

# Notice of Meeting

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## **Greener Select Committee**

**Tuesday, 14th December, 2010 at 6.30 pm**

**in Committee Room 1 Council Offices  
Market Street Newbury**

Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday, 6 December 2010

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact David Cook on (01635) 519475

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Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)



**To:** Councillors Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Roger Hunneman, Tim Metcalfe, Tony Vickers (Vice-Chairman) and Emma Webster (Chairman)

**Substitutes:** Councillors Paul Bryant, Manohar Gopal, Owen Jeffery and Alan Macro

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# Agenda

<b>Part I</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1. <b>Apologies</b> To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	
2. <b>Minutes</b> To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 7 September 2010.	1 - 4
3. <b>Declarations of Interest</b> To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members.	
4. <b>Waste Management</b>  <i>Purpose: For members to ask questions relating to waste management and fly tipping.</i>	Verbal Report
5. <b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan</b> <i>Purpose: To present the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and its Action Plan to the committee for consideration.</i>	5 - 94
6. <b>Renewable Energy in West Berkshire</b> <i>Purpose: This report is in response to two separate but related Council motions, dated March and September 2010, concerning renewable energy within West Berkshire and West Berkshire Council.</i>	95 - 112
7. <b>Work Programme</b>  <i>Purpose: To suggest items to be included on the work programme.</i>	Verbal Report

Andy Day  
Head of Policy and Communication

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

**Agenda - Greener Select Committee to be held on Tuesday, 14 December 2010** *(continued)*

If you require this information in a different format, such as audio tape, or in another language, please ask an English speaker to contact Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045, who will be able to help.



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Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

**GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**Councillors Present:** Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Tim Metcalfe, Tony Vickers (Vice-Chairman) and Emma Webster (Chairman)

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment) and Andrew Deacon (Waste Manager), David Cook and Martha Vickers

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Roger Hunneman

**PART I**

**11. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**12. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**13. Use of Local Resources - Local Food**

Representatives from Newbury Town Council attended the meeting to inform the Greener Select Committee's review into local food production by providing information on allotments.

Members were informed that Newbury Town Council was undertaking a project called Sustainable Newbury that contained elements looking at local food production. As well as this project the Town Council also ran a number of allotments.

The Town Council had produced an allotment strategy and were committed to promoting healthy living through the development and management of six allotment sites in Newbury. The Town Council worked to improve the allotment sites and their management.

Members were informed that there used to be a large waiting list for allotments but this had dropped over the past few months, although the waiting list had begun to rise again. There were two main factors that could have been the cause of the fall in the waiting list: a number of the allotment plots had been reduced in size that resulted in more plots being available and there had been an increase in the cost of renting a plot.

The Town Council felt that allotment owners got good value for money from the rent and there had recently been improvements to the security of sites. The recent increase in the rent had not prevented people getting an allotment and although payments could be spread over a year most people paid their annual rent in full in one go.

As well as renting allotments to residents the Town Council also worked with local schools, people with mental health conditions and people on drug rehabilitation courses. Members were also informed how the South Newbury Allotments Tenants Association was the largest in the area and worked together to bulk-buy materials and share produce. Newbury Town Council had also established the Growing in the Community initiative to alleviate concern that some of the allotments were becoming run down. The initiative allowed local tenant associations to take over the management and maintenance of

## GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 - MINUTES

allotments if it was felt that the Town Council was not meeting its obligations; to date no association had taken up this offer.

Members were informed that not all surrounding parish councils had allotments and thus some allotment tenants come from outside the ward area. Members felt that other town and parish councils should be encouraged to introduce allotments. It was acknowledged that the cost in purchasing land was a hindrance.

As the produce from allotments could not be sold tenants usually traded excess produce or gave food away.

Whilst discussing the presentation the following points were raised:

- The current waiting list had 73 people from within the parish and about 98 people including people from outside the parish. It was acknowledged that there might be a number of people on both lists.
- Some people had more than one plot and that over the six sites there were 560 plots.
- The Town Council helped people make better use of their allotments and if a tenant was finding it difficult to manage a full plot other tenants would either help or the site may be split into a number of smaller plots.
- Sustainable Newbury was a mixture of people who were interested in sustainability. They organised a competition on how to be more sustainable; the winner suggested planting fruit trees on public land to be harvested by the community. The Town Council were considering a pilot in Victoria Park.
- Members asked if it was known how many allotments there were in West Berkshire. It was suggested that the 2001 census might contain this information or parish / town councils might know.
- Historically houses had large gardens to allow residents to grow their own food.
- It was suggested that Newbury Town Council could look at having a charitable stall at the market where people could donate surplus produce to be sold with the proceeds going to local charities. It was noted that current market stall holders would need to be consulted and a side benefit might be that it attracted more customers to the market.
- It was recommended that West Berkshire Council should produce guidance for parish / town councils on how to introduce allotments.
- It was recommended that a District Parish Conference should discuss sustainability which would also include a discussion on allotments.
- It was noted that if 6 people petitioned for an allotment the local council would have to provide one.

Members considered the draft findings of the review into local food and recommended that the report progress to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee with the addition of the recommendations from the presentation on allotments being added.

## **GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 - MINUTES**

John Ashworