by respondents.



'More routes for mountain bikers' had the highest response as a 'high' priority followed by 'more footpaths allowing access for cyclists'. The following column chart shows the different priorities when these results are cross-tabbed with results for question 2.



The highest priority for recreational cyclists was 'more multi-use trails' followed by 'more cycle lanes on roads'. For those who cycle purely for utility trips the highest priority was 'more cycle lanes on roads' followed by 'more footpaths allowing access for cyclists'. 'More routes for mountain bikers' was the lowest 'high' priority for all three types of cyclist. This is in contrast to it being rated the highest priority overall. This is probably explained by the 41% no reply to Q2 not appearing in the category of user analysis.

In addition, seventy literal responses were received regarding 'other' priorities. The majority of these concerned on-road situations such as physical measures (width of roads, surfacing/pot holes, lights) as well as education and behaviour of motorists.

5.3 Conclusions

The aim of this questionnaire was to try and separate the views of the road cyclists from the off-road cyclists. Off-road in this context was to mean flat leisure cycling such as along canals or disused railway multi-use trails, however because many of the respondents were mountain bikers as well, the cycling (non-mountain biking) section of the questionnaire was answered as if for mountain biking. This is why the results for on road/off-road under question 3 were not used as it was felt their validity was considerably compromised.

Cyclists are always going to be a hard group to capture through a paper-based questionnaire, without incurring high labour costs, and in hindsight the design of the questionnaire became too complex and probably confused respondents to some extent. The reverse side of the questionnaire 'For Mountain Bikers' was clearer and therefore the off-road/on and off-road results can be used.

5.4 Key findings

- Over 81% of respondents cycle on a daily or weekly basis.
- 94% of respondents cycle for recreational purposes.
- Over 27% of recreational cyclists use a car to get to where they cycle.
- Disregarding the 'no replies' and 'lack of time' the main reasons for respondents not cycling as much as they would like are 'safety on roads/road crossings' and 'lack of suitable routes' at 20% and 17% respectively.
- 'More routes for mountain bikers' had the highest response as a 'high' priority
- The highest priority for recreational cyclists was 'more multi-use trails' followed by 'more cycle lanes on roads'.
- For those who cycle purely for utility trips the highest priority was 'more cycle lanes on roads' followed by 'more footpaths allowing access for cyclists'.

6.0 MOUNTAIN BIKING CONSULTATION

6.1 Method

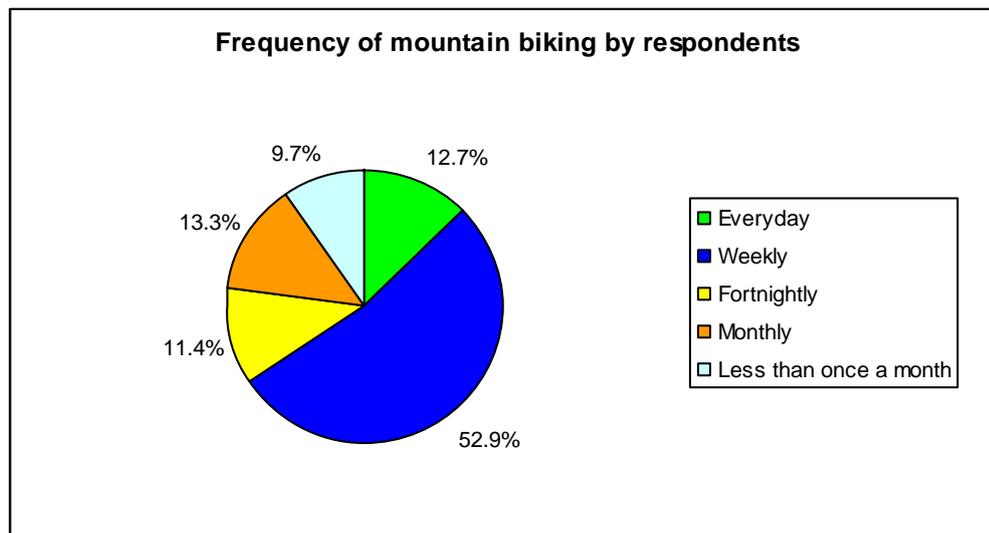
The mountain biking consultation was in the form of a paper-based questionnaire and was on the reverse of the Cycling questionnaire (see 5.1). Completion of the questionnaire was encouraged through; hyperlinks on mountain biking websites, employing DCCycleworks to carry out face-to-face completion and delivery of the questionnaire at popular mountain biking areas at weekends and also with a stall at the Cheddar Challenge mountain biking weekend at the beginning of November 2004.

6.2 Results & Analysis

A total of 308 responses (paper and electronic) were received in response to the Mountain Biking part of the Cycling questionnaire.

Q7 How often do you mountain bike?

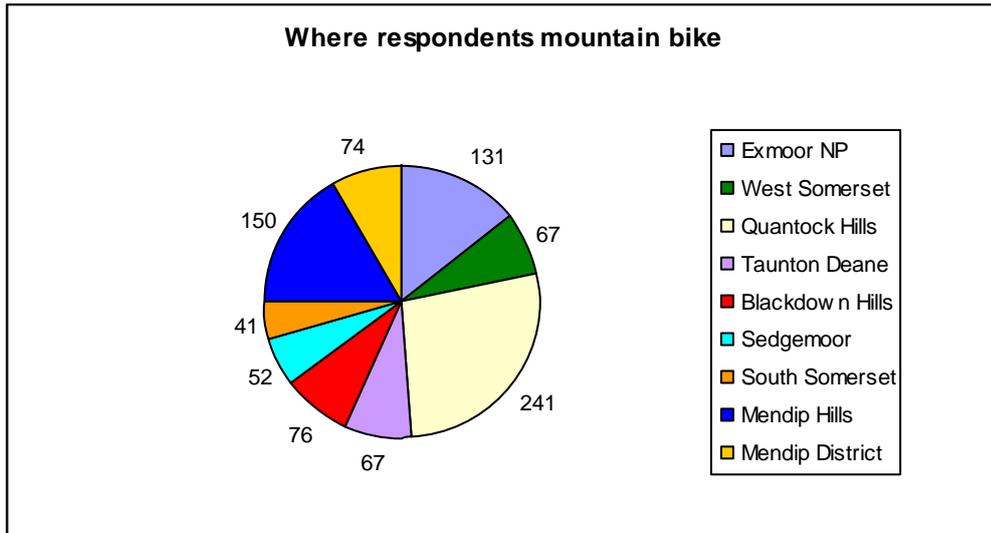
The following pie chart illustrates the frequency of mountain biking by respondents.



The majority of respondents mountain bike on a weekly basis with the other frequencies being of roughly equal proportions.

Q8 Where do you mainly mountain bike in Somerset?

The following pie chart shows the respondents' most popular areas for mountain biking.

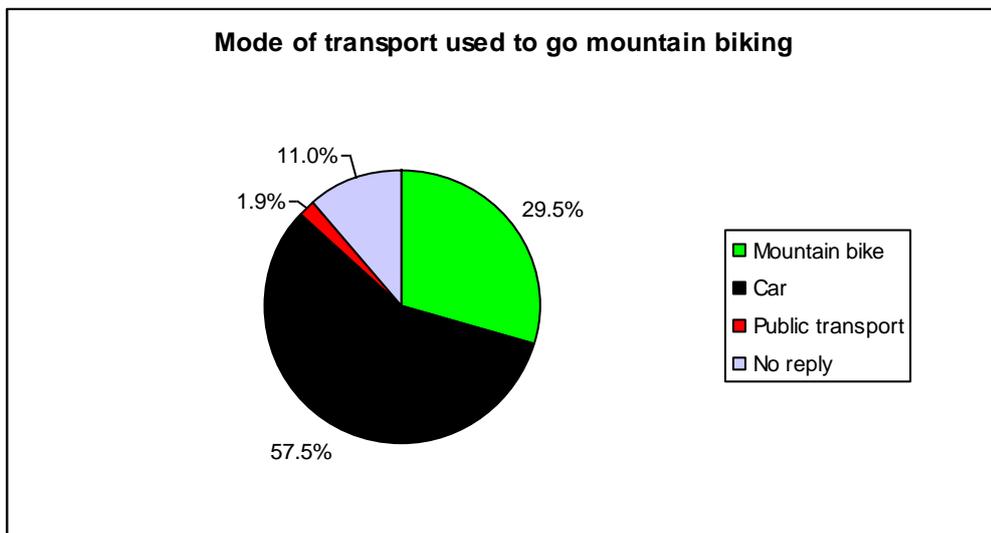


Over 78% of respondents mountain bike on the Quantock Hills. The next most popular areas are the Mendip Hills and Exmoor National Park with 49% and 43% of respondents mountain biking in these areas respectively. The least popular areas are South Somerset and Sedgemoor Districts with only 13% and 17% of respondents mountain biking in these areas respectively.

This question was divided into 'off-road' and 'on and off-road' to try and separate the respondents who like to ride completely off-road from those that like to do more 'touring' mountain biking which would entail some road cycling. The analysis of this question with other questions is at the end of 6.2.

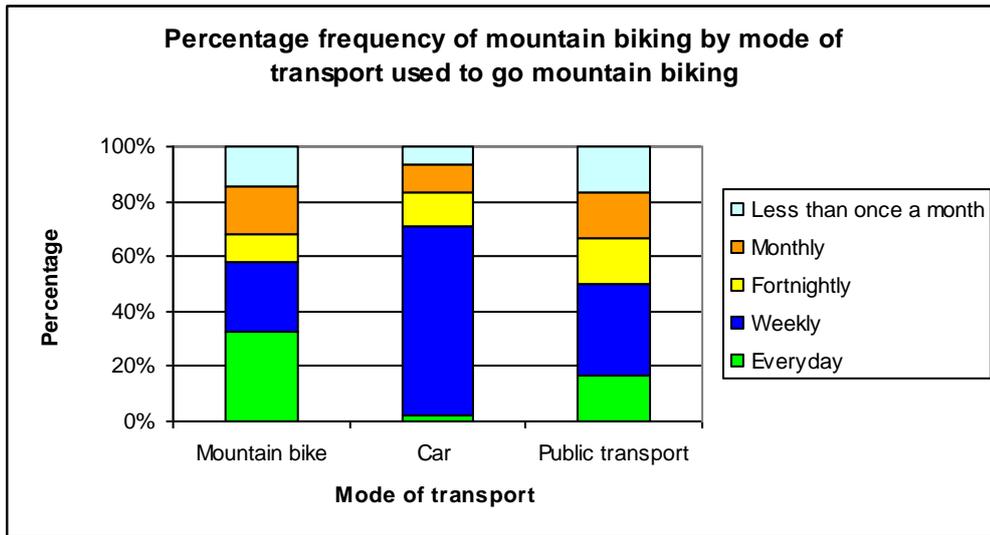
Q9 How do you normally travel to where you mountain bike?

The following pie chart shows how respondents answered question 9.



A third of those who answered this question travel to where they mountain bike by bike, however, the majority (65%) travel by car to where they mountain bike. Public transport accounts for the other 2% of respondents.

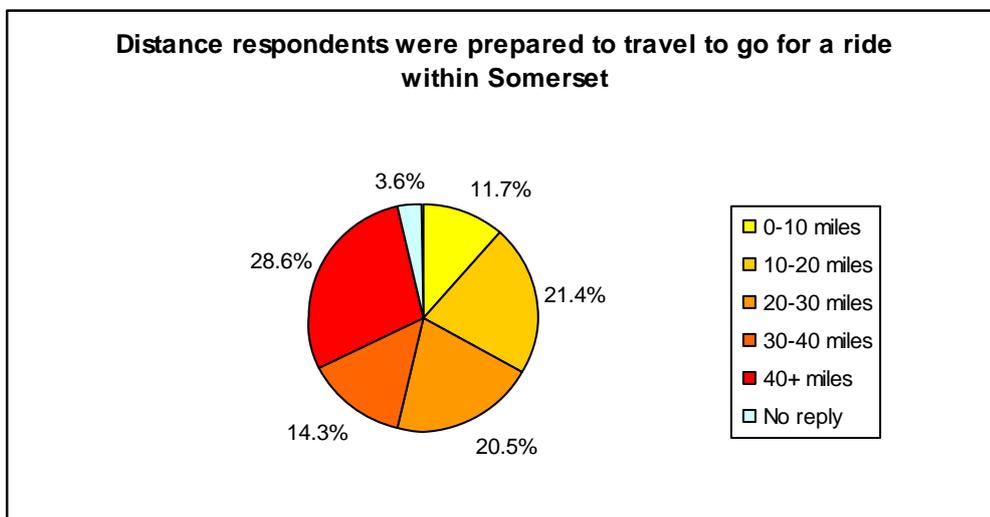
The following stacked column graph shows the percentage frequency of mountain biking by respondents by the mode of transport they used to get to where they mountain bike.



Those that go by car do so mainly on a weekly basis. A third of those that cycle to where they mountain bike do so everyday and a third of those that go by public transport do so on a weekly basis.

Q10 How far are you prepared to travel to go for a ride within Somerset (excluding special holidays/weekends away)?

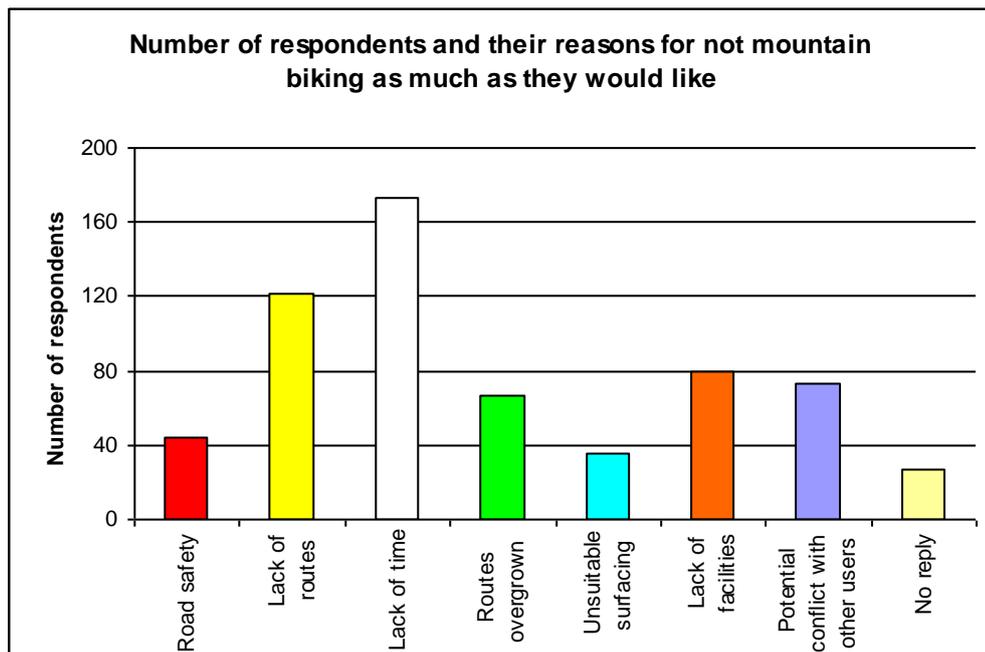
The following pie chart shows the percentage of respondents and how far they were prepared to travel to go for a ride within Somerset.



The most popular answer was also the furthest distance with 29% of respondents prepared to travel in excess of 40 miles to go for a mountain bike ride within Somerset. However 54% responded between 0 and 30 miles.

Q11 If you don't mountain bike as much as you would like, what are the reasons for this?

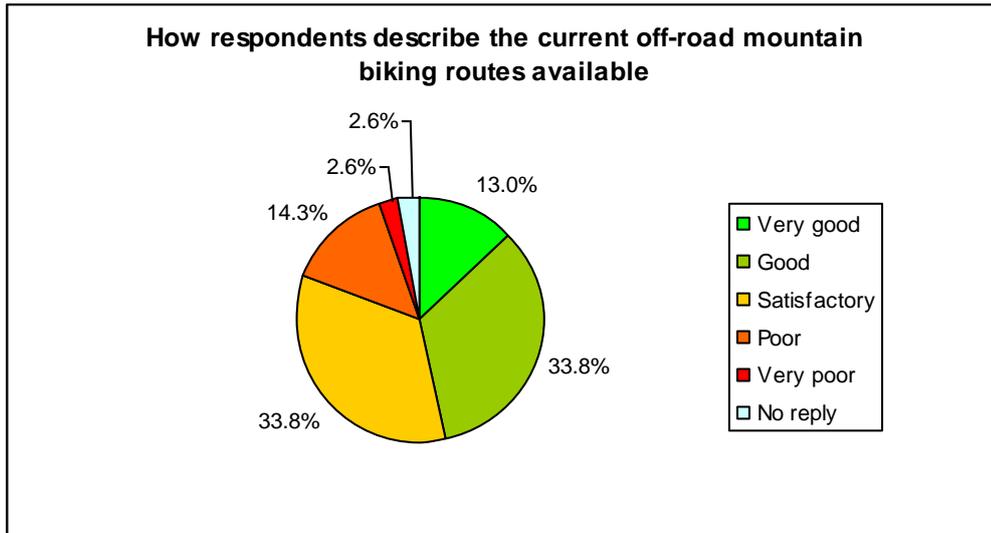
The following column chart illustrates how respondents answered question 11.



Lack of time was a reason for 56% of respondents. 39% of respondents cited the 'lack of routes' as a reason that they don't mountain bike as much as they would like and 26% cited 'lack of facilities'. Only 14% cited 'road safety' as a reason and 'surfacing' was the lowest at only 11% of respondents.

Q12 How would you describe the current off-road routes available?

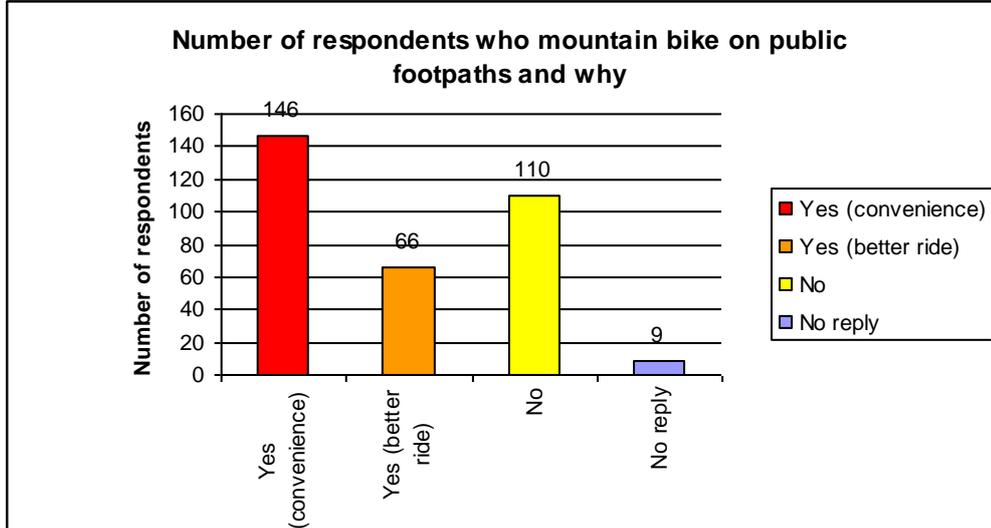
The following pie chart illustrates how respondents viewed the current off-road route provision.



Over 80% of respondents rated the current off-road mountain bike routes available as satisfactory or better. Only 8 respondents said it was very poor and 14% said it was poor.

Q13 Do you ever mountain bike on public footpaths?

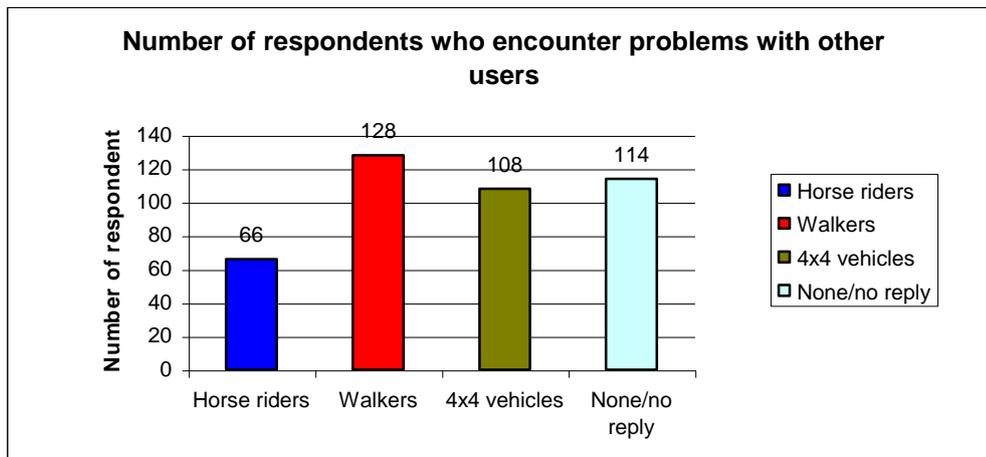
The following column chart shows the number of respondents who cycle on public footpaths and why.



Overall, 65% of respondents mountain bike on public footpaths. 47% of respondents mountain bike on public footpaths because they offer a more convenient route and over a fifth of respondents do so because they offer a better ride.

Q14 Do you ever encounter problems with any of the following other users?

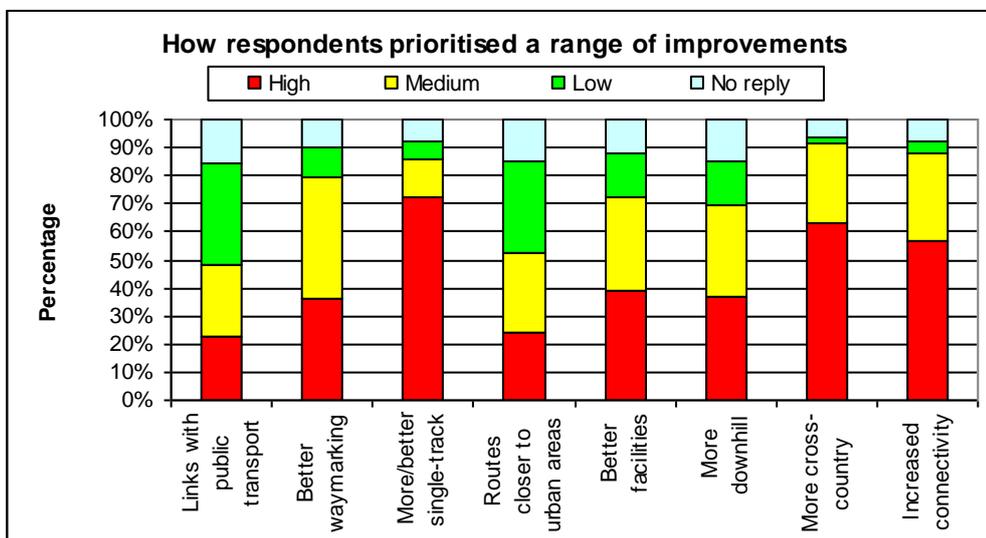
The following column chart illustrates the number of respondents who have encountered problems with other users.



37% of respondents had not encountered problems with other users (or did not answer the question), therefore the majority of respondents (63%) did encounter problems. 42% of respondents had encountered problems with walkers, 35% with 4x4 vehicles and 21% with horse riders.

Q15 Please prioritise the following improvements

The following stacked column chart shows the percentage of respondents and how they prioritised various improvements.



Over 72% of respondents rated 'more adventurous single-track routes' as a high priority. The next highest priorities were 'more cross-country routes' and 'increased connectivity' with 63% and 57% of respondents rating them as a 'high' priority respectively.

Disparities identified between areas (off-road mountain bikers)

By cross-tabbing the 'off-road' element of Q8 with other questions we can see where any differences are between areas of Somerset.

Q8 x Q7

- The highest percentage of everyday mountain biking was found to be in Taunton Deane.

Q8 x Q9

- The highest incidence of car use to get to where you mountain bike was by those respondents who mountain bike in Exmoor National Park and the Mendip Hills. The lowest was by those who mountain bike in Taunton Deane.

Q8 x Q11

- The highest percentage of respondents who cited 'lack of suitable routes' as a reason they don't mountain bike as much as they would like was by those who mountain bike in South Somerset and Sedgemoor Districts.
- Sedgemoor District was also highest for 'routes are overgrown' being a reason.
- 'Lack of facilities for parking/security' was particularly an issue for respondents mountain biking in West Somerset District.

Q8 x Q12

- No respondents who mountain bike in West Somerset thought that the current route provision for mountain bikers was poor or very poor. However, respondents who mountain bike in Sedgemoor and South Somerset Districts had the highest level of poor and very poor responses in relation to current route provision.

Q8 x Q13

- The highest level of mountain biking on public footpaths (for convenience) occurred in Taunton Deane.
- The highest level of mountain biking on public footpaths (for a better ride) occurred in the Quantock Hills.

Q8 x Q15

- The highest demand for 'better links for public transport' came from respondents who mountain bike in Sedgemoor and South Somerset Districts.
- The highest demand for 'better way-marked routes' came from respondents who mountain bike in West Somerset District.
- The highest demand for 'routes closer to residential areas' and 'better facilities at start/end of rides (parking/toilets/refreshments)' came from respondents who mountain bike in Sedgemoor District.
- The highest demand for 'more downhill routes' and 'more cross-country routes' came from respondents who mountain bike in South Somerset District.

- The highest demand for ‘increased connectivity (e.g.:less road between off-road sections of rides)’ came from respondents who mountain bike in the Blackdown Hills.

Disparities identified between areas (on and off-road mountain bikers)

Q8 x Q11

- The highest percentage of respondents who cited ‘lack of suitable routes’ as a reason they don’t mountain bike as much as they would like was by those who mountain bike in South Somerset District.

Q8 x Q13

- The highest level of mountain biking on public footpaths (for convenience) occurred in the Blackdown Hills.

Q8 x Q15

- The highest demand for ‘better facilities at start/end of rides (parking/toilets/refreshments)’ came from respondents who mountain bike in Sedgemoor District.
- The highest demand for ‘more cross-country routes’ came from respondents who mountain bike in Mendip District and the Mendip Hills.
- The highest demand for ‘increased connectivity (e.g.:less road between off-road sections of rides)’ came from respondents who mountain bike in South Somerset District and the Blackdown Hills.

6.3 Conclusions

On the whole, the results to the mountain biking consultation are pleasing. As with the area analysis for the horse riding/carriage driving consultation, there is doubt as to the validity of the results as respondents ticked more than one area and also the issue of blurred boundaries as answers for West Somerset may also be applicable to Exmoor National Park and the Quantock Hills. However, they are valid enough to demonstrate where the main differences are.

6.4 Key findings

- The majority of respondents mountain bike on a weekly basis.
- Over 78% of respondents cycle on the Quantock Hills.
- The least popular area is South Somerset District with only 13% of respondents mountain biking in this area.
- A third of respondents travel to where they mountain bike by bike, however the majority (65%) travel by car to where they mountain bike.
- 29% of respondents are prepared to travel in excess of 40 miles to go for a mountain bike ride within Somerset.

- 39% of respondents cited the 'lack of routes' as a reason that they don't mountain bike as much as they would like and 26% cited 'lack of facilities'.
- Over 80% of respondents rated the current off-road mountain bike routes available as satisfactory or better.
- Overall, 65% of respondents mountain bike on public footpaths. 47% of respondents mountain bike on public footpaths because they offer a more convenient route and over a fifth of respondents do so because they offer a better ride.
- 37% of respondents had not encountered problems with other users (or did not answer the question), therefore the majority of respondents (63%) did encounter problems. 42% of respondents had encountered problems with walkers, 35% with 4x4 vehicles and 21% with horse riders.
- Over 72% of respondents rated 'more adventurous single-track routes' as a high priority. The next highest priorities were 'more cross-country routes' and 'increased connectivity' with 63% and 57% of respondents rating them as a 'high' priority respectively.
- Sedgemoor and South Somerset Districts are lacking in many areas for mountain biking.
- Increased connectivity is a real issue for respondents mountain biking in the Blackdown Hills.

7.0 LANDHOLDER CONSULTATION

7.1 Method

At the beginning of December 2004 a double-sided A4 questionnaire was sent to a random selection of 3000 landholders in Somerset. The questionnaire was carried out in conjunction with SCC's Consultation Department. To overcome the problem of data protection and to avoid doing mailings through what could be a biased mailing list (e.g: NFU, FWAG, CLBA), DEFRA were approached. With the support of the local National Farmers Union representative and the regional Rural Development Service, DEFRA agreed to carry out a random sample of the c.7000+ holdings in Somerset to give 3000 names and addresses which would then be forwarded to a mailing house.

DEFRA categorise holdings into three classes; large, medium and small/very small. As the aim was to target landholders with rights of way across their land it was decided that the larger the holding the more likelihood there was of a right of way across it. Therefore, it was requested that the random sample be modified to include as many large and medium holdings as possible. As there are only some 7000 holdings in Somerset the 3000 sample included all the large and medium sized holdings and then the remainder was made up of a random sample of small/very small holdings. By doing this it was hoped that wastage of questionnaires being sent to landholders with no rights of way on their land would be minimised. The mailing house then sent out the questionnaire with covering letters to these

addresses. Landholders had until the end of February 2005 to return completed questionnaires.

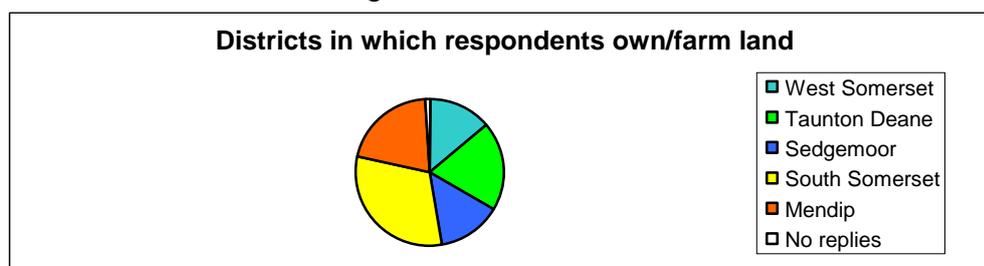
The questionnaire was also sent to other interested landowners who had not been selected in the sample and relevant stakeholders. The questionnaire was available to fill in on the SCC Rights of Way homepage with a hyperlink on the regional NFU website. CLBA also included the website address in their monthly newsletter to Somerset members. A press release was also produced to encourage participation.

7.2 Results & Analysis

A total of 695 responses (paper and electronic) were received.

Q1 Please tell us which district area you own/farm land in

The following pie chart shows the distribution of respondents across the various districts/borough.



There was a good level of response from all areas of Somerset, particularly South Somerset which is the largest district.

Q2 Please tell us if you own/farm land on any of the following

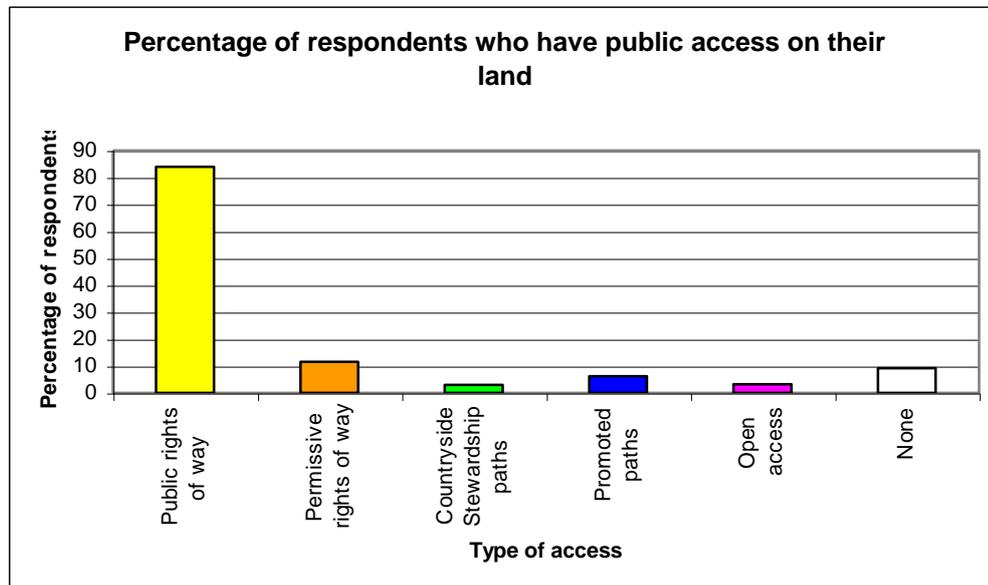
The table below summarises the number of responses from those who own/farm land in either Exmoor National Park or one of the AONBs.

	Exmoor National Park	Quantock Hills AONB	Blackdown Hills AONB	Mendip Hills AONB
Number of responses	56	26	36	32
Percentage of total responses	8.1%	3.7%	5.2%	4.6%

Over a fifth of respondents own/farm land in the National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Q3 Do any of the following types of access occur on your land?

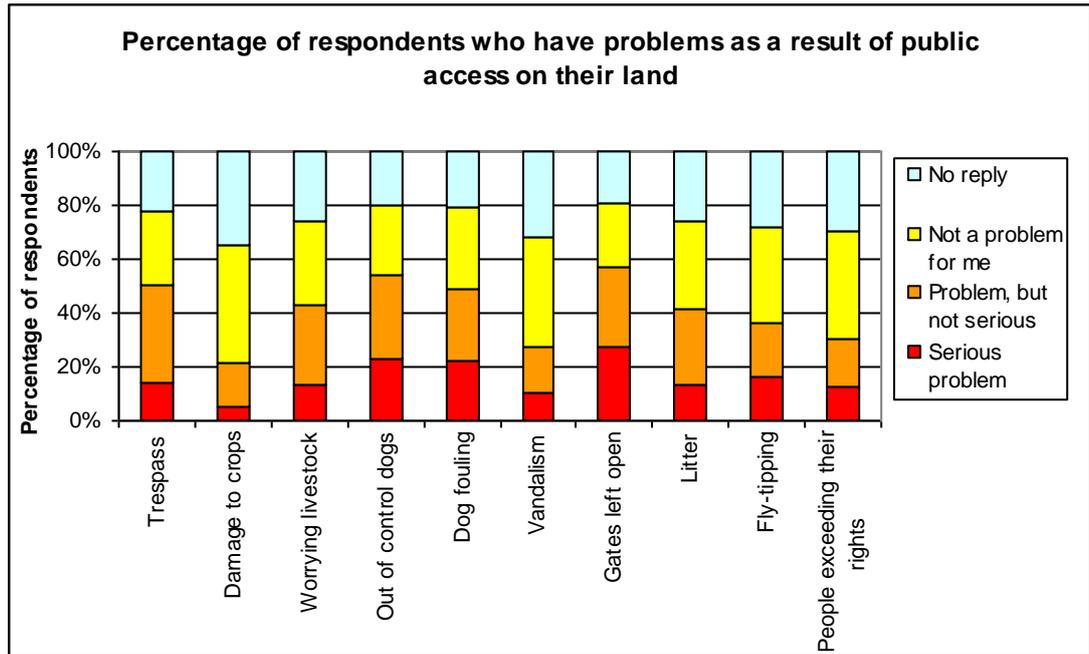
The following column chart shows the percentage of respondents and the type of public access on their land.



The large majority of public access on respondents land is through public rights of way. 12% of respondents have permissive rights of way and 3% have Countryside Stewardship and Open Access land. 64 responses were received that had no public access on their land.

Q4 Please tell us the level of the following listed potential problems you have had as a direct result of public access crossing your land?

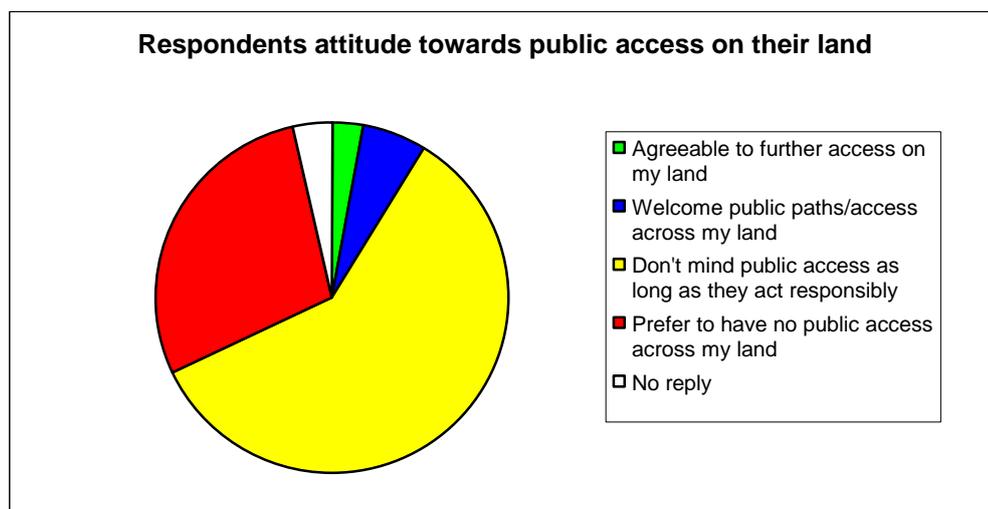
The following stacked column chart shows how serious 10 potential problems are for respondents.



Over a fifth of respondents consider gates left open, out of control dogs and dog fouling to be a serious problem. Trespass, worrying livestock and litter were all problems (although not as serious) experienced by over 40% of respondents. The least serious problem for respondents was damage to crops although this is the only problem that would be applicable to arable farmers and not to all landowners/farmers.

Q5 Which of the following statements best describe your attitude towards public access?

The following pie chart shows respondents attitude towards public access.

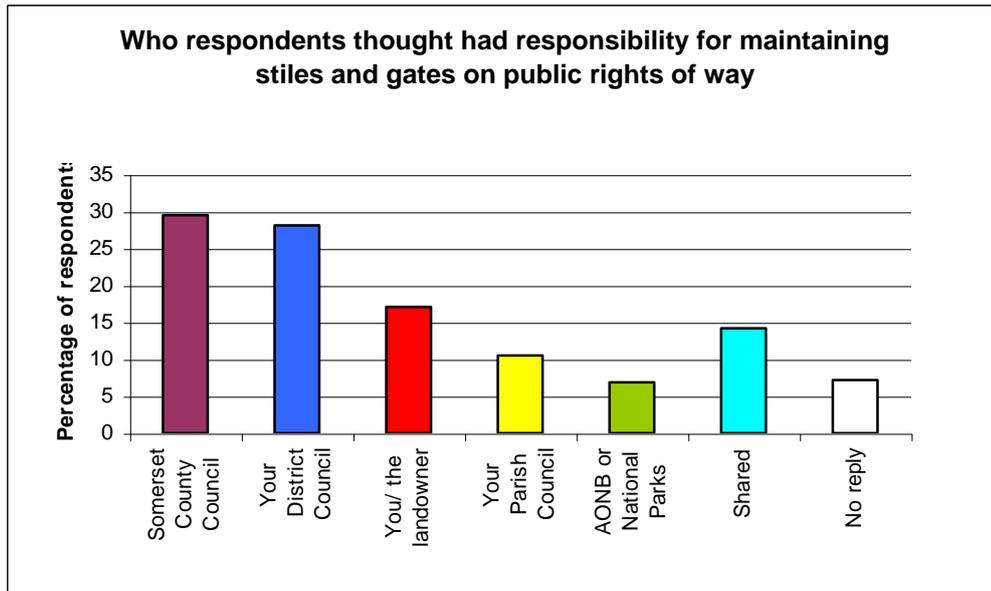


Almost two-thirds of respondents don't mind having public access across their land as long as members of the public act responsibly. 3%

are agreeable to further access, however over 30% would prefer to have no public access on their land.

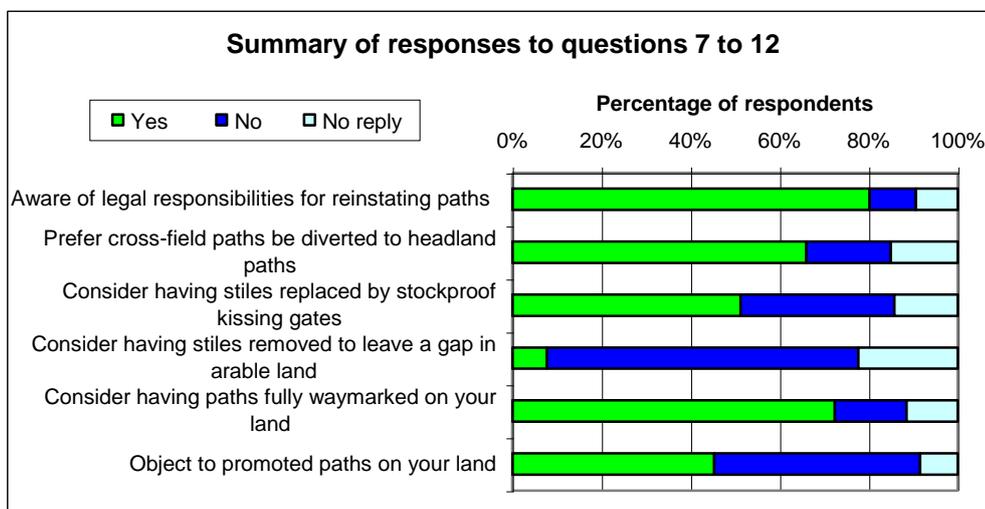
Q6 Who do you think has responsibility for stiles and gates on public footpaths and bridleways?

The following column chart illustrates the percentage of respondents and whom they thought had responsibility for stiles and gates on public rights of way.



The majority of respondents believe the responsibility for stiles and gates rests with either the County or District Council. Only 17% believed it to be their responsibility although 14% believed it to be a shared responsibility.

Questions 7-12 are summarised in the following stacked bar chart.



Q7 Are you aware of your legal responsibilities for reinstating paths crossing cultivated land?

Over 80% of respondents were aware of their responsibilities.

Q8 Would you prefer cross-field paths to be diverted into headland paths?

Two-thirds of respondents would prefer cross-field paths to be diverted to headland paths.

Q9 Would you consider having stiles replaced by stock proof kissing gates?

Just over half of respondents would consider having stiles replaced by stock proof kissing gates however over a third would not.

Q10 Would you consider having stiles/gates removed to leave a gap in arable situations?

Only 8% of respondents would consider this and this question also had the highest no reply percentage as not all respondents would have arable situations.

Q11 Would you consider allowing paths across your land to be fully waymarked (to prevent unintentional trespass)?

Only 16% of respondents would not consider this.

Q12 Would you object to a public right of way across your land being promoted as part of a bigger route e.g.: parish circular walk, long distance trail, disabled route, etc.?

Views of respondents were evenly split over the promotion of a right of way across their land.

Q13 Do you have any specific suggestions for improving public access in general on your land?

Almost 300 literal responses were received to this question. Common themes in many of the responses were; better education of the public, dogs and their walkers, and specific requests for maintenance/improvement of routes.

Disparities identified between areas

By cross-tabbing the results of questions 1 and 2 with other questions it is possible to identify and disparities between results for different areas of the County.

Q1&Q2 x Q4

The following table is a summary of the largest disparities across the districts for the problems detailed in Q4.

PREVALENCE OF PROBLEMS ACROSS NINE AREAS OF SOMERSET	District Areas/ AONB/ENP	
	Highest 'serious problem' % response (overall % response)	Highest 'not a problem for me' % response (overall % response)
Trespass	Mendip Hills AONB 18.8% (14%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 41.7% (27.5)
Damage to crops	South Somerset District 7.4% (5.3%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 63.9% (43.7%)
Worrying livestock	Exmoor National Park 23.2% (13.7%) Mendip Hills AONB 25% (13.7%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 47.2 (31.2%)
Out of control dogs	Mendip Hills AONB 40.6% (22.6%) Exmoor National Park 37.5% (22.6%) West Somerset District 33.3% (22.6%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 41.7% (26%)
Dog fouling	Mendip Hills AONB 34.4% (21.9%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 44.4% (30.1%)
Vandalism	Exmoor National Park 14.3% (10.1%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 50% (40.6%)
Gates left open	Exmoor National Park 42.9% (27.2%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 33.3% (23.9%)
Litter	Mendip Hills AONB 18.8% (13.4%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 41.7% (33.1%)
Fly tipping	Blackdown Hills AONB 22.2% (16.1%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 50% (35.7%)
People exceeding their rights	Exmoor National Park 21.4% (12.5%)	Blackdown Hills AONB 50% (40.1%)

The highlighted cells are the areas of Somerset whose response was considerably above the average and would therefore suggest that the problem, or lack of, is particularly applicable to that area. The highest percentage responses to 'serious problem' and not a 'problem for me' were almost exclusively from landowners/farmers in Exmoor National Park or the Blackdown/Mendip Hills AONBs.

For every one of the ten problems the highest percentage response to 'not a problem for me' came from respondents who own/farm land in the Blackdown Hills AONB. This would suggest that the Blackdown Hills AONB do not have a high level of problems as a result of public access, apart from fly tipping where the highest percentage response to 'serious problem' was also from respondents who own/farm land in the AONB. Therefore, fly tipping on the whole is not a problem in the Blackdown Hills AONB, but where it does occur it is a serious problem.

Out of control dogs and worrying livestock would appear to be serious problems for landowners/farmers particularly in Mendip Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park. Other problems particular to landowners/farmers in Exmoor National Park are gates left open and people exceeding their rights. Dog fouling is an above average serious problem for landowners/farmers in Mendip Hills AONB.

Q1&Q2 x Q5

The highest percentage response to 'I don't mind people coming onto my land as long as they act responsibly' was from Mendip District landowners/farmers (73%). The highest percentage response to 'I would be agreeable to further public access on my land' was from Mendip Hills AONB landowners/farmers (16%). The most negative area to public access was Sedgemoor District where 41% of landowners/farmers said they would 'prefer to have no public access' on their land.

Q1&Q2 x Q6

The area with the highest percentage of landowners/farmers who think it is their responsibility for stiles/gates on rights of way was Quantock Hills AONB (35%). The areas with the highest percentage of landowners/farmers who think it is the District Council's responsibility for stiles/gates on rights of way were Mendip District (50%) and Mendip Hills AONB (44%). Landowners/farmers in Exmoor National Park see the Park as responsible for stiles/gates on rights of way (71%) whereas in the AONBs landowners/farmers are split between themselves, the District Council and County Council as to who is responsible, but not the AONB service.

Q1&Q2 x Q9

The area where landowners/farmers were most in favour of having stiles replaced with stock proof kissing gates were Quantock Hills AONB (65%) and Blackdown Hills AONB (61%). All other areas were evenly split with most more in favour than against.

Q1&Q2 x Q11

A quarter of landowners/farmers in Mendip Hills AONB are opposed to having paths across their land fully waymarked (higher than any other area), however the majority are in favour (63%).

Q1&Q2 x Q12

Landowners/farmers in the districts are divided as to whether they object to the promotion of a right of way across their land. However, landowners/farmers in the AONBs and Exmoor National Park are more objectionable than agreeable to rights of way across their land being promoted.

7.3 Conclusions

The response to the landholder questionnaire was more than expected and demonstrated the level of interest and feeling regarding rights of way and public access issues amongst landowners/farmers.

The results across the nine different areas are more reliable in this case than they were with the horse riding/carriage driving and cycling/mountain biking questionnaires as very few respondents ticked more than one area. However analysis for West Somerset District would include those landowners that ticked for Exmoor National Park in question 2. This does not invalidate the results but it does mean awareness is necessary, for example, if comparing Exmoor National Park results directly with West Somerset results. Another factor is the low number of responses to question 2 meaning that the sample sizes for Exmoor National Park and the AONBs is lower than that for the districts.

7.4 Key findings

- Over a fifth of respondents consider gates left open, out of control dogs and dog fouling to be a serious problem.
- Trespass, worrying livestock and litter were all problems (although not as serious) experienced by over 40% of respondents.
- The majority of respondents believe the responsibility for stiles and gates rests with either the County or District Council.
- Over 80% of respondents were aware of their responsibility to reinstate paths across cultivated land.
- Two-thirds of respondents would prefer cross-field paths to be diverted to headland paths.
- Just over half of respondents would consider having stiles replaced by stock proof kissing gates however over a third would not.
- Only 16% of respondents would not consider allowing paths across their land to be fully waymarked.
- Out of control dogs and worrying livestock would appear to be serious problems for landowners/farmers particularly in Mendip Hills AONB and Exmoor National Park.
- Serious problems particular to landowners/farmers in Exmoor National Park are gates left open and people exceeding their rights.
- Dog fouling is an above average serious problem for landowners/farmers in Mendip Hills AONB.

- The most negative area to public access was Sedgemoor District where 41% of landowners/farmers said they would 'prefer to have no public access' on their land.
- The area with the highest percentage of landowners/farmers who think it is their responsibility for stiles/gates on rights of way was Quantock Hills AONB (35%).
- Landowners/farmers in Exmoor National Park see the Park as responsible for stiles/gates on rights of way (71%) whereas in the AONBs landowners/farmers are split between themselves, the District Council and County Council as to who is responsible, but not the AONB service.
- The area where landowners/farmers were most in favour of having stiles replaced with stock proof kissing gates were Quantock Hills AONB (65%) and Blackdown Hills AONB (61%).

8.0 SCHOOLS CONSULTATION

8.1 Method

Following the introduction of the power under Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 to close or divert rights of way to protect children and staff on school grounds it was decided to consult schools. In 2004, Somerset County Council Education & Learning Department sent a Rights of Way questionnaire to 274 educational establishments across the County ranging from primary schools to Lifelong Learning centres. There were 14 questions relating to public rights of way and public access on school sites.

8.2 Results & Analysis

Out of the 274 establishments 225 (82%) responded to the questionnaire. The first three questions set out to ascertain whether there were any public rights of way on the school site. 144 (64% of respondents) answered No to all three questions thus negating the need to answer the rest of the questionnaire. This meant there were 81 positive responses, (29% of establishments). The breakdown of these responses is as follows:

Question	% of responses (225)	
	Yes	No/none
1. Are you aware of any Public Rights of Way (PRoW) over your School site, including any detached playing field area (as shown on Ordnance Survey maps eg footpaths, bridleways etc)?	17%	83%
2. Are you aware of any PRoW over your School site (those paths used regularly by the public but not shown on Ordnance Survey maps)?	6%	94%
3. Are there any PRoW that are regularly used by pupils	17%	83%

or staff to access the school premises or playing fields?		
If the answer to either of the above is YES, please attach a site plan indicating routes of the path(s).	15%	85%
4. Could any of these PRow/footpaths etc be improved to ease or promote further use?	12%	88%
5. Are these paths suitable for use by people who are blind, partially sighted or have mobility problems?	7%	93%
6. Would the provision of any new routes, missing links or diversions to the current network improve staff or pupil access? (please give details)	11%	89%
7. Are there any Health and Safety issues associated with these paths e.g. – Dog Fouling?	20%	80%
8. Do any of these public paths promote criminal activity? (Such as vandalism, burglary or arson)	10%	90%
9. Do any public paths present a potential security risk to staff or pupils?	13%	87%
10. If yes to either of the above, have there been any incidents? If so, have they been reported to the LEA via the Security Incident Report Forms?	6%	94%
11. Have any remedial measures been taken to combat the criminal activity or to improve security?	16%	84%
12. Is this path regularly maintained, if so, by whom?	14%	86%
13. Have any of the issues identified above been included in your School's Asset Management Plan (AMP)?	7%	93%
14. Would improvements to your footpaths/PRow link to your School Travel Plan?	9%	81%

All public rights of way over school sites are regularly used by staff or pupils to access the school premises or playing fields. 12% of respondents said access could be improved through improvements and eleven percent through diversions and/or missing links to the public rights of way; however only nine percent have said that these improvements would link to their School Travel Plan. According to the responses, 42% of the school sites with public rights of way are suitable for use by people who are blind, partially sighted or have mobility problems. A minority of respondents cited the public rights of way as promoting criminal activity and as presenting a potential security risk to staff and pupils (10% & 13% respectively). Sixteen percent have already taken remedial measures to combat criminal activity. One fifth of respondents said there were Health & Safety issues associated with the paths on their site with 48% of these relating to dog fouling. 83% of respondents with public rights of way on their site said they are regularly maintained.

8.3 Conclusions

The high response rate to the questionnaire indicates that the results are representative of all the schools in Somerset. Less than one fifth actually have public rights of way on their premises, suggesting that the

majority of schools are either accessed from the roadside over private access routes or by adopted footways. Many schools had suggestions for improvements, which will be added to the data layer of proposals. A small minority of respondents have reported incidents of crime/breach of security, although it is difficult to establish from the responses whether these were committed using the public right of way as a means of doing so.

8.4 Key findings

- The majority of school sites don't have public rights of way on their premises.
- Only a few were able to suggest improvements to the public rights of way with some wishing to discourage use of the paths on their premises.
- There were some schools that felt the existence of the paths led to crime and a compromising of security however the biggest health and safety issue was dog fouling.
- 17% of schools with public rights of way said they were not regularly maintained, although many of these paths may well be of a low maintenance need.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix E: Qualitative consultation June 2005

This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.



RNID typetalk

RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

QUALITATIVE CONSULTATION REPORT

June 2005

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The consultation process for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) began in February 2003 with initial letters being sent to Parish Councils, user groups, landowning bodies and key stakeholders. The table below summarises the consultation undertaken to date. The focus of the qualitative consultation was mainly at the beginning of 2003 and also in November 2004, however consultation regarding the production of the RoWIP will be a continual process with many individuals, colleagues, bodies and organisations.

Target Audience	Format of Consultation	Date undertaken
General Public	Questionnaire Your Somerset newspaper	Jan/Feb '04 Jun '04
User groups (RA, BHS, TRF, etc)	Letter Interview	Feb '03 Nov '04
Landowning bodies	Letter	Feb '03
Horse riders/ carriage drivers	Questionnaire	Oct/Nov '04
Cyclists/ mountain bikes	Questionnaire	Oct/Nov '04
Parish Councils	Letter Questionnaire	Feb '03 Oct/Nov '04
Key stakeholders	Letter	Feb '03
Landholders (eg: farmers)	Questionnaire	Dec '04 – Feb '05
Somerset Local Access Forum	Letter Meetings	Jun '03 Ongoing
Exmoor Local Access Forum	Report	Apr '05
Somerset County Council Depts	Letter/ memorandum Meetings	Jun '03 Ongoing
County Councillors	Letter Annual Report	Jun '03 Oct '03 & Oct '04
Schools	Questionnaire	Sep '04
District Council Officers	Meeting Letter Interview	Mar '03/ ongoing Jun '03 Nov '04
Countryside Agency	Letter	Jun '03
Neighbouring Highway Authorities	Letter Questionnaire	Jun '03 Jan '05
Exmoor National Park	Meetings	Ongoing
AONBs	Letter Interview	Jun '03 Jan '05
People with visual/mobility problems	Focus Groups	Nov '04
Levels & Moors parishes	Parish cluster meetings followed by public meetings.	Jan '04 (ongoing)

2.0 LANDOWNING BODIES

2.1 Method

Consultation letters were sent to 27 landowning bodies towards the end of February 2003. These bodies ranged from utility companies to Estates to charitable wildlife organisations. The letters asked the bodies to consider and comment on the following ten issues;

- any existing access strategies that you may operate including permissive paths,
- any attractive routes in order to support local tourism and economic regeneration,
- any regularly used routes that do not appear on the definitive map and that are not an adopted highway, or any unclassified routes including green lanes that could benefit from becoming publicly maintainable,
- rights of way truncated or severed by motorways, major roads and developments, and any safety issues concerned with crossing these. The convenience and safety of other crossings over rivers and canals etc should also be considered,
- potential right of way links that could improve the continuity of the existing network or create a circular walk,
- any discrepancies within the current rights of way network such as cul-de-sac paths or routes disrupted in heavily developed areas,
- new rights of way that may access attractive areas of the countryside, or enable users to avoid using road links. This could include routes from centres of population that access the countryside and routes for local journeys such as walking to work or local amenities,
- waterside or coastal paths that suffer natural erosion,
- isolated sites of historical, natural or cultural interest that at present has no recorded public access,
- any further rights of way issues that you would wish to be considered for discussion during the preparation of the Improvement Plan,

2.2 Feedback

The response rate was initially very disappointing, however following further correspondence 13 responses were received in total from the 27 bodies written to. The quality of responses was varied. They ranged from simple acknowledgment letters, to inclusion of a policy document, to specific suggestions for improvements.

2.3 Conclusions

At the time of consultation, RoWIPs were very much still unheard of by many landowning bodies, however public knowledge about the RoWIP has increased through further consultation phases, increased media coverage and also as a result of being included in Local Transport Plan documents. Doing a follow-up consultation in the form of in-depth interview is a possibility, however strong partnerships have been built with many of the landowning bodies since the initial consultation as a result of the development of projects. Examples of this are as follows:

- Neroche Heritage Lottery Bid (Forestry Commission, Blackdown Hills AONB)
- Coleridge Way (Wyndham Estate, National Trust, Exmoor National Park, Quantock Hills AONB)
- West Somerset Coast Path (Luttrell Estate, Fairfield Estate, Crown Estate)
- River Parrett Trail (English Nature, Environment Agency)
- West Huntspill permissive bridleway (Environment Agency)
- Cheddar reservoir circular permissive trail with disabled access (Bristol Water)

The necessity of further consultation will be reviewed following the publication of the RoWIP.

3.0 PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

3.1 Method

Parish and Town Councils were one of the first consultees with an initial letter being sent out in February 2003. The letter was of a similar format to that sent to the landowning bodies seeking the Councils' comments on nine rights of way issues.

3.2 Feedback

The response was relatively low, however by May 2005, 35% of Parish/Town Councils had submitted written requests for improvements, diversions, regradings and deletions. Not all of these responses can be attributed to the initial letter with many being as a result of routine enquiries. All proposals are currently being input onto a GIS data layer.

3.3 Conclusions

As the RoWIP is meant to reflect the current and likely future needs of the public, this consultation was useful in providing us with suggestions from the Parish/Town Councils for improvements to the network, however, when it comes to prioritising improvement proposals, this information wasn't as useful. Therefore, in 2004 it was decided to carry out a Parish Council questionnaire which asked Parish/Town Councils

to rate their satisfaction and their priority for action on 11 rights of way issues (please see Quantitative Consultation report for more details).

4.0 LEVELS & MOORS PARTNERSHIP

4.1 Method

At the beginning of 2004, the Levels & Moors Partnership (LAMP) started a process of consultation with parish councils. Parishes were clustered into groups of 3 or 4 to make the process more manageable and also to look at routes that cross boundaries.

Maps of the rights of ways are sent to parishes and they are then asked to attend an initial meeting with District Council and County Council Rights of Way officers to discuss possible improvement proposals for submission to the County Council. The Parish Council representatives are then asked to go away and mark up the maps with their suggestions for improvements ready for a public meeting (advertised in local press), where members of the public and adjoining parishes are invited to attend and comment on the marked proposals and also suggest their own. LAMP then ask the relevant parishes to consider the comments from the public meeting and submit a final map of prioritised improvement proposals to either LAMP or SCC.

As of May 2005, the process had been completed for all of the parishes in the 'Peat Zone', and the majority of parishes in the 'Southern Moors' and 'Polden Villages'. However all of 'The Mump', 'Northern' and 'Coastal' parishes have still to begin the process.

4.2 Feedback

As of May 2005, 7 responses had been received at County Hall, some direct from the parishes and some via LAMP. All responses are detailed and clear. For the effort that has gone into this process it is disappointing to have had such a low return rate, however it is hoped this will pick up as the overall consultation comes to an end.

4.3 Conclusions

The parish consultation that LAMP are carrying out is detailed and concentrates on individual routes and how they could be improved. This information will prove invaluable if and when these parishes are selected for network improvement or development. The downside of the consultation is the risk that expectations of Parish Councils are raised and which can prove difficult to manage if on-the-ground improvements are not seen soon after the consultation.

5.0 MOBILITY FOCUS GROUPS

5.1 Method

The aim of the mobility consultation was to reach members of the public that have difficulty using public rights of way due to a physical/sensory impairment or personal reasons such as having a young family, hence pushchairs/buggies etc. It was decided that this was best performed through holding focus groups rather than doing a questionnaire.

An A4 flyer asking for interested parties to return a reply slip to a Freepost address was produced at the beginning of October 2004 and was distributed as far and wide as possible (libraries, Tourist Information Centres, doctors' surgeries, hospitals, groups for the disabled, press releases, etc). The end of October was the deadline for applications of interest. The majority of interest was from people in the Taunton area and Mendip area. Therefore it was decided to hold two focus groups; one at Taunton Vale Sport Club and the other at Mendip Community Transport, Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet. Invitations were sent out to all those that expressed interest and also to Rights of Way Officers from the relevant District Councils.

The SCC Consultation Department facilitated both focus groups. A loose structure to the sessions had been produced, focussing on use of the network, route features, accessibility, information and non-physical barriers to access.

5.2 Feedback

Together, the two focus groups had members who were; wheelchair users, partial wheelchair users, electric buggy users, parents of young children, visually impaired and also people who had difficulty walking and getting over stiles. Discussion at both focus groups had the tendency to drift away from strategic issues and focussed on specific situations. Below are the main points raised in discussion from both focus groups.

Shepton Mallet Focus Group, Mendip Community Transport building

11am – 1pm, 22nd November 2004

Officers present: 4

Focus group members: 17

- Stiles were the first topic of discussion. Many members felt that not only their presence but also their design proved to be one of the main barriers to access for the less able to the countryside. Several design were discussed and the main problems were cited as lack of handposts, width of stile and step shape/height.

- A Rambler scheme was suggested whereby an able bodied person would 'buddy up' with a less able person on a guided walk. This would also act as respite time for carers.
- Information was also a key determinant in whether people made the effort to visit a place/route. It was felt that there was a lack of coordinated information on routes for those that are less able/disabled.
- Good pre-site information was just as important as on-site information. RSPB was mentioned as a leader in this field offering information in Braille and audio tape media.
- Personal safety and conflict with other users was a major concern. Use of routes by 4x4 vehicles made surfaces unsuitable for carriage drivers with spinal injuries.
- A choice of length of routes at destinations would be preferable with adequate parking, toilet and emergency telephone facilities – without urbanising the countryside too much.
- Other problems experienced were; gravel in car parks/on routes, dog fouling (gets on wheelchairs and then hands), livestock, inadequate public transport services.
- The group expressed a need for more routes outside of Country Parks and more carriage driving routes.

Taunton Focus Group, Taunton Vale Sport Club

11am – 1pm, 30th November 2004

Officers present: 6

Focus group members: 10

- The group felt suitable routes in the countryside did exist, however they were blocked by stiles.
- Safety on urban routes was a particular concern for some members who had been victims of anti-social behaviour.
- Conflict with cyclists and horse riders did put some members off using rural rights of way.
- Stoned surfaces easily impede wheelchair users. Cobbles and gravel are the worst.
- Gradient of routes is crucial for wheelchair users. Some gradients of access routes in and around Taunton alongside the river and canal are unsuitable for wheelchair use.
- The problem is not always the width of the route but physical barriers such as overgrowth on roadside routes that push vulnerable users nearer to the flow of traffic. Proper programme of maintenance needed.
- More coordinated information is necessary to inform people of where routes are. Details of width, barriers, gradients, surfaces and facilities are crucial.
- The qualifications of officers was raised with regard to route development for the less able. Many of the officers had had specific training on the needs of wheelchair users.

- Routes of around 3 miles in length were suggested as being suitable for most members of the focus group. Nature reserves and National Trust sites were popular for suitable routes.
- Public transport provision was said as being inadequate; not enough low-liner buses and many buses only take one wheelchair, which precludes going out as a group.
- General feeling that awareness needs to be raised amongst the public of the needs of the less able.

5.3 Conclusions

Although a higher attendance had been hoped for it was felt that both focus groups had been a success. The small group sizes did encourage discussion from all members ensuring that everyone's opinion was heard. Co-ordinated pre-site and on-site information are crucial to a successful trip out in the countryside for those with mobility problems. Physical features of the route are crucial to the enjoyment of the route; type of surfacing, width and length of route, options for short-cuts, gradient, type and quality of barriers, adequate facilities, etc. Everyone's needs and desires are different though and as long as people are given all the relevant information about a route, then they can make a decision as to whether it would be suitable for them. Since the focus groups were conducted, work has begun on collecting information on the location and provision of routes that are suitable for disabled/blind/partially sighted access. It is hoped that the Somerset County Council website's Rights of Way homepage will become a portal to hold relevant information on suitable routes and provide links to further information. The full network survey (to be carried out in 2005/2006) will also provide information on routes that are currently available for disabled access or have the potential for disabled access with some modifications.

6.0 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

6.1 Method

Stakeholders, for the purposes of this section, comprise user groups, district/borough councils, AONBs and Exmoor National Park. Although there is merit in interviewing representatives from organisations and charities such as Forestry Commission, National Trust, RSPB, etc. it was decided not to interview them at this stage, partly due to the time aspect and also due to the poor response we had in the 'Landowning Bodies' (see 1.0) consultation. The need for such interviews will be reviewed as the RoWIP progresses.

Face-to-face interviews with a representative(s) for each stakeholder were conducted in late 2004 and early 2005. It was decided to involve the Somerset Local Access Forum (SLAF) with this task, however they had already initiated a Working Group that was interviewing the

district/borough council Rights of Way officers. While this did not completely duplicate the exercise it was felt best to still interview the district/borough council Rights of Way officers and then involve SLAF members in the interviews of the AONB and National Park representatives. The Vice-Chairman of SLAF was appointed as the contact for arranging SLAF members to attend interviews (dependent upon member availability).

The interviews were loosely structured around an initial Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis, followed by;

- Network size and distribution
- Accessibility of rights of way
- Condition of rights of way
- Promotion and awareness
- Accommodating other interests
- Needs of users
- Meeting objectives for providing opportunity for exercise, recreation and enjoyment
- Current policies
- Wider benefits.

It should be noted that not all of the above topics were relevant to all of the stakeholders.

6.2 Feedback

The following are the main issues/points raised in each interview by the relevant representative/officer.

User groups

Trail Riders' Fellowship

Date: 2nd November 2004

- In favour of a hierarchy of routes (TRF initiative)
- TRF have Code of Conduct
- Lack of sensitive featuring of trail riders in publications – often negative features lead to a cultural distaste
- Often lack of differentiation between legitimate users on rights of way and hunt followers
- Main conflict is with landowners

British Horse Society

Date: 3rd November 2004

- Strength of network lies in Exmoor and the Quantock Hills
- Lack of resources and high staff turnover at SCC
- Maintenance could be better

- Multi-use trails on old railway lines and upgrading of routes to bridleway are the way forward.
- Outside of Exmoor and the Quantocks network provision is very poor
- Toll rides and permissive routes have their place but don't fill all the gaps
- Education of cyclists and drivers is needed
- Money best spent on maintenance and funding bids rather than promotion
- Conflict is more perception than reality. Can be used as an excuse to exclude horses. Better to share routes than have no routes at all
- Very healthy activity for mind and body. Can teach children about discipline and responsibility.

Ramblers Association

Date: 9th November 2004

- Extensive footpath network serving most areas fairly well
- Higher rights users can deteriorate the surfacing of routes
- Maintenance poor in some areas
- RoWIP is an opportunity to make Rights of Way service more efficient
- Ease of use and furniture improvements are the main priorities
- Need for better coordination of information and different sectors (tourism, health, etc)
- Awareness of rights and responsibilities need to be improved amongst landowners and Councillors.
- Connectivity could be improved in some areas
- Issues of funding and timely legal processes need to be reviewed
- Need to make compromises otherwise things never get done
- Rambler Working Parties help with maintenance of routes

Cycle Somerset

Date: 11th November 2004

- Lack of joined up thinking and drive across local authorities
- Cycle lanes often stop at road junctions – priority should be for cyclists
- Utilise old railway lines and work with horse associations
- Open up droves to help encourage tourism
- Bridgwater is good for cycling
- Lack of signage and waymarks in some areas
- More education needed of cyclists with regard to encountering horses
- Major benefits of cycling – health and reduced car use

British Driving Society

Date: No response following repeated attempts at contacting representative

District/Borough Councils

Mendip District Council

Date: 10th November 2004

- LTP and promotion of RoW are the main opportunities
- Concerned that RoWIP will be shelved
- Lack of bridleways in parts and disabled access, too many footpaths in other areas.
- Good potential for upgrade of footpath network for horseriders
- Culture difference between horses and cyclists. Cyclists tend not to give way to horses.
- Need for education of general public re farming, ie: to leave gates as you find them, control of dogs, etc.
- Get existing networking up to scratch before carrying out improvements.

Sedgemoor District Council

Date: 2nd November 2004 (prior to the return of Sedgemoor District Agency Agreement for maintenance to SCC in April 2005)

- Obstructive landowners e.g.: removing signposts, etc.
- Adequate footpath network but bridleway network needs extending
- Dog walking on urban fringes can lead to vandalism of stiles, etc.
- SDC not keen on promoting RoW hence focus is on maintenance with health and safety being the main priority
- Some conflict on Quantocks caused by motorised users
- Lack of appreciation by SDC and SCC as to the wider benefits of RoW

West Somerset (SCC)

Date: 17th November 2004

- Most of West Somerset is protected by National Park and AONB leaving other areas very quiet and often neglected
- Hard work getting landowners on side – signposts being removed, etc
- New database, LTP and volunteer scheme are good opportunities to improve the RoW service
- Demanding pressure from user groups to deliver with limited staffing resource
- A358 severance of paths is an issue
- Priority is existing network before adding to it
- WSR is good for links to RoW – they have a walks pack

- Coastal RoW are in better condition than inland where obstructions are a real issue
- Need to develop partnerships with users and parishes
- Need to develop policies.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Date: 2nd November 2004 (prior to the return of Taunton Deane Borough Agency Agreement for maintenance to SCC in April 2005)

- Only one BOAT and many missing footpath/bridleway links
- Lack of money to address maintenance of existing bridleways
- 80% of RoW along M5 are severed
- Need to balance pragmatism with money
- Lack of routes for disabled, offer Bristol gates where they are of benefit e.g.: along River Tone
- Parish Liaison Officers – makes managing RoW more efficient

South Somerset District Council

Date: 17th November 2004

- Lack of vital policy/procedures and money from SCC. Would help with consistency across the County
- Fragmented bridleway network
- Problems of severance by A303
- Public transport inadequate for trail walking etc
- Really push promotion side of RoW through Walking Festival, media strategy, walks packs, possible pack of rides, etc.
- LTP money helps relieve pressure on budget
- Became involved with health walks but have now pulled out due to other pressures.

AONBs & ENPA

Quantock Hills AONB

Date: 14th January 2005

- Permissive bridleways have proved extremely useful to help riders avoid using main roads
- Fringes of Hills need improving to help links with villages
- Pressure is on hilltops, would be good to improve routes on the mantle of the Hills to divert this pressure
- Damage caused by vehicular use, half of which is hunt followers
- Little need for additional RoW provision
- Some severance issues caused by A39
- Access mainly by car, bus routes either side of the Hills but none going over the Hills.
- Emphasis is on minimal promotion as already at carrying capacity
- High demand for circular easy access trails, a couple already exist with a further one under development

Blackdown Hills AONB

Date: 17th January 2005

- RoW under-developed and under-used therefore great scope for improving the situation
- Bridleway network fragmented and in poor condition
- Negative approach to public access from landowners
- Lack of staff and resources at SCC
- Boundary issues with Devon – maintenance, cul-de-sac and change of status
- Poor maintenance leads to low usage levels.
- Limited public transport provision, if any
- Northern scarp is steep meaning access from urban centres of Taunton and Wellington can be an issue
- Cycling improvements must be carried out with a reciprocal consideration for horse riders
- Some issues when routes go through SSSIs. Permissive routes receive lots of funds while the definitive route is neglected
- To achieve improvements to the network, landowners will need to be compensated
- Inter-user conflict often perceptual rather than actual
- No provision for disabled access

Mendip Hills AONB

Date: Tuesday 11th January 2005

- Knowledge base of staff and volunteers is major strength
- Lack of resources
- RoWIP is opportunity to divert RoW round farmyards and out of gardens
- Definitive Map doesn't relate to 21st century
- Opportunity to develop downloadable web-based media
- Patchy bridleway network but good on Black Down
- Chew Valley bus runs to Cheddar (not that well used) and Weston to Wells service (more popular). AONB have produced a series of bus walks
- Mountain bike routes have been graded and a voluntary code of non-use has been used to reduce erosion of routes
- Hold a Farmer's Discussion Group twice annually to discuss access
- Main complaint on the hills relates to dog fouling and dogs worrying livestock.
- Mendip Hills is mainly a day trip / weekend attraction area and needs to be managed as such
- Need to educate the majority to understand and relate to the countryside better.

Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB

Due to only the smallest amount of this AONB being in Somerset a consultation letter was sent on 15th December 2004 inviting them to comment on any rights of way issues that they felt were pertinent to the production of the RoWIP. A response was not received by the date given and therefore the assumption is that they have no comment to make at this stage of the RoWIP process.

Exmoor National Park Authority

Date: Wednesday 5th January 2005

- The knowledge of staff and locals as well as the Field Services Team are all strengths
- Permissive routes are valuable to provide extra routes, particularly to provide vital links to honeypot sites
- Hunts and hunt followers cause damage to RoW
- Good proportion of bridleways and Restricted Byways in comparison with the rest of Somerset
- Uneven usage of network leads to erosion at honeypot sites
- Have path hierarchy with associated inspection regime
- Work is in progress to improve poor road junctions through diversions and agreements
- ENP subsidise bus service to Snowdrop Valley. WSDC summer bus services are often published too late for people to become aware of them
- Work is ongoing to provide more access for the disabled
- Need for greater tolerance between users
- Need to make the network and the process of changing the network more rational.

SLAF Working Group consultation with RoW district/borough officers

The SLAF interviewed three and wrote to two of the five sets of district/borough RoW officers with 15 questions in September 2004. The Working Group reported the findings at subsequent SLAF meetings and have passed on the two written responses, from the West Somerset officer (SCC) and the officer at Taunton Deane Borough Council. Many of the responses to the questions echoed opinions latterly expressed by the officers in their interviews (as above).

6.3 Conclusions

There are some common themes that occur in the groups of interviews. The user group representatives particular concerns were funding, staffing and routine maintenance of the existing network. Other issues were the lack of provision for the less able, fragmentation of the bridleway network, lack of policy at SCC, and the 'maintain existing network properly before adding to it' debate. AONB and ENP officers were also concerned about funding for RoW but also particularly

emphasised that landowners will need to be compensated if improvements are to take place. Education about conduct when using RoW was also a common theme. These comments and opinions will be taken into account when producing the draft RoWIP.

7.0 NEIGHBOURING HIGHWAY AUTHORITIES

7.1 Method

On 22nd December 2004, all neighbouring highway authorities were written to inviting comment on the following boundary rights of way issues:

- any anomalies, eg: change of status, cul-de-sac routes
- any maintenance issues, eg: lack of maintenance, better on one side than the other, poor waymarking, bridges out of repair that cross the boundary, obstructions, etc.
- any promoted routes and long-distance trails that run across the boundary and any associated issues that need to be addressed
- any Improvement Plan proposals that impact on rights of way or land within Somerset County
- any further comments in relation to the RoWIP.

Somerset borders five other Highway Authorities; Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire, Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset

7.2 Feedback

Responses were received from 4 out of the 5 Highway Authorities with Wiltshire County Council being the only authority to not respond. The main points of each response are summarised below:

Devon County Council

- Two anomalies, could be more but would require checking of both definitive maps.
- Submitted three improvement proposals that are near or cross the boundary.

Dorset County Council

- Highlighted 5 anomalies.
- Also highlighted 8 maintenance issues on the boundary most of which relate to bridges.

Bath & North East Somerset Unitary Authority

- Highlighted 5 known anomalies, two of which are currently being resolved through a diversion order.

- Any MCTT proposals and Mendip Hills AONB Management Plans could well affect B&NES and SCC.

North Somerset Unitary Authority

- There are a couple of bridleway modification applications that affect both authorities.
- Strawberry Line extension to Wells and the crossing of River Axe to assist with the Wessex NCN are two strategic routes that affect both authorities and North Somerset highlight the need for impetus to resolve these issues.

7.3 Conclusions

It is clear from the consultation that there are maintenance and legal status issues to be resolved on Somerset's boundary with other Highway Authorities as well as the need to work together on strategic promoted leisure routes.

8.0 SOMERSET & EXMOOR LOCAL ACCESS FORA

8.1 Method

The role of Local Access Fora (LAF) is to act as strategic advisory bodies to Highway Authorities on Open Access, RoWIP and public access issues. At an early stage in the RoWIP process it was decided that Exmoor National Park Authority would produce their own RoWIP chapter that would become an appendix to both Devon and Somerset RoWIPs. This was one reason why an Exmoor Local Access Forum was set up.

To date the majority of the consultation has been with the Somerset LAF through correspondence, presentations, discussions, joint stakeholder interviews, and a network assessment workshop, with the Exmoor LAF receiving written updates as and when appropriate. Consultation and joint working with the LAFs will be an ongoing process to ensure their involvement with the production of the RoWIP and also its implementation.

8.2 Feedback

Somerset LAF are very responsive to material put before them and have raised some pertinent issues upon consultation which have and will continue to be taken into account in the production and implementation of the RoWIP.

8.3 Conclusions

The Somerset LAF is a mixture of people from a range of differing backgrounds and have been selected to represent as many interests as possible. There are also changes in membership at least every 3 years and therefore it is important to continually improve the knowledge of the LAF members on rights of way issues so that they can adequately advise the RoWIP process.

9.0 SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL RoWIP STEERING GROUP

9.1 Method

The following list of departments and bodies were put together in 2003 to form the RoWIP Steering Group,

- SCC Highways
- SCC Local Transport Plan
- SCC Planning Department
- SCC Minerals & Waste
- SCC Education
- SCC Safe Routes to School
- SCC Travel Plans
- SCC Sustainable & Community Planning
- SCC Economic Development
- SCC Equalities
- SCC Countryside
- SCC County Farms
- SCC Archaeology
- SCC Tourism
- Exmoor National Park Authority
- Taunton Deane Primary Care Trust
- FWAG
- SCC Environment Portfolio holder
- District & Borough Council Planning Departments

The first meeting took place on 14th November 2003.

9.2 Feedback

The first meeting was very much at the start of the RoWIP process and was therefore very much an informal discussion. Rights of Way officers mentioned the upcoming consultation process and questions for the consultations would be circulated to relevant departments for comments.

There were calls to make a 'rational' network with prioritised routes. Surfacing for multi-user routes was also discussed along with the funding of the RoWIP through the Local Transport Plan. Network development on the basis of most need was also mentioned with specific reference to numbers of horses and riders in certain areas.

It was agreed to hold a further steering group meeting following the period of consultation.

9.3 Conclusions

The Steering Group is vital in identifying where there are cross-cutting issues with other departments. It also enables joint working on particular projects to enable the best use of resources. As the RoWIP progresses the Steering Group will become more involved in the process with further meetings/workshops.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



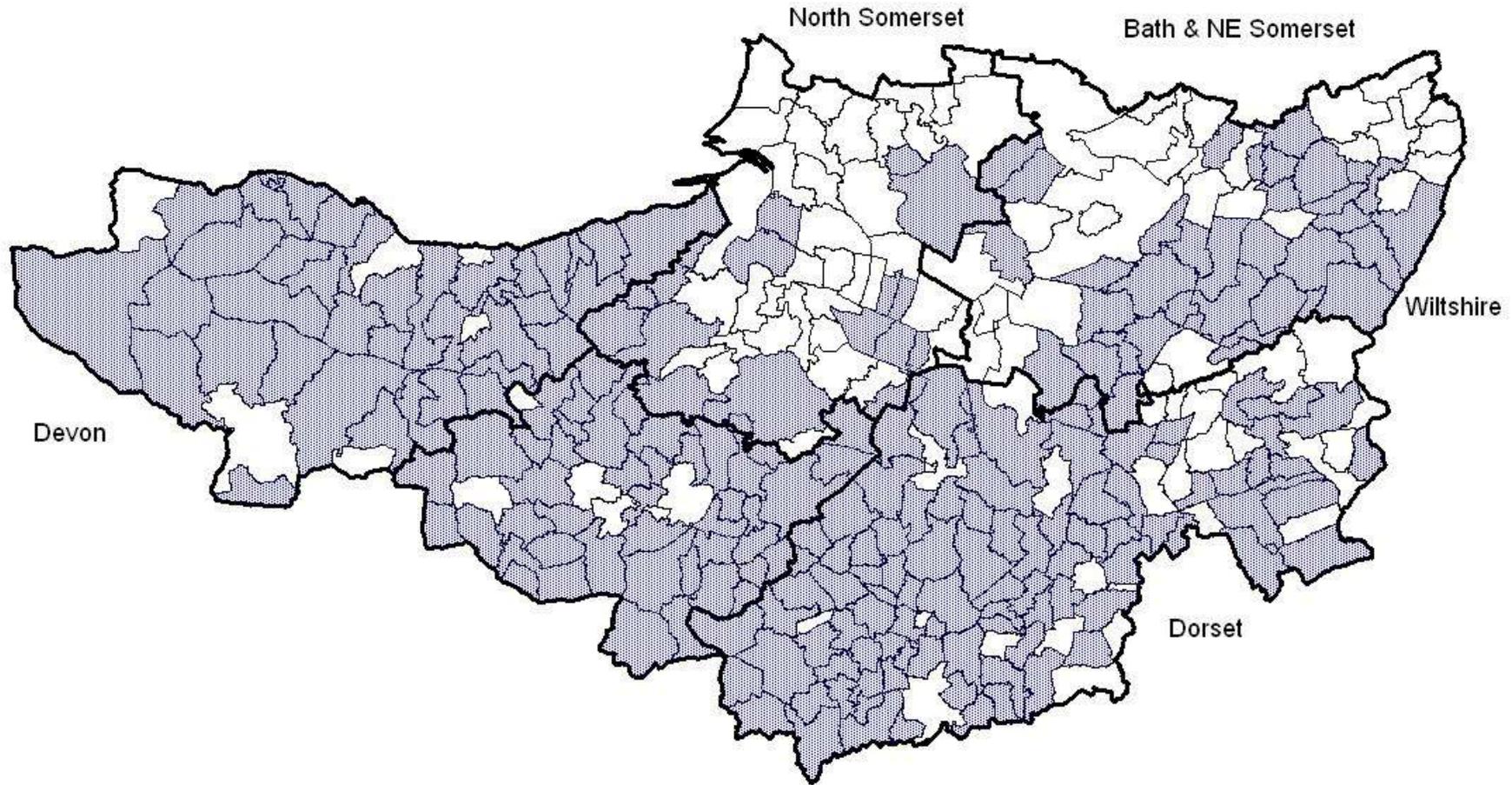
Appendix F: Parish-based horse & rider census

This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.



RNID typetalk

PARISHES FOR WHICH SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL HOLD HORSE CENSUS DATA



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-  Parishes for which SCC holds horse census data
-  Parishes for which SCC do not hold horse census data

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL HORSE CENSUS DATA

Parish	No. Horses	No. Riders	No. Child	No. Drivers	Census Year
Abbas and Templecombe CP					
Alford CP			NO DATA		
Aller CP	14	6	7	0	2003
Ansford CP			NO DATA		
Ash CP	84	33	23	5	2002
Ash Priors CP	4	3	0	0	1992
Ashbrittle CP	17	8	4	0	1992
Ashcott CP			NO DATA		
Ashill CP	42	16	3	0	2002
Ashwick CP			NO DATA		
Axbridge CP			NO DATA		
Babcary CP	32	15	6	2	2002
Badgworth CP			NO DATA		
Baltonsborough CP	29	18	5	0	2003
Barrington CP	13	10	2	0	2006
Barton St. David CP	16	7	0	0	2002
Barwick CP			NO DATA		
Batcombe CP	63	36	10	0	2003
Bathealton CP			NO DATA		
Bawdrip CP			NO DATA		
Beckington CP			NO DATA		
Beercrocombe CP	21	3	0	0	2002
Berkley CP			NO DATA		
Berrow CP			NO DATA		
Bickenhall CP	79	21	6	0	2005
Bicknoller CP	26	16	4	0	2005
Binegar CP			NO DATA		
Bishop's Hull CP	3	1	0	0	1992
Bishop's Lydeard CP	39	16	3	0	1992

Bradford-on-Tone CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Bratton Seymour CP	21	5	5	0	2002
Brean CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Brent Knoll CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Brewham CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Bridgwater CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Bridgwater without CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Broadway CP	44	17	11	3	2003
Brompton Ralph CP	35	19	5	1	2005
Brompton Regis CP	29	0	0	0	2004
Broomfield CP	90	50	12	0	2005
Brushford CP	100	0	0	0	
Bruton CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Brympton CP	14	10	1	3	2003
Buckland Dinham CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Buckland St. Mary CP	26	18	4	0	2005
Burnham without CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Burrowbridge CP	41	16	7	0	2005
Burtle CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Butleigh CP	31	111	78	4	2005
Cannington CP	10	4	2	0	2005
Carhampton CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Castle Cary CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Catcott CP	20	8	5	0	2005
Chaffcombe CP	12	5	2	0	2003
Chapel Allerton CP	62	21	11	2	2005
Chard Town CP	40	28	5	0	2003
Charlton Horethorne CP	102	33	12	3	2006
Charlton Mackrell CP	128	53	59	1	2002
Charlton Musgrove CP	56	32	40	0	2003
Cheddar CP					<i>NO DATA</i>
Cheddon Fitzpaine CP	19	10	7	0	1992

Chedzoy CP	NO DATA				
Chewton Mendip CP	NO DATA				
Chilcompton CP	29	27	14	1	2003
Chillington CP	4	3	1	1	2003
Chilthorne Domer CP	43	25	82	0	2003
Chilton Cantelo CP	17	13	1	0	2003
Chilton Polden CP	NO DATA				
Chilton Trinity CP	NO DATA				
Chipstable CP	72	21	20	5	1992
Chiselborough CP	9	2	4	0	2003
Churchstanton CP	72	21	20	5	
Clatworthy CP	8	6	2	0	2006
Closworth CP	NO DATA				
Coleford CP	28	21	6	1	2003
Combe Florey CP	11	5	0	0	2005
Combe St. Nicholas CP	102	36	18	2	2002
Comeytrowe CP	NO DATA				
Compton Bishop CP	NO DATA				
Compton Dundon CP	NO DATA				
Compton Pauncefoot CP	10	10	3	0	2003
Corfe CP	67	61	0	6	2005
Corton Denham CP	NO DATA				
Cossington CP	NO DATA				
Cothelstone CP	8	2	3	0	2005
Cranmore CP	0	0	0	0	2003
Creech St. Michael CP	65	17	10	0	2005
Crewkerne CP	98	22	4	0	2005
Cricket St. Thomas CP	8	3	1	0	2003
Croscombe CP	28	12	2	0	2003
Crowcombe CP	51	33	15	0	2005
Cucklington CP	49	24	4	2	2003
Cudworth CP	0	0	0	0	2006
Curland CP	27	17	8	1	2005

Curry Mallet CP	5	6	0	0	2002
Curry Rivel CP	31	31	30	0	2003
Cutcombe CP	122	48	8	0	2005
Dinnington CP	9	3	0	0	2002
Ditcheat CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Donyatt CP	12	8	5	1	2004
Doulting CP	23	16	6	0	2003
Dowlish Wake CP	20	12	1	0	2002
Downhead CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Drayton CP	14	6	5	0	2003
Dulverton CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Dunster CP	13	0	0	0	2004
Durleigh CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Durston CP	5	4	4	0	1992
East Brent CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
East Chinnock CP	9	8	1	0	2002
East Coker CP	89	53	55	0	2002
East Huntspill CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
East Pennard CP	7	22	8	0	2004
East Quantoxhead CP	9	6	0	0	2005
Edington CP	18	8	4	0	2005
Elworthy CP	10	2	0	0	2006
Emborough CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Enmore CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Evercreech CP	43	40	14	0	2003
Exford CP	211	106	23	4	2005
Exmoor CP	140	60	12	0	2005
Exton CP	56	31	0	0	2006
Fiddington CP	25	13	0	1	2005
Fitzhead CP	14	7	4	1	2005
Fivehead CP	63	23	5	2	2002
Frome CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Glastonbury CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				

Goathurst CP	NO DATA				
Godney CP	6	5	2	0	2004
Great Elm CP	12	4	2	0	2003
Greinton CP	10	4	3	0	2005
Halse CP	54	18	6	0	2005
Hambridge and Westport CP	29	17	5	0	2006
Hardington Mandeville CP	43	18	15	1	2002
Haselbury Plucknett CP	17	11	10	0	2003
Hatch Beauchamp CP	12	5	3	0	2005
Hemington CP	NO DATA				
Henstridge CP	92	45	6	0	2005
High Ham CP	46	15	11	0	2003
Hinton St. George CP	12	4	2	2	2002
Holcombe CP	21	20	1	0	2003
Holford CP	11	8	1	0	2005
Holton CP	23	19	5	0	2005
Horsington CP	86	39	46	0	2003
Horton CP	NO DATA				
Huish Champflower CP	66	24	2	0	2005
Huish Episcopi CP	NO DATA				
Ilchester CP	21	12	2	0	2003
Ilminster CP	14	7	1	3	2002
Ilton CP	61	91	70	0	2004
Isle Abbots CP	7	3	4	0	2002
Isle Brewers CP	12	8	3	1	2002
Keinton Mandeville CP	4	4	0	1	2005
Kilmersdon CP	33	25	10	1	2004
Kilve CP	41	32	16	0	2005
Kingsbury Episcopi CP	1	1	4	1	2005
Kingsdon CP	NO DATA				
Kingston St. Mary CP	76	56	20	2	2005
Kingstone CP	5	3	0	0	2002
Kingweston CP	32	20	12	0	2002

Knowle St. Giles CP	2	2	0	0	2003
Lamyat CP	28	21	9	0	2003
Langford Budville CP	10	5	5	1	2005
Langport CP	NO DATA				
Leigh-on-Mendip CP	16	18	5	0	2003
Limington CP	8	9	3	0	2006
Litton CP	NO DATA				
Long Load CP	6	2	1	0	2006
Long Sutton CP	48	21	10	0	2002
Lopen CP	12	7	1	0	2002
Lovington CP	NO DATA				
Luccombe CP	60	27	5	0	2005
Lullington CP	NO DATA				
Luxborough CP	10	8	2	0	2005
Lydeard St. Lawrence CP	31	23	7	0	2005
Lydford-on-Fosse CP	26	13	6	0	2005
Lympsham CP	NO DATA				
Lyng CP	NO DATA				
Maperton CP	NO DATA				
Mark CP	NO DATA				
Marston Magna CP	10	9	1	0	2002
Martock CP	33	7	8	6	2002
Meare CP	NO DATA				
Mells CP	9	10	1	0	2003
Merriott CP	26	13	13	0	2003
Middlezoy CP	NO DATA				
Milborne Port CP	39	13	14	0	2003
Milton Clevedon CP	7	5	2	0	2003
Milverton CP	48	32	16	0	2005
Minehead CP	24	6	1	0	2006
Minehead without CP	46	26	5	0	2006
Misterton CP	10	8	0	0	2002
Monksilver CP	NO DATA				

Montacute CP	23	15	5	0	2002
Moorlinch CP	6	2	2	0	2005
Muchelney CP	13	11	3	0	2002
Mudford CP	37	18	7	0	2003
Nether Stowey CP	22	10	4	0	2005
Nettlecombe CP	24	15	10	0	2005
North Barrow CP	35	14	7	0	2006
North Cadbury CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
North Cheriton CP	16	6	1	2	2003
North Curry CP	76	27	106	5	2005
North Perrott CP	57	24	51	1	2003
North Petherton CP	102	36	18	0	2005
North Wootton CP	3	7	4	0	2003
Norton Fitzwarren CP	110	50	100	0	2005
Norton St. Philip CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Norton Sub Hamdon CP	9	10	2	0	2003
Nunney CP	6	4	3	1	2003
Nynehead CP	0	9	10	0	1992
Oake CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Oare CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Odcombe CP	70	0	0	0	2005
Old Cleeve CP	78	25	8	4	2005
Orchard Portman CP	57	44	3	0	2005
Othery CP	26	13	6	0	2005
Otterford CP	56	16	7	1	1992
Otterhampton CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Over Stowey CP	43	18	14	1	2005
Pawlett CP	50	75	0	0	2005
Pen Selwood CP	<i>NO DATA</i>				
Pilton CP	95	57	28	9	2003
Pitcombe CP	20	17	14	0	2003
Pitminster CP	70	50	15	3	2006
Pitney CP	37	17	8	0	2002

Porlock CP	100	50	8	2	2005
Priddy CP	NO DATA				
Puckington CP	4	1	2	0	2002
Puriton CP	NO DATA				
Pylle CP	20	8	1	0	2004
Queen Camel CP	NO DATA				
Rimpton CP	20	13	0	0	2002
Rode CP	NO DATA				
Rodney Stoke CP	38	11	13	2	2005
Ruishton CP	10	5	5	0	1992
Sampford Arundel CP	20	6	9	1	1992
Sampford Brett CP	32	27	5	0	2006
Seavington St. Mary CP	12	4	4	0	2002
Seavington St. Michael CP	NO DATA				
Selwood CP	21	16	4	0	2004
Selworthy CP	40	20	3	0	2005
Shapwick CP	NO DATA				
Sharpham CP	NO DATA				
Shepton Beauchamp CP	27	23	2	0	2006
Shepton Mallet CP	30	14	2	0	2003
Shepton Montague CP	8	3	5	0	2002
Shipham CP	NO DATA				
Skilgate CP	NO DATA				
Somerton CP	67	55	6	0	2004
South Barrow CP	43	27	5	1	2006
South Cadbury CP	15	13	3	0	2003
South Petherton CP	14	12	2	0	2005
Sparkford CP	NO DATA				
Spaxton CP	50	30	6	1	2005
St. Cuthbert Out CP	NO DATA				
Staple Fitzpaine CP	16	10	8	1	2005
Staplegrove CP	6	1	1	1	1992
Stawell CP	37	25	15	0	2005

Stawley CP	21	9	3	4	1992
Stockland Bristol CP	34	15	4	0	2005
Stocklinch CP	11	5	4	0	2006
Stogumber CP	36	25	3	0	2005
Stogursey CP	70	39	4	0	2005
Stoke St. Gregory CP	27	15	1	0	2005
Stoke St. Mary CP	20	10	5	0	2005
Stoke St. Michael CP	NO DATA				
Stoke Sub Hamdon CP	6	6	8	1	2005
Stoke Trister CP	NO DATA				
Ston Easton CP	NO DATA				
Stratton on the Fosse CP	NO DATA				
Street CP	NO DATA				
Stringston CP	2	2	0	0	2005
Tatworth and Forton CP	28	11	4	0	2003
Taunton NCP	NO DATA				
Tellisford CP	NO DATA				
Thornfalcon CP	4	4	0	0	1992
Thurloxton CP	17	9	0	0	2005
Timberscombe CP	210	76	2	1	2005
Tintinhull CP	57	21	20	4	2003
Tolland CP	NO DATA				
Treborough CP	24	8	4	0	2005
Trudoxhill CP	117	63	16	0	2004
Trull CP	10	4	4	2	1992
Upton CP	40	24	2	0	2005
Upton Noble CP	34	11	3	0	2003
Walton CP	NO DATA				
Wambrook CP	24	17	4	2	2002
Wanstrow CP	33	18	5	0	2003
Watchet CP	NO DATA				
Wayford CP	30	12	4	0	2003
Weare CP	NO DATA				

Wedmore CP	116	42	16	3	2005
Wellington CP	27	18	2	0	1992
Wellington without CP	16	22	23	0	1992
Wells CP	NO DATA				
Wembdon CP	NO DATA				
West and Middle Chinnock CP	NO DATA				
West Bagborough CP	71	30	2	0	1992
West Bradley CP	21	13	6	0	2003
West Bradley CP (DET)	NO DATA				
West Buckland CP	30	13	0	0	1992
West Camel CP	49	17	6	0	2002
West Coker CP	NO DATA				
West Crewkerne CP	NO DATA				
West Hatch CP	25	13	7	0	1992
West Huntspill CP	75	75	0	0	2005
West Monkton CP	15	10	0	0	2005
West Pennard CP	44	41	15	0	2003
West Quantoxhead CP	5	3	2	0	2006
Westbury CP	67	18	27	0	2005
Westonzoyland CP	NO DATA				
Whatley CP	40	15	1	0	2003
Whitelackington CP	3	3	1	0	2002
Whitestaunton CP	13	14	6	0	2003
Williton CP	58	61	37	0	2006
Wincanton CP	NO DATA				
Winsford CP	82	66	0	0	2005
Winsham CP	40	20	3	1	2005
Witham Friary CP	24	42	14	0	2004
Withycombe CP	40	20	0	0	2005
Withypool and Hawkridge CP	63	33	8	1	2005
Wiveliscombe CP	78	33	7	0	2005
Wookey CP	NO DATA				
Woolavington CP	NO DATA				

Wootton Courtenay CP	72	48	0	1	2005
Yarlington CP	NO DATA				
Yeovil CP	40	31	6	1	2003
Yeovil without CP	NO DATA				
Yeovilton CP	39	33	10	0	2003

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix G: RoWIP scorecard & implementation procedure
February 2012

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1. CONTEXT

As a result of extensive consultation with user groups and parish councils we have received in excess of 1000 proposals. These proposals are largely additions to the existing network, either through the creation of new routes or the upgrading of rights on existing public rights of way.

We need to have a system of prioritisation that is transparent, robust and defensible, and relates to the policies and actions contained within RoWIP2. This need is particularly important should objections be submitted against future creation/diversion orders.

Funding

Whilst the Future Transport Plan (FTP) is a potential source of funding for implementing network development proposals, funding for most high scoring proposals is likely to be sought from external sources as long as sufficient staff resource is in place to process such proposals or can be recruited as part of the funding bid.

2. SCORECARD GUIDANCE NOTES

The following notes explain what each section of the scorecard relates to and to clarify any ambiguities for scoring officers and members of the public. The relative weighting of scores has been arrived at through reference to the statutory guidance, the policies and actions contained within RoWIP2 and consultation with user groups and other stakeholders.

Potential to improve provision for walkers Urban/ urban fringe/ inter-urban 3

This applies to a route/road crossings that improves provision for walkers within the main towns of Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and all market towns, on their fringes or between them and outlying towns/villages.

Rural 1

This applies to a proposal that does not fall into the above definition but would improve provision for walkers. Rural proposals score less as we are trying to improve accessibility in urban areas (access to services) as well as access from the town into the country to reduce the need for using unsustainable modes of transport. Also, the urban-based proposals represent greater value for money as they are likely to be used by a greater number of individuals.

Proposals for upgrading existing footpaths to bridleways shall be scored under this section as the needs of all types of users shall be taken into consideration when implementing any upgrading of routes therefore the overwhelming majority of footpaths should become easier to use if upgraded to a bridleway.

Potential to improve provision for those with limited mobility, visual and hearing impairments Urban/ urban fringe/ inter-urban 5

This applies to any proposal that as a minimum requirement shall be free from stiles. Therefore a bridleway will automatically score in this section as it cannot have stiles. Equally a footpath proposal to exchange stiles for kissing gates would also score.

Rural 3

As for urban based proposals but scores less for the same reasons given for walkers.

Potential to improve provision for horse rider and cyclists **5**

This applies to any proposal that is for a bridleway or above. There has been no differentiation between urban and rural as the two groups of users are so varied in where they are based and also where they go to ride/cycle. Proposals for bridleways and above allow both sets of users to use such a route therefore the two user-types have not been scored separately. Livery/riding centre data and horse number data will have a spatial influence in the scorecard as the majority of riders normally ride from where their horse is kept. However, mountain bikers in particular are willing to travel distances on a regular basis to cycle due to the desire for certain geographical features that are largely beyond our control.

Potential to improve provision for carriage drivers **3**

Restricted byway proposals shall score under this section as this will allow for the passage of carriage drivers.

Has scored in 3 or more of the above **5**

As explained in detail in the RoWIP there is a need, where appropriate, to ensure that route development caters for as many non-mechanically propelled vehicular users as possible hence this bonus score.

Route is along an existing public right of way **Whole** **10**

Also explained in the RoWIP is the need, where possible, to use the existing network to achieve improvements thereby minimising any extra revenue cost that a proposal might have.

In part **5**

Scores lower if only part of the proposal is on an existing PRow as the risk of increased revenue costs is greater.

Safety – will take users off-road, provide a safer crossing **A road** **10**
Point or make on-road use safer **B/C road** **8**
Unclassified **6**

Proposals that directly prevent users from having to use roads, provide safer crossing points on such roads or makes the use on-road safer will score as above according to the class of road. The division of score against road class is an indication of the relative degree of risk posed by each class. Consultation has shown that almost half of horse riders use main roads, a fifth of equestrians and cyclists don't ride/cycle as much as they would like due to road safety and 65% of equestrians encounter poor sight lines at junctions of PRow with roads. Accident statistics play a key role in the allocation of funding towards highway safety schemes therefore ways of complementing the police statistics will be investigated.

Would address known vulnerable user accident history **20**

Where a proposal clearly demonstrates that it will contribute to eliminating a known accident blackspot /area then it shall score under this section.

Livery or riding centre nearby (with 5 or more horses)	Within 1km	3
	Within 3km	2
	Within 5km	1

Whilst route development for walkers, cyclists and those who are visually or mobility impaired can be based on the location of the human population (this receives a weighting through the higher scores for urban/urban fringe proposals), route development for equestrians must be based on the location of the horses, stables, livery yards and riding centres.

Livery/riding centres can be transient, repeat censuses every 5-10 years should ensure that the information held is relatively contemporary. The closer a proposal is to a riding centre or livery yard the more points it will score. The weighting of the score reflects that although this is an important element in route development the information is subject to change and should be checked should a proposal reach implementation stage. For example, if a horse-racing stable has plenty of land and gallops it may be that route development is not necessary in that area.

Horse / route density quotient (parish based)	High	3
	Medium	2
	Low	1

As with livery/riding centres, horse population figures are also subject to change on a regular basis and will require regular censuses. By dividing the number of horses by the density of off-road riding routes (including unsurfaced, unclassified roads) it will give an indication of the areas with the greatest need. Certain areas in the county have a sufficient density of off road riding routes for the local riders but should they have high numbers of horses the quotient could give a false impression that the area may benefit from additional routes. Rather than cap the route density to exclude proposals in certain parishes from scoring under this section a subjective assessment should be made at implementation phase through consultation with the local users and Parish/Town Council. Where a route crosses a parish boundary then an average of the two figures will be taken to see into which banding they fall.

Creates a circuit	Largely off-road	10
	Largely with unclassified roads	8
	Packaged with other proposals	5

This criteria will ensure that those proposals that are missing links in off-road circuits will score higher than other proposals that will require packaging to create an off-road circuit. One of the primary considerations when prioritising improvement proposals for implementation must be the benefit it has to vulnerable users in terms of reducing the amount of road walking/riding/cycling they have to undertake. Outside of the main urban areas, walkers and cyclists are in many cases forced to use the county road network between PRoW as there is not always a pavement or cycle lane/track available. The same is true for equestrians, as the connectivity of many riding routes is poor, however the level of risk faced by equestrians and cyclists is arguably greater than that faced by walkers. The horse is an animal that can be unpredictable and along with cyclists take up more space on the highway than a walker. The average length between riding/cycling routes is going to be longer for equestrians than walkers as there is a greater length of network available to walkers.

Helps to resolve Definitive Map & Statement anomaly

Where it fails 'ease of use' 10

Where it passes 'ease of use' 2

Where a proposal helps to resolve an anomaly on the Definitive Map & Statement it will score, and will score higher where the existing route fails the 'ease of use' criteria.

Improves promoted route

Safety 8

Scenic value 1

Where a proposal will improve a promoted route it will score as above for safety or for scenic value reasons. Greater weighting has been given to improving safety.

Access to point of interest/tourist attraction

New 3

Beneficial alternative 1

Where a proposal provides access to a point of interest, a viewpoint or a tourist attraction that is not already accessible by off-road access then it will score under this section. Proposals that provide a beneficial alternative to existing access for reasons of visitor pressure or gradient, etc, would also score under this section.

Provides access to or provides higher rights on access land

5

Where there is clear demand for access to island sites of open access land or for higher rights for cyclists and horse riders then proposals shall score under this section.

RoWIP DESKTOP SCORECARD

IMPROVEMENT ID:	PARISH(ES):	SCORE
Potential to improve provision for walkers	Urban/ urban fringe/inter-urban	3
	Rural	1
Potential to improve provision for those with limited mobility	Urban/ urban fringe/inter-urban	5
	Rural	3
Potential to improve provision for horse riders and cyclists		5
Potential to improve provision for carriage drivers		3
Has scored in 3 or more of the above categories		5
Route is along an existing public right of way	Whole	10
	In part	5
Safety – will take users off-road, provide a safer crossing point or make on-road use safer.	A road	10
	B/C road	8
	Unclassified	6
Would address known vulnerable user accident history		20
Livery or riding centre nearby (with 5 or more equines)	Within 1km	3
	Within 3km	2
	Within 5km	1
Equine / route density quotient (parish based).	High	3
	Medium	2
	Low	1
Creates a circuit	Largely off-road	10
	Largely with unclassified roads	8
	Packaged with other proposals	5
Helps to resolve Definitive Map anomaly	Where it fails BVPI 178	10
	Where it passes BVPI 178	2
Improves promoted route	Safety	8
	Scenic value	1
Access to point of interest/tourist attraction	New	3
	Beneficial alternative	1
Provides access to or provides higher rights on Access Land		5
DESKTOP TOTAL		

RoWIP FIELD FEASIBILITY SCORECARD

CRITERIA			SCORE
Does the proposed route/crossing point exist on the ground?	Yes		+2
	In part		+1
	No		-1
Is there available parking nearby (car park/layby)?	Cars only		+1
	Cars & horse box		+2
Does the route appear to have a well drained consolidated surface?	Yes		+1
	In part		0
	No		-1
How many structures exist/ would potentially be required along the route/ for the road crossing?	Gates/stiles/ditch crossings (<3m)	0-2	+1
		2-5	0
		5+	-1
Do more than two bridges (>3m) already exist along the route?	Yes		-1
How many bridges would potentially be required along the route/ for the road crossing	Bridges (>3m)	0-2	-1
		2+	-2
FIELD FEASIBILITY TOTAL			
DESKTOP TOTAL			
OVERALL SCORE			

APPROXIMATE COST OF PHYSICAL WORKS (tick)

Under £1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
£1,000 - £10,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
£10,000 +	<input type="checkbox"/>

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS (tick)

Proposal appears to be used by:	Walkers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyclists	<input type="checkbox"/>	Equestrians	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposal would duplicate an existing PRoW that is out of repair. Resolve faults on existing PRoW.						
Proposal would be best achieved along a different route. Submit new route for Desktop Scorecarding.						
Proposal would be best achieved through a diversion order. Submit to Diversion Scorecard.						
Proposal could be suitable as an 'accessible path'. Submit for auditing.						
Are there any existing Rights of Way that would appear to be unused in the vicinity?						
Proposal route is subject to a Modification application	Whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	In part	<input type="checkbox"/>		

3. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

Following the scoring of proposals, they will be packaged, wherever possible, to ensure that route development is focussed on providing connected, safe off-road circuits rather than looking at just singular high-scoring routes. Exceptions to packaging will be missing links or road crossings where it may simply require one route or crossing to make a connective network. It should be noted that packaging of proposals may not only provide wider benefits than implementing single proposals but also prove advantageous when bidding for internal or external funding.

Long-distance multi-use route proposals that do not qualify for Future Transport Plan funding shall have the component routes scorecarded on an individual basis and an average taken of the scores. Where the average score falls into the High banding (to be confirmed once proposals have all been scored) funding shall be sought to commission a feasibility study (see Policy Statement 4.4).

When the landowner(s) is(are) known they will be approached and a creation agreement sought with the offer of compensation equivalent to the devaluation that the extra rights/route would cause to his/her land.

When the landowner(s) is(are) not known either a creation agreement with adjoining landowner(s) or a creation order will be made. Compensation in these situations shall be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is often the case that enclosed lanes where the landowner is not known may have many adjoining landowners. A creation order in these situations could prove quicker and far less costly than administering several creation agreements with adjoining landowners.

When an agreement is not reached with a landowner a creation order will be sought where the additional rights/route can be proven to be of considerable benefit to the public. Decisions to make creation orders will not be taken lightly especially where the landowner intends to object to the order. Not only could there be significant financial implications to making a creation order but the order, if confirmed, could be counterproductive with the landowner potentially being obstructive to users once the route is in place. For these reasons a creation order should be the last resort.

Where the additional rights/routes would be advantageous, but don't warrant the making of a creation order then a permissive option will be sought. Permissive agreements usually last for 10 years but can be for longer and allow the landowner to experience the additional access without fully committing to a definitive right of way. Compensation would usually not be payable in such circumstances, however the landowner(s) would be encouraged to achieve the additional access through an agri-environment scheme which would provide the landowner with a source of income in return for the provision of extra access.

Timeframes will apply to certain parts of the implementation process to ensure that the process is not delayed, however it should be recognised that implementing improvements is a negotiation process as opposed to a determination process

(modification applications) and therefore there can be external factors at play that will cause delays.

Rationalisation will be a primary consideration when considering additional access. Practically all improvements, to some degree will result in an on-cost in terms of maintenance at some point in the future. Therefore, where there are public rights of way that are close to the improvement and are clearly not part of a connective network and do not serve any services, points of attraction, or residential areas and are not being used then, extinguishment shall be sought (s118, Highways Act 1980). In some circumstances, it will be the case that the unused right of way and the improvement are so close together that it is best achieved through a diversion order.

Creation of new paths emerging onto roads will be assessed in conjunction with the Transport Development Team. Any improvement proposal that results in creating either a new junction or higher rights at an existing junction with must be assessed to ensure that steps are taken to make the junction as safe as possible for all users.

Consultation with users, landowners and the relevant councils will be the key to any improvement. Consultation at the packaging phase to ensure that what is intended will meet the needs of the local users. Consultation throughout the implementation process to ensure that everyone's needs, desires are taken into account and as far as possible are not compromised and, post consultation evaluation to ensure that the new rights/routes are a success, are being used and whether there are any lessons that can be learnt for future implementation of improvements.

PLEASE NOTE: THE ABOVE SCORECARD AND PROCEDURE MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS IT IS USED. ANY CHANGES WILL BE CONSULTED UPON.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2



Appendix H: Exmoor National Park Authority's Rights of Way Improvement Plan - progress summary of the actions and suggested revisions

April 2011

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EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY'S RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS SUMMARY OF THE ACTIONS AND SUGGESTED REVISIONS

Note. Please refer to the original Exmoor National Park Authority rights of way improvement plan for background information and rationale

Development/Improvements:

Current ROWIP Action	Progress notes	Suggested new action
D1. The National Park Authority will work with landowners to dedicate as definitive public rights of way those sections of the South West Coast Path which are not public rights of way at present	Progress on this action includes dedication of the coast path route at Crock Pitts. Further effort has been put on hold following the enactment of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 which includes the creation of legal route around the entire coast of England.	Due to the enactment of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 no further work is planned on this action. We will, however work closely with Natural England and the Highway Authorities in their delivery of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to ensure that provision for walkers, horse riders and cyclists along the coast is most beneficial.
D2. The National Park Authority will produce an annual action plan to implement improvements.	Actions from the ROWIP are integrated into the National Park Authority annual business plan.	Actions from the ROWIP will continue to be integrated into the National Park Authority annual business plan.
D3. When considering suggestions for the creation of new routes, priority will generally be given to multi-user routes where these are appropriate – i.e. creation of restricted byways or bridleways and routes suitable for those with restricted mobility.	Policy adopted. This approach has been integrated into our ROWIP field scoring methodology.	When considering suggestions for the creation of new routes, priority will continue to be given to multi-user routes where these are appropriate – i.e. creation of restricted byways or bridleways and routes suitable for those with restricted mobility.
D4. The National Park Authority will adopt a	Policy adopted.	The National Park Authority will continue to

<p>formal policy to ensure that least restrictive path furniture is used when considering changes to the network and when existing furniture needs replacing. The priority should be gap, then gate then stile if absolutely essential. Latches should also be easy to operate.</p>		<p>ensure that least restrictive path furniture is used when considering changes to the network and when existing furniture needs replacing. The priority is gap, then gate then stile. Stiles will only be used in the rare circumstances where they are the only practicable option. Gates and latches should be easy to operate for all users and, where reasonably achievable, from horse back. Total numbers of stiles within the National Park will be monitored and reported .</p>
<p>D5. The National Park Authority will only provide furniture that is the least restrictive option (whilst having due regard to the needs of livestock control). Where a gap or gate is considered adequate but a landowner requests a stile then only 25% contribution will be made by the National Park Authority. Where it is agreed that a stile is only option then the National Park Authority will undertake all works.</p>	<p>Policy adopted.</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will only provide furniture that is the least restrictive option (whilst having due regard to the needs of livestock control). Where a gap or gate is considered adequate but a landowner requests a stile then only 25% contribution will be made by the National Park Authority. In rare circumstances where it is agreed that a stile is the only practicable option then the National Park Authority will undertake all works. Total numbers of stiles will be monitored and reported.</p>

<p>D6. The National Park Authority will investigate and develop an Exmoor Parish Paths Partnership scheme.</p>	<p>The Exmoor National Park Authority dedicated volunteer support officer and Rangers support a number of Exmoor Path Watchers and volunteers from the Highway Authority Parish Path Partnership Scheme</p>	<p>The Exmoor National Park Authority dedicated volunteer support officer and Rangers will continue to support Exmoor Path Watchers and volunteers from the Highway Authority Parish Path Partnership Scheme.</p>
<p>D7. The National Park Authority will adopt a route classification scheme for maintenance purposes based on variables such as surface type location and type of use.</p>	<p>A route classification and work prioritisation scheme has been devised and adopted in consultation with the Exmoor Local Access Forum</p>	<p>The Exmoor National Park Authority will continue to use its adopted route classification and work prioritisation scheme making revisions as necessary.</p>
<p>D9. The National Park Authority will ensure that way-marking is consistent throughout the National Park using best practice from Devon County Council Public Service Agreement.</p>	<p>The National Park Authority has achieved a consistent approach to way-marking on public rights of way throughout the National Park.</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will ensure that way-marking on public rights of way and permissive paths is consistent throughout the National Park.</p>
<p>D10. The National Park Authority will address problems where used routes are not on the definitive public right of way and remove obstructions.</p>	<p>245 off-line issues have been identified on the public rights of way network. To date 52 issues have been resolved.</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will continue to address problems where used routes are not on the definitive public right of way and remove obstructions.</p>
<p>D11. The National Park Authority will ensure its policy on public transport, cycling, horse riding and walking will include enhancement of and links to the existing rights of way network when considering applications</p>	<p>Rights of way issues are negotiated when they are relevant to a planning application. Recent examples of new routes negotiated as part of a planning application include the new link paths near Tarr Farm and</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will seek to apply its policy on public transport, cycling, horse riding and walking including enhancement of, and links to, the existing rights of way network when</p>

for new developments.	at the Cutcombe Market site. All planning applications that affect public rights of way are reviewed by the Authority's Public Rights of Way and Access Officer	considering applications for new developments. All planning applications that affect public rights of way will be reviewed by the Authority's Public Rights of Way and Access Officer
D12. The National Park Authority will, when revising the Local Development Framework, include open access land in policy to protect the interest of users.	As public access rights are not protected through the planning system this action is unlikely to add anything to the planning process.	This action will not be continued but the Authority will continue to manage and protect Access Land in line with its statutory duty.
D13. The National Park Authority will seek to encourage formal areas where motorized recreation can be managed on private land by landowners. There is the potential for private landowners to make a business catering for 4x4s and motorcycles on suitable land, removing pressure from more sensitive areas.	A number of formal areas exist on private land within and near to the National Park catering for 4x4s and off road motorcycle recreation.	The National Park Authority will continue to encourage formal areas where motorized off-road recreation can occur on private land, where this is possible without causing damage to the National Parks special sensitive environments, archaeology and sense of tranquility.

Partnership Working:

Current ROWIP Action	Progress notes	Suggested new action
PW1. The National Park Authority will work with Parish Councils to promote circular routes around settlements and improve accessibility.	Circular routes have been developed at Parracombe and Nettlecombe	Support Parish and community led initiatives for circular routes. Exmoor National Park Authority will ensure accessible routes exist and are promoted within all key landscapes/ key visitor experience areas

		of the National Park
PW2. The National Park Authority will work with accommodation providers to create 'cyclist-friendly' accommodation.	No specifically relevant action undertaken to date, however schemes such as the Exmoor Cycle route and Exmoor mountain bike map have helped support/encourage more cyclist visitors.	The National Park Authority will work with the 1-South-West project to improve the welcome for Mountain Bikers to the National Park.
PW3. The National Park Authority will encourage the development of one or more sites on Exmoor suitable for the sectors of off-tarmac cycling which cause real conflict.	Downhill mountain bike facilities were developed at Combe Sydenham Country Park and off road cycling has been promoted on Crown and Forestry Commission Land around the Dunster area.	The National Park Authority will support and encourage private sector initiatives to cater for specialist recreational activities
PW4. The National Park Authority will work with County Councils, Parish Councils and people with disabilities to progress the creation of all ability routes with an aim to improve and promote at least one per parish.	This has not been achieved as the Field Fair Trust report that we commissioned advised a different approach (see ROWIP action PW11)	Combine with ROWIP action PW1
PW5. The National Park Authority will develop partnership working with other interested organisations to address issues of social exclusion.	This action has been pursued via the Heritage Ambassadors and Green Ambassadors Schemes, the MOSAIC project, support for the Calvert Trust as well dedicated core staff roles for outreach work and volunteer support	Continue current action
PW6. The National Park Authority will negotiate a memorandum of	Complete	Continue to maintain our memorandum of understanding with

understanding with English Nature regarding maintenance of public rights of way which cross SSSIs.		Natural England regarding maintenance of public rights of way which cross SSSIs.
PW7. The National Park Authority will look at formally adopting a contingency planning policy in line with neighbouring authorities.	The Authority has a Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Plan and a risk management strategy which covers all its activities and is updated annually.	This action will not continue to be referenced as part of the Exmoor National Park ROWIP
PW8. The National Park Authority will work with landowners to look at ways of integrating public access benefits with environmental benefits and help facilitate access funding through DEFRA environmental schemes.	Policy adopted. We continue to liaise and provide advice to landowners and others in relation to any agri-environment schemes that offer access payments.	Continue to liaise and provide advice to landowners and others in relation to any agri-environment schemes that offer access payments
PW9. The National Park Authority will develop partnership working with tourism organisations to look at improving information and physical links for visitors.	Exmoor Tourism Partnership (which includes Exmoor National Park Authority) has been established to improve information and promotion to encourage National Park visitors.	The National Park Authority will continue to work with the Exmoor Tourism Partnership to improve information and promotion to encourage National Park visitors. Opportunities for physical rights of way improvements that have a particularly high benefit for tourism will be explored and prioritised.
PW10. The National Park Authority will work with landowners to attain funding for priority routes on their land.	Policy adopted. We continue to liaise and provide advice to landowners and others in relation to any agri-environment schemes that offer access payments. (see PW8	Continue to liaise and provide advice to landowners and others in relation to any agri-environment schemes that offer access payments (combine with PW8)

	above)	
PW11. The National Park Authority will work with groups representing people with disabilities to produce route descriptions (gates/slopes etc) to enable people with disabilities to make their own choices as to what is suitable for their particular needs.	The Exmoor for All report was completed on our behalf by the Field Fair Trust. The recommendations of this report are being pursued via improved information and further consultation. We have met with the Somerset Access and Inclusion Network and Living Options Devon.	The National Park Authority will continue to work with groups representing people with disabilities to produce better information to enable them to make their own choices as to what is suitable for their particular needs and to ensure a representative range of countryside access options are available

Ongoing Action:

Current ROWIP Action	Progress notes	Suggested new action
O1. The National Park Authority will seek opportunities to route the Coast Path as close to the coast as possible, whilst ensuring it is safe for all to use. Where erosion necessitates a diversion, signing and information in accordance with national trail standards, will ensure that it is easy to follow.	Policy adopted. The coast path has been routed closer to the sea at Crock Pitts, Culbone Woods and Lynton. Further improvements in this area may be achieved by the implementation of the <i>Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009</i> .	The National Park Authority will work closely with Natural England and the Highway Authorities during their implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to seek further opportunities to route the Coast Path as close to the coast as reasonably possible.
O2. Where the level of use of a route is causing or has caused such damage that it cannot be repaired without heavily changing the character of the track and the surrounding area, Government guidance	Policy adopted.	Existing policy will be continued.

will be followed looking at voluntary and statutory restrictions on its use.		
O3. When ground conditions are extremely wet and vulnerable to damage, restrictions on use may be used in line with Government guidance to prevent excessive damage being caused.	Policy adopted.	This policy will be continued.
O4. The National Park Authority will continue to seek dedication of permitted routes to public rights of way and new creations.	Policy adopted. This has been achieved on the following routes: Aville Farm, Withycombe Hill, Dean Lane, Crock Pits, Stock Common	The National Park Authority will continue to seek dedication of permitted routes to public rights of way and new creations in consultation with the Highway Authorities.

Public Information:

Current ROWIP Action	Progress notes	Suggested new action
P1. The National Park Authority will work with users to produce a graded cycle map of Exmoor allowing users to choose their own routes.	Action completed.	The National Park Authority will work with the 1-South-West project to improve the welcome for mountain bike riders further.
P2. Education should continue to be targeted at users and others as to what rights for mechanically propelled vehicles exist. Signing sites where illegal use is occurring should be followed up by prosecution of persistent illegal users by the Police.	Policy adopted. A leaflet campaign was carried out in Devon and additional information has been provided on site at all Restricted Byways as well as general information in the Exmoor Visitor publication and on the Exmoor National Park Authority website. Exmoor National Park	This policy will be continued.

	<p>Authority has also worked with the Police, Somerset County Council, and others to develop the Somerset Path Watch Scheme.</p>	
<p>P3. The National Park Authority will make access information more readily available and easily accessible to all potential rights of way users. This will include the development of web based maps and guides and work with Parish Councils.</p>	<p>Simple gradient mapping of our public rights of way network is now available on the Exmoor National Park Authority website. Our access pages on the Exmoor National Park Authority website are regularly updated with path closure information and open access restrictions and this information is also available via our National Park Centres. A Google map facility has been made available on the National Park Authority website to indicate access information. Over 40% of permissive rights of way within the National Park are shown on the National Park Authority website.</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will continue to make access information more readily available and easily accessible to all potential rights of way users. This will include the further development of web based maps and printed guides that will be accessible via our National Park Centres, Local Information Points and by post.</p>
<p>P4. The National Park Authority will continue to inform Landowners and the public of their rights and responsibilities in relation to public rights of way.</p>	<p>This information is provided via our website, in the Exmoor Visitor publication, via the reviewed parish information boards, via National Park Centres and via our guided walk programme. We regularly work with landowners one-to-one and via other methods, providing</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will continue to inform Landowners and the public of their rights and responsibilities in relation to public rights of way using a variety of methods.</p>

	advice, assistance and responding to their concerns, user concerns and network faults.	
P5. The National Park Authority will record and make publicly available, information regarding permitted routes.	All permitted routes, where appropriate landowner permission has been received, are shown on the National Park Authority website. This figure currently stands at over 40% of the permitted routes of which we are aware.	The National Park Authority will record and make publicly available, information regarding all permitted routes where landowner permission is provided. The National Park Authority will endeavour to increase the percentage of permitted routes shown on our website each year. Information on all permitted routes that are maintained by the National Park Authority will be shown on our website except in very exceptional circumstances.
P6. All future access information produced by the National Park Authority will provide information on car free transport options where available. This will Include contact details of national transport information providers.	Public transport information is available in the Exmoor Visitor publication and for the National Park Authority guided walk programme. The Explore Moor website dedicated to public transport on Exmoor went live in April 2010	The National Park Authority will continue to provide information on car free transport options in all of its main access information publications and via the web.

Research:

Current ROWIP Action	Progress notes	Suggested new action
R1. The National Park Authority will undertake future research to gain further information on the	A public rights of way condition and satisfaction consultation was carried out in 2001 and 2004.	The National Park Authority will continue to undertake research to gain further information

<p>specific needs of users on Exmoor for the first rights of way improvement plan review.</p>	<p>Priority routes for improvement have been provided by the West Somerset and Exmoor Bridleway Association. Ongoing communication with the public and parish councils provides information on problems, needs and priorities.</p>	<p>on the specific needs of users on Exmoor. A ROWIP survey will be repeated to identify potential new routes, route upgrades and accessibility improvement opportunities ensuring that all types of user and a representative selection of non-users have the opportunity to comment.</p>
<p>R2. The National Park Authority will undertake further research with local carriage driving groups to ascertain local need for future provision of suitable routes and physical requirements.</p>	<p>No further research has been undertaken relevant to this action.</p>	<p>The National Park Authority will undertake further research to understand the level of demand and needs for carriage driving within Exmoor National Park.</p>
<p>R3. The National Park Authority will undertake an audit of existing public transport services and work with Devon and Somerset County Councils to see how these can be improved.</p>	<p>An action plan has been drawn up by the Exmoor Transport Partnership (Public Transport) to better co-ordinate and promote public transport services within Exmoor. A new summer service (401) linking Dulverton with Lynmouth was piloted in 2008 and will be running for the third year in 2010, along with the Moor Rover which was re-established in 2009 operating for 3 months in the high season providing demand responsive minibus travel in areas not otherwise covered by public transport. A new website, www.exploremoor.co.uk</p>	<p>The Exmoor Rights of Way Improvement Plan will form part of the Devon and Somerset County Council Local Transport Plans in future. Exmoor National Park Authority will continue to work in partnership with public transport providers and funders with the aim to maximise public transport options within Exmoor and greater Exmoor.</p>

	will be launched in the summer containing ideas for car free walks and activities as well as interactive mapping and links to timetables etc.	
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EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (2006)

INTRODUCTION

Exmoor National Park covers an area of 693 km² of mixed landscapes including semi-natural areas of moor and heath, woodland, coast and foreshore. A number of these habitats are of national and international importance. The Park has a resident population of around 10,500 with a further 1.7 million people living within 50km of the National Park boundary. It is estimated that the National Park receives 1.4 million visitor days per year (based on 1994 data). One third of the National Park (201 km²) is in the county of Devon and the remaining two thirds in Somerset (492 km²).

The public rights of way network within Exmoor National Park extends to over 1000 km with an additional 18,000 ha of access land currently available to the public for walking. Some areas of access land also carry different access rights for horse riding. Approximately 55% of the rights of way network is available to equestrian users, reflecting the historic and present importance of horse riding on Exmoor, which now provide attractive recreation opportunities for horse riders, cyclists and walkers.

The rights of way network is managed and maintained by Exmoor National Park Authority which has delegated powers from Devon and Somerset County Councils. This generally means that most maintenance duties such as signing and waymarking are undertaken by Exmoor National Park Authority whilst definitive map issues and other legal duties are undertaken by the relevant Highway Authority.

EXISTING ACCESS PROVISION

Existing Rights of Way:

Exmoor has a high density of public rights of way with 1.39km/ sq km. This is above average for National Parks and should be compared with the extremes of the Peak District at 1.86km/ sq km and Brecon Beacons at 0.68 km/ sq km.

The following figures are approximate lengths;

Type:	Total Length:
Public Footpaths	438 km (272 miles)
Public Bridleways	468 km (292 miles)
Restricted Byways	64 km (40 miles)
Permitted route agreements with Exmoor National Park Authority	40 km (25 Miles)
TOTAL	1010 Km

Permitted Access

There are many paths on areas of moorland and woodland owned by Exmoor National Park Authority, The National Trust and Crown Estate. Many more permitted paths exist through agreement with private landowners. However, not all permitted paths/access are recorded and advertised to the public. Only those with long term agreements are depicted on OS maps and although those negotiated by Exmoor National Park Authority are generally recorded, there are others which are not.

Common Land

There are 12 registered commons in the Devon area and 9 registered commons in the Somerset area of the National Park. These areas have definitive public rights of access on foot and are depicted as open access land on Ordnance Survey maps

Parts of Brendon Common, Furzehill Common, Ilkerton Ridge Common and the Valley of Rocks Common carry a public right of access under the 1925 Law of Property Act. These areas, known as 'CRoW Act - Section 15 access land' are not currently distinguished from Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) access land shown on OS maps, but can be viewed on the Open Access website at www.openaccess.gov.uk

Open Access

On the 28th August 2005, part I of the CRoW Act 2000 created a public right of access on foot on Exmoor. A total of approximately 18,000 hectares of land is now available for open access on foot within the National Park (before this date there was around 9,000 hectares available). This right of 'open access' applies to areas mapped as registered common land and areas fulfilling the CRoW Act criteria of 'open country' (mountain, moor, heathland and downland).

The National Park Authority has powers under the CRoW Act to create access to these new areas of access land. This includes powers to make agreements with landowners to open up, improve, repair, maintain, or to protect existing means of access and prevent anything that would impede public access. The National Park Authority also has powers to undertake the work where a landowner fails to abide by any agreements or where agreements cannot be reached.

National and Regional Routes

Exmoor National Park Authority manages 34 miles of the 630 mile long South West Coast Path (SWCP) National Trail. It is the longest of all the National Trails and is highly significant in terms of its economic contribution to the area through tourism. Research released in 2003 indicates that the 630-mile Coast Path generates around £300 million a year for the region's economy – enough to support more than 7,500 jobs. The Exmoor section of the Path was the first to be opened and is highly significant, being seen as the official start of the route. Very few people walk the whole 630 miles but the presence of the Path gives visitors the confidence that if they visit the coast in the South West they will always be able to walk a quality route. A detailed inventory and survey is done every three years and high National Trail standards are applied, with funding being received from Natural England.

Issues:

1. Loss of the path due to Coastal erosion is a serious and regular threat. The loss of the path along Porlock Shingle Ridge has led to a less than perfect solution, with one alternative path being closed from March to June due to nature conservation concerns and the alternative taking the route far inland. Parts of the route currently use minor public roads and this can detract from the experience.

Action O1: The National Park Authority will seek opportunities to route the Coast Path as close to the coast as possible, whilst ensuring it is safe for all to use. Where erosion necessitates a diversion, signing and information in accordance with national trail standards, will ensure that it is easy to follow.

2. Some of the route on Exmoor is not on definitive public rights of way, leaving the route vulnerable to sudden closure or diversion.

Action D1: The National Park Authority will work with landowners to dedicate as definitive public rights of way those sections of the route which are not public rights of way at present.

3. Where the SWCP runs along roads used by motor vehicles.

Three other long distance paths recognised by Exmoor National Park Authority pass through the Park. These are the Two Moors Way (102 miles/164km) and the Tarka Trail (180 miles/290km) and the Coleridge Way (36 miles/58km). In addition, the Macmillan Way West passes through the Park.

The Coleridge Way was launched in 2005 linking the Quantock Hills and Exmoor National Park. The walking route which is 36 miles long has proven very popular with walkers and separate equine route is currently being developed. It is hoped that a significant section of this route will be open in May 2007.

Such routes are valued because they bring economic benefits of tourism to otherwise isolated rural areas, attract funding for maintenance and improvements to the rights of way network and help extend the network to provide more routes and access to areas of special quality. Exmoor is fortunate that such routes have not suffered from the over use which has occurred in other areas, particularly from large organised events. However, care needs to be taken to assess the environmental impact of proposals for such routes and to manage them in accordance with agreed plans. Care should also be taken to ensure that such routes do not divert resources away from the remainder of the route network.

Access to the National Park

The National Park Authority promotes public transport to encourage people to access the countryside without the use of a public car. The location of the National Park in relation to surrounding centres of population means that public transport is often not the easiest or preferred method of travel into the park by visitors or local people.

A 2003 survey found that:

- 79% of visitors arrive by car
- 13% were on an organised coach tour
- 4% arrive by other coach/bus service
- 3% arrived by train
- 1% walked

One popular service is the number 300 bus which serves the north coast and allows walkers to access the South West Coast Path and other rights of way along the route. There are other bus services and routes within the National Park but these need to be promoted more effectively to encourage their use.

Action R3: The National Park Authority will undertake an audit of existing public transport services and work with Devon and Somerset County Councils to see how these can be improved.

EXISTING USE OF THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

Recreation

As one of the twin purposes of National Parks, providing for understanding and enjoyment is a vital part of the National Park Authority's function. A wide range of recreational activities are acceptable and should be promoted in Exmoor National Park but almost any activity can have detrimental effects on the environment without careful management. Many activities can be actively encouraged and walking tends to be the most popular activity that receives the greatest promotion. However, horse riding and mountain biking are popular and receiving

more promotion through various initiatives between the National Park Authority and other organisations. A large growth area has been competitive adventure racing involving multiple activities such as orienteering and canoeing. This popularity appears to have been fuelled by the media's coverage and promotion of such multi-discipline events.

Large organised events using the public rights of way network can cause erosion and conflict issues. Exmoor National Park Authority staff work closely with event organisers and publish an 'events guidelines and a code of conduct for organisers' to ensure that any negative effects caused by these events are minimised.

Tourism

Estimates from the 1994 All Parks Visitor Survey (APVS) suggest that day visitors to Exmoor walk a total of 790,000 miles per annum. The APVS also showed that 47% of day trip visitors identified walking as the main purpose of their visit to Exmoor while 33% of holiday visitors were on a 'moderately active visit', including walking. 54% of holiday visitors had walked between 1 and 4 hours and 12% had walked for more than 4 hours. In addition, among visitors as a whole, 7% had taken part in horse riding or pony trekking.

The footpath closures implemented during the 2001 foot and mouth disease outbreak led to a substantial decline in visitor numbers to Exmoor. Businesses that depend on visitors for their income were hard hit and the importance of the rights of way network and access to the countryside to the local economy was highlighted.

Local Use

An approximate estimate from census figures would suggest that about 3,600,000 days are spent in the Park by residents each year.

Nationally 1 in 4 households has a dog or dogs, which means there are likely to be at least 1,200 such households on Exmoor. Assuming the national average of 1.5 miles dog walking per household per day, an estimated 615,000 miles per annum are walked by locals with dogs. Nationally 16% of all walks undertaken are dog walks, 23% for shopping, 21% for walking to work or taking children to school and 20% for leisure. The average a person walks for these purposes is 189 miles per annum or 0.6 miles per walk. In 1991 48.5% of Exmoor workers travelled to work by car, 29.5% worked at home, 13.8 % travelled on foot and 1.7% by public transport (Source: National Census).

CONTEXT

Statutory Duties

The statutory purposes for which Exmoor National Park is designated are:

- *To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage*
- *To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public*

Exmoor National Park Authority has a primary duty to further National Park purposes and, whilst doing so, to:

“seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local community, but without incurring significant expenditure in doing so, and shall for those purposes cooperate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic and social development within the area of the National Park”.

The Sandford Principle

Occasionally, conflict between the National Park purposes to conserve the environment and provide recreation becomes irreconcilable. The ‘Sandford Principle’ arose from Lord Sandford’s 1974 review of National Park Policies. The report drew attention to the recreational pressures on the National Parks and suggested that, although the two National Park purposes carried equal weight, where conflict between the two arise the first, conservation purpose should prevail over the second, recreation, purpose. This principle is now incorporated in the Environment Act 1995.

Existing management plan strategy/objectives

The Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2001-2006 contains policies regarding public access.

Chapter 13 of the plan contains objectives and policies relating to public access and the ‘Vision for Access’: *A network of public rights of way and permitted paths maintained and improved in a way that satisfies walkers, riders, cyclists, farmers, landowners and local people alike, providing links across the farmed landscapes to the wilder landscapes beyond.*

Objective

13/1: To seek and promote opportunities for access for the enjoyment of Exmoor’s special qualities by the public in a sustainable manner.

Policies

P13/1 *In promoting access on Exmoor in publications, priority will be given to those that promote the use of the public rights of way network in a sustainable manner: in particular, those that provide payback towards*

*management of public rights of way;
promote the use of public transport;
and encourage staying visitors to
explore the area local to their
accommodation on foot or by bicycle
rather than by travelling long
distances for sightseeing.*

P13/2 *Every effort will be made to ensure that suitable alternative routes are found where there is a loss of access such as through coastal erosion.*

P13/3 *The promotion of National Trails and Regional Routes will not be in isolation but as part of the overall route network.*

P13/4 *Proposals for new long distance routes within the National Park will be subject to environmental impact assessment.*

P13/5 *The waymarking of paths will be in accordance with the Countryside Agency's recommended colour scheme and route classification. The network of Local Walks and Rides will have priority for waymarking and promotion.*

P13/6 *New permitted paths will be negotiated only as additions to existing access, not as alternatives. Where an alternative route is needed, a formal diversion will be sought.*

P13/7 *Provision will be made for publicity to be built into all agreements on access. Agreements will not commence until adequate signposting is in place and publicity has been carried out.*

13/2: To maintain a public

P13/8 *The existing system of signposting*

Rights of Way network that is open, sustainable and convenient for people to use and enjoy and which, where possible, provides opportunities of access for people of all abilities.

and waymarking will be retained and developed as determined by statute and Countryside Agency recommended classification for route priority will be applied.

P13/9 *The National Park Authority will work with others to minimise conflicts of use/overuse that may arise, but apply the Sandford Principle to such workings. If such conflicts cannot be resolved by consensus building, available legislation will be used to prevent further damage.*

P13/10 *Methods of maintaining and improving paths using natural, sustainably-produced and locally derived materials will continue to be used on Exmoor.*

P13/11 *Opportunities to improve access to the Countryside for less mobile and disabled people will be identified.*

P13/12 *Partnerships with the local tourism industry will be promoted to secure finance for improvements to Public Rights of Way, recognising the benefits to the industry of a well-maintained Rights of Way network and of promoting sustainable approaches to tourism.*

13/3: To encourage and enable the public to enjoy access to open country for quiet enjoyment (and where possible extend such opportunities), while having due regard to the interests of nature conservation and farming.

P13/13 *The National Park Authority will work within the Government's legislative framework to manage access provision to unenclosed areas of moor and heath, taking opportunities to increase access where possible.*

13/4: To improve opportunities for access on Exmoor for all

P13/14 *Groups representing less mobile people and those with disabilities will*

people, irrespective of their mobility or other physical abilities.

be consulted to seek opportunities for improving access to the countryside.

P13/15 *Provision will be made for less mobile people in all new access schemes where this is practical and environmentally acceptable.*

Local Transport Plans for Somerset and Devon 2006-2011

The County RoWIP's (containing the ENPA RoWIP chapter) form a strand of the Somerset and Devon Local Transport Plans 2006-2011 (LTP2) and will help deliver the county transport objectives through rights of way improvements.

The Somerset LTP objectives are as follows:

- Reduce the growth of congestion and pollution and improve health;
- Reduce social exclusion and improve access to everyday facilities;
- Improve safety for all who travel;
- Protect and enhance the built and natural environment; and
- Support sustainable economic growth in appropriate locations

The Devon LTP objectives are as follows:

- Tackling traffic congestion
- Delivering accessibility
- Making roads safer
- Improving air quality
- Improving leisure and tourism
- Promoting health and well-being
- Improving public spaces

Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2001 - 2011

Policy TR11 The design and layout of development proposals should, where appropriate, accommodate the needs of cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders and encourage cycling, walking and horse riding. In appropriate cases, and in particular where developments are likely to attract significant numbers of visitors, planning obligations will be used to achieve improvements to public transport services and facilities.

Policy TR12 Development which will adversely affect existing public rights of way will be required to incorporate measures to protect user's interests.

Best Value Performance Review of Recreation Management – Action Plan 2000/01

Rights of way management – Recommended Action

- 1.6.1** The National Park Authority should make representations to Government, jointly with other national parks and on its own account, to seek a commitment to provide adequate additional funding to meet the responsibilities imposed by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
- 1.6.2** The underlying objectives of the Exmoor Paths Partnership are sound and should continue to be supported. A comprehensive review of options for delivering this aspect of rights of way management on path erosion, and for developing visitor payback as an effective source of funding, should be undertaken as a priority. (This should involve all relevant sections of the Authority, including the Rangers, Field services and Recreation and Tourism Team.)
- 1.6.3** Effective systems for monitoring rights of way performance indicators, to assess progress towards achieving targets, must be established by the start of the 2001/2002 financial year.
- 1.6.4** The National Park Authority should carry out surveys of “stakeholders” views on rights of way management at least every three years. Surveys of farmers and landowners and groups representing disabled people should be undertaken within 6 months and the results added to the Best Value report.
- 1.6.5** The National Park Authority should establish a documented system for rights of way inspections in areas prone to increased risk of hazard to path users.
- 1.6.6** Systems should be developed to regularly review path condition and establish routine maintenance requirements.
- 1.6.7** The National Park Authority should ensure that all its operations in respect of rights of way management are carried out with due regard for the impact on the environment by judging them against pre-determined criteria. Such criteria should be adopted as soon as possible and should form part of any tender process for contracted works.
- 1.6.8** A review of alternative ways of delivering services, particularly monitoring rights of way, identifying problems and undertaking management work, should be carried out as a priority. Particular emphasis should be given to greater involvement of parish councils and landowners, and to examining the scope for increasing the responsibility of the Field Services Team for monitoring condition and specifying work.

Exmoor Local Access Forum Vision

“The Rights of Way Improvement Plan will aim to provide solutions to existing problems whilst securing, improving and promoting access opportunities for the future so that:

- Good information is available on existing public rights of way including promotion of access opportunities for people of all abilities and those with limited transport options.
- Cross boundary anomalies are resolved in co-operation with adjoining authorities and the existing rights of way network is rationalised where appropriate.
- The needs of landowners are considered as well as all rights of way users.
- Pressure on existing well used rights of way is reduced by improving and promoting less well used routes.
- Access to new areas of CRoW Act ‘open country’ is established and promoted.
- The creation and promotion of circular routes is encouraged and multi-use is promoted where appropriate.
- Negative impacts of motor vehicles on rights of way are minimised and illegal use tackled.
- Partnerships are developed between stakeholders in monitoring, maintaining and improving the network to suit local needs.”

Exmoor Local Access Forum, 2004.

PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS

There has been relatively little consultation with the public, user groups, parish councils etc in the past in relation to the rights of way network within the National Park. However, due to the close working practices between the National Park Authority, local access forum, user groups and individuals, regular feedback and views on users needs and the condition of the network are provided.

A new All Parks Visitor Survey is being planned and whilst it should provide information about visitor trends, it will not provide specific information in relation to the use of the rights of way network.

The Best Value Performance Review of Recreation Management surveys were undertaken in 2000/2001 and again in 2004. The survey results can be found in Annex 1. The results from these surveys will enable the National Park Authority to improve the management and condition of Rights of way within the Park where necessary.

STRUCTURE OF PLAN CHAPTER

Devon and Somerset County Councils undertook a series of county wide consultations with user groups, organisations, landowners and the general public. The results provided valuable information on user needs and preferences for both counties, but specific information relating to Exmoor was limited.

However, through other methods of consultation with users the National Park Authority has been able to gather limited information specific to Exmoor. This information has been useful in formulating the first plan chapter. Wider information from all user groups and other users prior to future reviews of the chapter would be beneficial.

Action R1: The National Park Authority will undertake future research to gain further information on the specific needs of users on Exmoor for the first rights of way improvement plan review.

Expected Outcomes

The extensive rights of way network within the National Park means that the needs of those who use the network, whether residents or visitors, will differ significantly from the surrounding areas. Because, the National Park has an existing high density of rights of way, a large scale extension of the network is not appropriate or necessary except where strategic links or cul-de-sac routes are identified. The improvement plan chapter will therefore focus primarily on extending access to the network to more types of user group by upgrading existing rights of way where appropriate. Whilst priority will generally be given to the creation of multi-use routes, not all routes will be suitable for such use. This means that some proposed new routes may be developed for single use only (i.e. pedestrian/cycle use only)

The National Park Authority has received many suggestions for physical improvements. All suggestions will be prioritised using criteria agreed with both County Councils and the two County and Exmoor Local Access Forums and will include, amongst other criteria, consideration of :

- Environmental/conservation issues
- Impact on landscape character
- Costs of initial works and ongoing maintenance

Whilst this plan chapter will not detail specific improvements, the National Park Authority is committed to produce annual action plans to implement improvements in subsequent years.

Action D2: The National Park Authority will produce an annual action plan to implement improvements.

Limitations

The nature of most improvements will mean that physical improvements on the ground will need to be negotiated with landowners in the first instance and subsequent legal processes will have to be initiated in the later stages, both of which can take a great deal of time.

No specific funding has been allocated to implement improvements but it is hoped that rights of way improvement plans will help gain much needed additional funding. The National Park Authority aims to work closely with Devon and Somerset County Councils to draw down additional funding for rights of way in general.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ABILITY OF THE NETWORK TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND MEET THE NEEDS OF USERS

Walking

Existing provision for walking is extensive within Exmoor National Park with approximately 1006km of public rights of way available and an additional 18000 ha of access land available to the public for walking. The National Park Authority has a duty under the CRoW Act to 'ensure reasonable access' to new access land and consultation results suggest that additional links may be needed to access some new areas and to create links between open access areas. However, in most instances this will only mean that new access points and furniture will be required.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan Consultations have suggested that the following are of importance for walkers:

- Safe off road routes.
- A clear need for more accessible and circular routes close to settlements.
- Maintenance.
- Replacement of stiles with gates to improve ease of use.
- Reduced damage to surfaces.
- Information available on where to walk.
- Improved car parking provision in certain areas.

Action PW1: The National Park Authority will work with Parish Councils and Local Authorities to promote circular routes around settlements and improve accessibility and health.

Action D3: When considering suggestions for the creation of new routes, priority will generally be given to multi-user routes where these are appropriate – i.e. creation of restricted byways or bridleways and routes suitable for those with restricted mobility.

Cycling

At present cycling is a growing activity for which increased provision is desired. The National Park Authority supports the aim of the National Cycling Strategy and the cycling strategies of Somerset and Devon County Councils, to maximise the role of cycling as a healthy recreation activity and transport mode and to ensure the needs of cyclists are taken into account in new infrastructure.

Exmoor National Park Authority works with the Highway Authorities and Sustrans to ensure that the National Cycle Network on Exmoor is well maintained and developed where appropriate. Cycling is a sustainable and enjoyable method of transport for visitors to access the National Park. Opportunities for more promoted routes and 'cyclist-friendly' accommodation are developing and should be encouraged by Exmoor National Park Authority. Accommodation suitable for cyclists including such facilities as secure bike storage is in short supply, but providers are starting to develop their facilities in this direction. At present Exmoor National Park Authority is working with Devon County Council on a long distance cycle route linking Torbay to Minehead in Somerset. Road cycling maps are produced for the Exmoor area and in general road cyclists plan their own routes with road maps.

Off-tarmac cycling is extremely popular in Exmoor National Park. The Exmoor Explorer, an annual off-tarmac cycle ride, always fills the 400 places available to members of the public and general opinion from around the National Park is that this activity is enjoyed in most areas. In recent years Exmoor has been the subject of many articles in the national press promoting it for mountain biking.

As with horse riding, the extensive network of bridleways lends itself to this activity. Exmoor's topography and geology appear ideal for off-tarmac cyclists of all abilities. Exmoor National Park Authority has worked in the past with others to develop and promote general routes on Croydon Hill, North Hill and at Wimbleball Lake. Many riders do not ride general public rights of way as they are not sure of the tracks' suitability for cycling, despite being legal routes. Reports of conflict are infrequent and often due to misunderstanding of the law. Conflict with other users does occur with the small sector of the sport who ride down hill solely for speed. This causes obvious conflict with other public rights of way users. In some areas of the National Park near to urban areas cyclists have built their own tracks for down hill riding, sometimes through sensitive sites. This sector of the sport needs provision of suitable facilities to manage this negative impact.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultations have suggested that the following are of importance for cyclists:

- Safe routes from settlement to local services, schools etc.
- Improved facilities for transporting cycles by means of public transport.
- Improved perception of cyclists by landowners and other stakeholders.
- Better awareness of cyclists and rights of cyclists by other road users.
- Well publicised and extensive network of on and off road routes.
- Address conflicts between horse riders, walkers and mountain bikers where these exist – need for separate routes in some instances.
- More specific routes and better information for cross country and downhill riders.

Action PW2: The National Park Authority will work with accommodation providers to create 'cyclist-friendly' accommodation.

Action P1: The National Park Authority will work with users to produce a graded off-tarmac cycle map of Exmoor allowing users to choose their own routes.

Action PW3: The National Park Authority will encourage the development of one or more sites on Exmoor suitable for the sectors of off-tarmac cycling which cause real conflict.

Horse Riding

Horse riding is one of the traditional recreational activities on Exmoor. The Hobhouse Report of 1947 which recommended that Exmoor should be designated as National Park highlighted Exmoor's value for riding as being of national importance. Approximately 55% of the network within Exmoor National Park is currently available to equestrian users, reflecting the historic and present importance of horse riding. Compared with areas outside the National Park this proportion is relatively high and provides attractive recreation opportunities for all non-motorised users. Private riders account for about 75% of the activity on Exmoor, the remaining 25% being commercial horse riding.

Exmoor National Park Authority has worked with the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the British Horse Society to develop a publication called 'Exmoor and the Quantocks on Horseback'. This provides horse riders with a variety of different routes based on the existing bridleway network. In the longer term it is hoped that this will be complemented by a long-distance promoted bridleway (The Coleridge Way) safely linking Exmoor and the Quantocks together for horse riding. This is a joint partnership initiative between Exmoor National Park Authority, the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural

Beauty, Somerset County Council and West Somerset District Council. The route was opened in April 2005 initially for walkers only.

Exmoor National Park Authority and West Somerset District Council have financed and supported a new website, www.equinetourism.com. This website is not just aimed at promoting riding to visitors but is also designed to cater for all businesses related to horses. Amongst other things it provides users with information on local horse-orientated businesses, events, services, places to visit and ride, etc.

Exmoor National Park Authority is also working closely in partnership with West Somerset District Council supporting the Equine Tourism website to develop a series of equine based business forums. This is an opportunity for all horse related businesses to come together, listen to presentations and begin to network, which in the long run should lead to an increase in partnership working in an industry which relies heavily on others. The website is also looking to secure funding to continue raising awareness of the site, which will ultimately impact on the level of use of Exmoor's bridleways by horses.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultations have suggested that the following are of importance for horseriders:

- Safe off road riding.
- Raising awareness of the safety implications of riding on public roads.
- Upgrading existing suitable footpaths for equine use to extend network.
- Maintenance/surface improvement.
- Gates operable on horseback.
- More links between bridleways.
- Address conflicts between horse riders, vehicles and mountain bikers where these exist – need for separate routes in some instances.

Action D3: When considering suggestions for the creation of new routes, priority will generally be given to multi-user routes where these are appropriate – i.e. creation of restricted byways or bridleways and routes suitable for those with restricted mobility.

Carriage Drivers

Whilst many existing routes may provide opportunity for carriage driving there is no specific provision or information currently available to users. The National Park Authority therefore needs to consult with local groups to understand the needs and identify suitable routes.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultations have suggested that the following are of importance for carriage drivers:

- 2003 survey of members by British Driving Society (Devon Branch) indicated need for more pleasure drives.
- More traffic on country lanes so need for more off road routes.
- More information needed on suitable routes for carriage driving.
- Good signing, improved access (width minimum 1750mm and suitability – steepness/roughness).
- Well maintained routes.
- Parking for carriage/horse transport.

Action R2: The National Park Authority will undertake further research with local carriage driving groups to ascertain local need for future provision of suitable routes and physical requirements.

Motorised Users

Exmoor has a network of Unclassified County Roads (UCRs) and Restricted Byways (former RUPPs) that vary tremendously in their character, from deep sunken lanes to tracks across wide open moorland, and are a great attraction to both four-wheel drive vehicle users and trail bike riders. 33 of the 41 Restricted Byways on Exmoor received a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application for upgrade to a Byway Open to All Traffic before 20th January 2005. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that these 33 DMMOs are to be processed to establish their definitive legal status by the Highway Authority, Somerset County Council, under the original criteria for such applications. Any DMMOs submitted after this date are to be processed under new guidance set out in the NERC Act. Exmoor National Park Authority relies on the Highway Authority for legal interpretation of the law and managing this re-classification process.

Mechanically propelled vehicles can give rise to problems which Exmoor National Park Authority needs to address by means of effective management. Because mechanically propelled vehicle use of un-surfaced routes appears to be such an emotive topic, provoking strong responses from other users and locals affected by such use as well as from the vehicle users themselves, a clear and consistent approach to managing these routes is required. Exmoor National Park Authority will seek to minimise the disruption that can arise from this recreational activity within the National Park, within the Government's guidelines.

As with all recreational rights of way use, motorised use of the public rights of way network can be divided into two separate groups; legal and illegal. This distinction is particularly important to draw when looking at mechanically propelled vehicles due to the strong feelings expressed to Exmoor National Park Authority both for and against legal motorised use of Restricted Byways, UCRs and Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs). Legal users obey the law regarding themselves and their vehicle, operate their vehicles with due care and attention

to others and only use Public Rights of Way where they have a legal right. Illegal users do not satisfy some or all of these criteria. Motorcycles in particular have become a real issue on footpaths and bridleways, causing an obvious danger and nuisance to legitimate users.

Legal use:

Regular maintenance, drainage and monitoring of road conditions are essential where mechanically propelled vehicle use by the public is legal. Routes should not be 'urbanised' and any physical works should be sensitive to the general appearance and character of the surroundings.

The Department of the Environment (DoE) circular 2/93 (paragraph 13) advocates the use of management measures based on co-operation and agreement and commends the use of Traffic Regulation Orders to prevent inappropriate use and to protect the countryside where all other management measures have failed or are considered inadequate. The DoE practical guide *Making the Best of Byways* advocates management of routes by means of voluntary restraint agreement.

Action O2: Where the level of use of a route is causing or has caused such damage that it cannot be repaired without heavily changing the character of the track and the surrounding area, Government guidance will be followed looking at voluntary and statutory restrictions on its use.

Action O3: When ground conditions are extremely wet and vulnerable to damage, restrictions on use may be used in line with Government guidance to prevent excessive damage being caused.

Though conflicts often arise from a perception that mechanically propelled vehicle use is not appropriate, these perceptions are often allied to a lack of certainty over the rights that actually exist on the route, both on the part of the aggrieved party and on the part of the motorist. Education as to what rights exist is difficult at present due to the uncertainty surrounding the legality of public rights for mechanically propelled vehicles, but local people and users should be kept up to date with developments.

Much of the uncertainty about vehicular rights stems from the classification of many of these routes on the original Definitive Maps as Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs). RUPPs were re-classified as Restricted Byways by the NERC Act in May 2006. Exmoor has around 64 kilometres of Restricted Byways in Somerset. To establish public mechanically propelled vehicle rights each Restricted Byway would have to be re-classified as a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT). At present user groups have applied to upgrade these Restricted Byways to BOATs on a case by case basis which will finally clear up the legality of mechanically propelled vehicles on each individual route. Most if not all of

these claims will be decided by a public enquiry at which point the validity of claims for mechanically propelled vehicle rights will be determined.

Illegal use:

Exmoor National Park Authority has a policy to deal with illegal motorised use of protected areas, footpaths and bridleways within the National Park. Enforcement is the duty of the Police and National Park Authority staff have no legal powers in this area. Information is the key to ensuring that everyone is aware of where they can and cannot legally use their mechanically propelled vehicles. Leaflets have been produced and circulated in partnership with relevant local and national bodies and information articles placed in the local press. Signing sites where illegal use is occurring makes the perpetrators aware that what they are doing is both illegal and damaging. Prosecution of persistent users of mechanically propelled vehicles in areas where damage or danger is being caused should be carried out by the Police, assisted by any information provided by Exmoor National Park Authority.

Action P2: Education should continue to be targeted at users and others as to what rights for mechanically propelled vehicles exist. Signing sites where illegal use is occurring should be followed up by prosecution of persistent illegal users by the Police.

Action D13: The National Park Authority will seek to encourage formal areas where motorised recreation can be managed on private land by landowners. There is the potential for private landowners to make a business catering for 4x4s and motorcycles on suitable land, removing pressure from more sensitive areas.

People with Restricted Mobility and Sensory Impairments

Exmoor's terrain means that it would be difficult to make all routes accessible to all with restricted mobility. However, simple measures can be made to ensure that some mobility impaired users can explore more of the National Park. Many stiles create barriers to otherwise accessible paths, poorly hung gates and hard to operate latches also block progress along otherwise suitable routes.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan consultations have suggested that the following are of importance for users:

- Removal of barriers (stiles, poor gates, latches etc).
- Better information on route suitability.
- Maintenance.
- Information on accessible public transport.

There is existing specific provision for disabled people at a few sites within the National Park, but information on suitable public rights of way is limited and needs development. The Exmoor National Park Authority *Accessible Exmoor* publication (which lists accommodation, visitor attractions and walking routes suitable for people with disabilities) is currently being reviewed and will be re-published in partnership with user groups and will include information on accessible public transport. The National Park Authority also currently works with people with disabilities from a rambling group who have demonstrated that almost any surface is accessible to 'Tramper' type buggies (a commonly used rough terrain buggy) and only small changes are often needed to open up the network to all.

Action D4: The National Park Authority will adopt a formal policy to ensure that least restrictive path furniture is used when considering changes to the network and when existing furniture needs replacing. The priority should be gap, then gate, then stile if absolutely essential. Latches should also be easy to operate.

Action D5: The National Park Authority will only provide furniture that is the least restrictive option (whilst having due regard to the needs of livestock control). Where a gap or gate is considered adequate but a landowner requests a stile then only 25% contribution will be made by the National Park Authority. Where it is agreed that a stile is the only option then the National Park Authority will undertake all works.

Action PW4: The National Park Authority will work with county councils, parish councils and people with disabilities to progress the creation of all ability routes with an aim to improve and promote at least one per parish.

Action PW11: The National Park Authority will work with groups representing people with disabilities to produce route descriptions (gates/slopes etc) to enable people with disabilities to make their own choices as to what is suitable for their particular needs.

OTHER ISSUES

Maintenance

The public rights of way network within the National Park is managed and maintained by the National Park Authority under agency agreements with Devon and Somerset County Councils. A significant investment is made on signs, vegetation clearance and repairs to maintain a high quality network often above the statutory duty placed on a Highway Authority, e.g. where part of the costs should normally be met by landowners. Renewable resources are used including local timber from sustainably managed Exmoor woodlands. All maintenance is undertaken with due regard to nature conservation, heritage conservation and

landscape character issues (e.g. hedge cutting is undertaken outside of the bird nesting season) and advice is sought from National Park Authority officers before improvement work is undertaken.

Network surveys are undertaken each year by the Ranger Service team to identify maintenance that is required. A GIS survey system is being developed which will enable easier surveys and produce more useful information. The National Park Authority also relies heavily on public reports of damage/obstructions to the network.

The Ranger Service currently carries out general maintenance tasks and compiles maintenance programmes for drainage, paring and erosion. The majority of physical work is undertaken by the Field Services Team which carries out routine maintenance including:

- Furniture construction (gates/stiles/bridges) and instillation
- Surface repairs, improvements, drainage
- Production and installation of signage
- Erosion control
- Vegetation clearance

During particularly busy times of year outside contractors are employed to carry out large scale projects and some maintenance tasks including mechanical hedge trimming. Volunteer labour is currently used for certain maintenance and improvement tasks. This is co-ordinated by the Ranger Service and is a valuable additional resource which assists the National Park Authority in its work.

In order to meet the targets of the Best Value Recreation Management review the National Park Authority is aiming to develop closer working with Parish Councils in relation to monitoring and management of the rights of way network on a local scale.

Whilst the results of the rights of way improvement plan consultations highlighted maintenance as a concern of users, Exmoor's rights of way network has always been praised as being well maintained. However, informal communications and feedback from the public and user groups has suggested that the quality of the rights of way network within the Park has declined in recent years. This is of concern for the National Park Authority and a review of Recreation Management has recently been completed involving public opinion surveys on the condition of rights of way within the National Park. The results of the surveys will enable the National Park Authority to focus attention on the areas where work and improvements are needed.

A recent audit of the rights of way network within the Devon section of the National Park showed that 85% of the public rights of way were considered easy to use. 13% of the rights of way in the Devon section were surveyed. The target for the Devon County Council Public Service Agreement is to raise this to 90% by

2005. There are no data currently available for the Somerset side of the National Park but this will be available shortly.

Action D6: The National Park Authority will investigate and develop an Exmoor Parish Paths Partnership scheme.

Action D7: The National Park Authority will adopt a route classification scheme for maintenance purposes based on variables such as surface type, location and type of use.

Action O2: Where the level of use of a route is causing or has caused such damage that it cannot be repaired without heavily changing the character of the track and the surrounding area, Government guidance will be followed looking at voluntary and statutory restrictions on its use.

Action O3: When ground conditions are extremely wet and vulnerable to damage, restrictions on use may be used in line with Government guidance to prevent excessive damage being caused.

Exmoor Visitor Payback Scheme

The Exmoor Paths Partnership (EPP) was an innovative environmental scheme dedicated to reversing the effects of path erosion within Exmoor National Park. The 'Partnership' consisted of individuals and tourism businesses that donated directly or generated income via a range of voluntary contribution mechanisms. A small team of specialist path workers undertook a range of practical tasks to improve paths in keeping with the character of the local area. The team developed innovative methods to combat problems leading to erosion. These improvements were in addition to the regular maintenance programme to footpaths undertaken by the National Park Authority.

The EPP was set up in September 1997 as a three-year project. It was financed jointly from public and private sources. The key funders of the project were the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), under the auspices of the Objective 5b criteria, Exmoor National Park Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, The National Trust and English Nature. During the three year period of the project, over 225 kilometres of paths were improved, and over 80 businesses signed up to help raise funds or provide sponsorship. Over £15,000 has been generated from voluntary contributions towards this scheme and many businesses still collect funds to improve paths on Exmoor.

The project ended in 2001, but the principle of visitors, tourism businesses and others making a financial contribution to the improvement of the paths network (and to other ENPA projects) is still valid and the scheme is being re-launched

during 2005. Further information can be found at: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Action D8: The National Park Authority will re-launch and broaden the Visitor Payback Scheme.

Signing and Waymarking

The Highway Authority has a statutory duty to sign rights of way where they leave a metalled road and to place signs at points along a route where it considers it necessary to have a sign or way-mark to assist persons unfamiliar with the locality. Clear way-marking is vital to the enjoyment of the rights of way network and the minimisation of any conflicts between path users and landowners. Confident map users will not necessarily like or need way-marking in all locations, particularly open moorland, but for casual users it provides reassurance and assists with navigation.

Although Exmoor National Park Authority Management Plan policy P 13/5 states that way-marking will be carried out in accordance with government advice/guidance there is a need to clarify how this is practically applied to Exmoor's rights of way network.

Action D9: The National Park Authority will ensure way-marking is consistent throughout the National Park, using and improving upon best practice from the Devon County Council Public Service Agreement.

Changes to the network

Exmoor National Park Authority works closely with the County Councils and landowners when making changes to the network. Legal orders are made by the respective County Council but the initial stages of landowner liaison and consultations are undertaken by the National Park Authority.

Within the National Park there are some rights of way that change at parish/county boundaries from one classification to another, or simply stop. This causes confusion to users and landowners and often results in illegal use. There are also some routes which do not exactly follow the definitive line for various reasons including physical obstruction, seasonal water logging and other unsuitable conditions. Whilst this does not necessarily cause a problem for users it is of concern to the National Park Authority and landowners and needs to be addressed before informal agreements become legally binding.

Action D10: The National Park Authority will address problems where used routes are not on the definitive public right of way and remove obstructions.

Action O4: The National Park Authority will continue to seek dedication of permissive routes to public rights of way and new creations.

Social inclusion

National Park Authority members and officers sit on a 'task and finish' group, the purposes of which is to:

- Audit what the Authority undertakes to address the 'social inclusion' agenda.
- Identify what more could or should be done to ensure that programmes, activities, are 'inclusive', and
- To develop an action plan to address areas of exclusion

The National Park Authority considers that there are three main areas that need to be addressed to limit social exclusion to the rights of way network.

- 1. Physical:** barriers (stiles etc), surfaces, public transport, signing, specialist 'easy access' trails.
- 2. Information:** appropriate formats, languages, events and guided walks. Engage with under-represented groups.
- 3. Perceptual:** perceived need for specialist equipment, acceptance in a rural environment, lack of understanding.

Action PW5: The National Park Authority will develop partnership working with other interested organisations to address issues of social exclusion.

Tourism

A rough calculation, using the results of the 1994 National Parks Visitor Survey, updated by more recent survey information, indicates that annual gross expenditure on all types of tourism activities by visitors to Exmoor National Park was at least £20 million in 2004. Exmoor's economy is heavily dependent on tourism, which in turn is reliant to a great extent on a well maintained and easy to use public rights of way network. This was proven beyond reasonable doubt by the correlation between the closure of public rights of way due to the Foot and Mouth epidemic and the sharp fall in visitor numbers and income to the area. There is an increasing understanding of the symbiotic relationship between good environmental management and successful rural tourism. Exmoor's tourism industry relies heavily on a sensitively managed landscape that is accessible to the public.

Ways of maximising the benefit of Exmoor's bridleway network to tourism are being explored by Exmoor National Park Authority, working with the Visit Exmoor partnership. Exmoor's extensive bridleway network provides the local tourism

providers with a unique selling point which few, if any, rural tourism providers in other regions can compete with.

It is particularly important that the industry is targeted as many visitors leave decisions about 'what to do' until arrival at their destination. Information provided at this stage of the visitor experience can contribute to an overall 'satisfaction' feeling by the visitor, which can then lead to repeat visits.

Action PW9: The National Park Authority will develop partnership working with tourism organisations to look at improving information and physical links for visitors.

Public Information

Information regarding public rights of way is available from appropriate Ordnance Survey maps. However, not all users are competent map readers or use a map when visiting the countryside. Different users require different types of information. Competent users will create their own routes using a map but casual users often prefer leaflets and self guided circular routes. It is therefore important that the National Park Authority makes available different levels of information for all types of user, including information on how to access the National Park using public transport.

The National Park Authority produces a wide range of walking leaflets and guides and there are also many guides produced by others. The British Horse Society produces guides to riding on Exmoor. However, for cycling there is limited information available. At a local level, information is also important and the National Park Authority is planning to develop parish guides to publicise the local rights of way network in partnership with Parish Councils.

It is also important that users are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to rights of way and access land and are considerate to the needs of other users. Information in National Park Information Centres and on the internet helps deliver the message and the launch of the new Country Code and the new access rights will help reaffirm the message. The National Park Authority is also developing a public information and signage strategy in relation to the CRoW Act open access rights.

Action P3: The National Park Authority will make access information more readily available and easily accessible to all potential rights of way users. This will include the development of web based maps and guides and work with Parish Councils.

Action P4: The National Park Authority will continue to inform landowners and the public of their rights and responsibilities in relation to public rights of way.

Action P5: The National Park Authority will record and make publicly available, information regarding permitted routes.

Action P6: All future access information produced by the National Park Authority will provide information on car free transport options where available. This will include contact details of national transport information providers.

Nature Conservation

Public Rights of Way

In the majority of situations access on foot for quiet enjoyment along public rights of way does not pose problems for nature conservation. Where public rights of ways cross protected areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or other locally important areas where birds may be nesting the advice given below should be adopted.

Where maintenance is required within protected areas (SSSIs/SACs), the National Park Authority requires consent from English Nature where works that might have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area such as drainage are needed. No consent is required for works to the actual definitive line provided that they do not extend beyond the defined area except when importing materials into a SSSI. Outside protected areas the Conservation and Land Management Team of the National Park Authority should be consulted on any maintenance works which are likely to affect other sites of local importance such as County Wildlife Sites.

When considering creating new routes on protected sites, the National Park Authority has to consult with English Nature and obtain assent. Where new routes are required outside these areas the National Parks Authority will assess the potential environmental impact to determine the likely effects on sites such as County Wildlife Sites. If it is found that a new route would have a detrimental effect on the nature conservation value of the site then an alternative route will be sought.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act Access Land

English Nature has provided the National Park Authority with advice concerning nature conservation interests on protected sites that qualify as open access land. Under Section 26 of the CRow Act the National Park Authority will be able to close or restrict access to sites for nature conservation reasons. However, in most instances informal management techniques will be used before formal closures are necessary.

Action PW6: The National Park Authority will negotiate a memorandum of understanding with English Nature regarding maintenance of public rights of way which cross SSSIs.

Heritage Conservation & Landscape Character

Public Rights Of Way

The National Park Authority encourages access to the countryside which enables people to access the historic environment. Generally, the effects of rights of way on archaeological features are limited unless routes cross or abut sites. Where this is the case then the National Park Authority monitors sites to measure any detrimental effects.

When considering the creation of new routes the National Park Authority would not approve any that may have potential detrimental effects and advice would be sought from English Heritage when considering such schemes.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act Access Land

The National Park Authority is assessing the likely impact of open access on all heritage sites. Under Section 26 of the CRoW Act the NPA will be able to close or restrict access to sites for heritage conservation reasons if necessary. However, it is hoped that in most instances informal management techniques will remove the need for formal closures.

Landscape Character

Certain landscape types within Exmoor National Park are better suited to particular recreational activities than others. For example coniferous woodland is particularly good for absorbing large numbers of people and noisy activities. The landscape character of open moorland lends itself to recreational activities requiring peace and solitude. Consideration will be given to the landscape character suitability when assessing proposals for increased public access, promotion of recreational activities and large recreational events.

Contingency Planning

The rights of way closures implemented during the 2001 foot and mouth disease outbreak led to a substantial decline in visitor numbers to Exmoor. Businesses that depend on visitors for their income suffered financially and the importance of the rights of way network and access to the countryside to the local economy was highlighted. It is important that Exmoor National Park Authority deals with any future bio-security hazards that may arise with a measured and reasonable reaction, ensuring proper bio-security is achieved without unnecessary recreational and economic loss.

Action PW7: The National Park Authority will look at formally adopting a contingency planning policy in line with neighbouring authorities.

Planning

It is very unlikely that large scale development will be permitted within the National Park. Generally, small scale or more usually conversions or adaptations of existing structures are more acceptable. One of the objectives of Local Development Framework policies is to help ensure that existing public rights of way are not adversely affected by development proposals. The National Park Authority will require proposals to take account of rights of way including arrangements for an acceptable diversion or alternatives where necessary. New developments should also take account of the needs of cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.

Action D11: The National Park Authority will ensure its policy on public transport, cycling, horse riding and walking will include enhancement of and links to the existing rights of way network when considering applications for new developments.

Action D12: The National Park Authority will, when revising the Local Development Framework, include open access land in policy to protect the interest of users.

Landowners/Managers

Landowners and land managers play a vital role in the management and maintenance of the rights of way network. Public rights of way can cause inconveniences with land management processes and close working with the land managing community is essential.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan Consultations have suggested that the following are of importance for landowners and users:

- Better education of both public and landowners needed to minimise conflict

Action P5: The National Park Authority will continue to inform Landowners and the public of their rights and responsibilities in relation to public rights of way.

Action PW8: The National Park Authority will work with landowners to look at ways of integrating public access benefits with environmental benefits and help facilitate access funding through DEFRA environmental schemes.

Action PW10: The National Park Authority will work with landowners to attain funding for priority routes on their land.

SUMMARY OF ACTION FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Research:

Action	Resources Required	Department	Completion
R1. The National Park Authority will undertake future research to gain further information on the specific needs of users on Exmoor for the first rights of way improvement plan review.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	Ongoing
R2. The National Park Authority will undertake further research with local carriage driving groups to ascertain local need for future provision of suitable routes and physical requirements.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	2005/06
R3. The National Park Authority will undertake an audit of existing public transport services and work with Devon and Somerset County Councils to see how these can be improved.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	2006/07

Development/Improvements:

Action	Resources Required	Department	Completion
D1. The National Park Authority will work with landowners to dedicate as definitive public rights of way those sections of the South West Coast Path which are not public rights of way at present	Officer time	Rangers Solicitor	Ongoing
D2. The National Park Authority will produce an annual action plan to implement improvements.	Officer time.	Rangers Recreation & Tourism	April annually
D3. When considering suggestions for the creation of new routes, priority will generally be given to multi-user routes where these are	Officer time	Rangers Recreation & Tourism Highway	Ongoing

appropriate – i.e. creation of restricted byways or bridleways and routes suitable for those with restricted mobility.		Authority	
D4. The National Park Authority will adopt a formal policy to ensure that least restrictive path furniture is used when considering changes to the network and when existing furniture needs replacing. The priority should be gap, then gate then stile if absolutely essential. Latches should also be easy to operate.	Officer time Furniture costs	Rangers	2005/06
D5. The National Park Authority will only provide furniture that is the least restrictive option (whilst having due regard to the needs of livestock control). Where a gap or gate is considered adequate but a landowner requests a stile then only 25% contribution will be made by the National Park Authority. Where it is agreed that a stile is only option then the National Park Authority will undertake all works.	Officer time Furniture costs	Rangers	2005 onwards
D6. The National Park Authority will investigate and develop an Exmoor Parish Paths Partnership scheme.	Officer time Development costs	Rangers Recreation & Tourism	2004/05/06
D7. The National Park Authority will adopt a route classification scheme for maintenance purposes based on variables such as surface type location and type of use.	Officer time	Rangers Field Services	2005/06
D8. The National Park Authority will re-launch and broaden the Visitor Payback Scheme.	Officer time Development costs	Recreation & Tourism	2005/06
D9. The National Park Authority will ensure that waymarking is consistent throughout the National Park using best practice from Devon County Council Public Service Agreement.	Officer time Physical costs	Rangers Field Services	Ongoing
D10. The National Park Authority will address problems where used routes are not on the definitive public right of way and remove	Officer time Legal costs Physical costs	Rangers	2005/06

obstructions.			
D11. The National Park Authority will ensure its policy on public transport, cycling, horse riding and walking will include enhancement of and links to the existing rights of way network when considering applications for new developments.	Officer time	Planning	Ongoing
D12. The National Park Authority will, when revising the Local Development Framework, include open access land in policy to protect the interest of users.	Officer time	Planning	Included in adopted version by 2010
D13. The National Park Authority will seek to encourage formal areas where motorised recreation can be managed on private land by landowners. There is the potential for private landowners to make a business catering for 4x4s and motorcycles on suitable land, removing pressure from more sensitive areas.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	2005/06

Partnership Working:

Action	Resources Required	Department	Completion
PW1. The National Park Authority will work with Parish Councils to promote circular routes around settlements and improve accessibility.	Officer time	Rangers Recreation & Tourism	2005/06
PW2. The National Park Authority will work with accommodation providers to create 'cyclist-friendly' accommodation.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	2005/06
PW3. The National Park Authority will encourage the development of one or more sites on Exmoor suitable for the sectors of off-tarmac cycling which cause real conflict.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	2004/05/06
PW4. The National Park Authority will work with County Councils, Parish Councils and people with disabilities to progress the creation of all ability routes with an aim to improve and	Officer time physical costs publication costs	Rangers Recreation & Tourism	2005/06

promote at least one per parish.			
PW5. The National Park Authority will develop partnership working with other interested organisations to address issues of social exclusion.	Officer time	Education & Interpretation	Ongoing
PW6. The National Park Authority will negotiate a memorandum of understanding with English Nature regarding maintenance of public rights of way which cross SSSIs.	Officer time	Countryside & Land Management Rangers	2005/06
PW7. The National Park Authority will look at formally adopting a contingency planning policy in line with neighbouring authorities.	Officer time	Management Team	2005/06
PW8. The National Park Authority will work with landowners to look at ways of integrating public access benefits with environmental benefits and help facilitate access funding through Defra environmental schemes.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism Countryside & Land management	Ongoing
PW9. The National Park Authority will develop partnership working with tourism organisations to look at improving information and physical links for visitors.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism	2004 onwards
PW10. The National Park Authority will work with landowners to attain funding for priority routes on their land.	Officer time	Recreation & Tourism Countryside & Land Management	2004 onwards
PW11. The National Park Authority will work with groups representing people with disabilities to produce route descriptions (gates/slopes etc) to enable people with disabilities to make their own choices as to what is suitable for their particular needs.	Officer time Publication costs	Recreation & Tourism Rangers Education & Interpretation	2006/07 onwards

Ongoing Action:

Action	Resources Required	Department
O1. The National Park Authority will seek opportunities to route the Coast Path as close to the coast as possible, whilst ensuring it is safe for all to use. Where erosion necessitates a diversion,	Officer time	Rangers

signing and information in accordance with national trail standards, will ensure that it is easy to follow.		
O2. Where the level of use of a route is causing or has caused such damage that it cannot be repaired without heavily changing the character of the track and the surrounding area, Government guidance will be followed looking at voluntary and statutory restrictions on its use.	Physical works costs Multi agency User groups	Rangers Recreation &Tourism
O3. When ground conditions are extremely wet and vulnerable to damage, restrictions on use may be used in line with Government guidance to prevent excessive damage being caused.	Physical works costs Multi agency User groups	Rangers Recreation &Tourism
O4. The National Park Authority will continue to seek dedication of permitted routes to public rights of way and new creations.	Officer time Legal costs	Rangers

Public Information:

Action	Resources Required	Department	Completion
P1. The National Park Authority will work with users to produce a graded cycle map of Exmoor allowing users to choose their own routes.	Officer time Volunteers Publication costs	Recreation &Tourism	2006/07
P2. Education should continue to be targeted at users and others as to what rights for mechanically propelled vehicles exist. Signing sites where illegal use is occurring should be followed up by prosecution of persistent illegal users by the Police.	Officer time	Recreation &Tourism Education & Interpretation	Ongoing
P3. The National Park Authority will make access information more readily available and easily accessible to all potential rights of way users. This will include the development of web based maps and guides and work with Parish Councils.	Officer time Publication costs	Rangers Education & Interpretation Recreation &Tourism	2004 onwards
P4. The National Park Authority will continue to inform Landowners and the public of their rights and responsibilities in relation to public rights of way.	Officer time Publication costs	Education & Interpretation Rangers	Ongoing
P5. The National Park Authority will record and make publicly available,	Officer time Publication	Rangers Education &	2005/06

information regarding permitted routes.	costs	Interpretation Recreation & Tourism	
P6. All future access information produced by the National Park Authority will provide information on car free transport options where available. This will include contact details of national transport information providers.	Officer time Publication Costs	Education & Interpretation	May 2005 Onwards

10.10 ANNEX 1

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES ON RIGHTS OF WAY MANAGEMENT 2000/01 & 2004

Q: How good are path surfaces in the National Park? (% responses)

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know	No response
2000/01	2.5	17.3	77.7	1.2	1.2
2004	3	21.2	84.7	0	0

Q: How good is the way-marking of paths?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know	No response
2000/01	6.2	25.9	65.4	2.5	0
2004	9	15.5	76.1	0	0

Q: Is the standard of paths better or worse than 3 years ago? (% responses)

Year	Better	Worse	The same	Don't know	No response	Better/the same
2000/01	13.0	13.0	60.9	13.0	0	73.9
2004	14.8	25.9	51.8	7.4	0	66.6

Q: How do Councils rate the current condition of paths?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know	No response
2000/01	27.2	63.6	4.5	4.5	0
2004	26.9	50	23	0	0

Q: How do Councils rate path signing?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know	No response
2000/01	4.2	33.3	58.3	4.2	0
2004	11.1	25.9	62.9	0	0

Q: How do Councils rate the Authority's speed of response to path maintenance problems?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know	No response
2000/01	4.3	26.1	56.4	13.0	0
2004	3.7	44.4	33.3	18.5	0

Q: How do Councils rate the quality of the Authority's response (work carried out)?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know	No response
2000/01	4.3	8.7	60.9	17.4	8.7
2004	3.7	25.9	51.8	18.5	

Q: Paths open for access. Is the situation better or worse then 3 years ago?

Year	Better	Worse	The same	Don't know	No response	Better/the same
2000/01	75	0	25	0	0	100
2004	27.7	0	63.6	9	0	91.3

Q: How good are all path surfaces generally?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know
2000/01	0	40	50	10
2004	11.3	53.7	26.3	8.5

Q: How good is path signing generally?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know
2000/01	0	10	80	10
2004	7.8	27.7	36.8	27.7

Q: Is the standard of path maintenance better, the same or worse than 3 years ago?

Year	Better	Worse	The same	Don't know	Better/the same
2000/01	60	0	20	20	80
2004	11.8	0	58.5	29.5	70.3

Q: Is the standard of signing better, the same or worse than 3 years ago?

Year	Better	Worse	The same	Don't know	No response	Better/the same
2000/01	20	0	50	20	10	70
2004	35.3	0	43.9	20.7	0	79.2

Q: How good is the speed of response by the Authority to a request for action?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know
2000/01	0	50	50	0
2004	0	30	20	50

Q: How good is the quality of the response?

Year	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know
2000/01	0	25	75	0
2004	0	20	30	50

Consultation with the Public on information about walking on open land

Q: Is there enough information about opportunities for walking?

2000/01	Yes (% respondents)	No (% respondents)	Don't know/no response
Footpaths	95	3	2
Open land	50	28	22

2004	Yes (% respondents)	No (% respondents)	Don't know/no response
Footpaths	87.5	3.1	9.2
Open land	67.7	16.1	16.1

Q: What is the quality of information on opportunities for walking?

2000/01	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know
Footpaths	3	16	76	5
Open land	9	14	36	40

2004	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Don't know
Footpaths	0	18.1	73	9
Open land	12.4	21.9	50	15.6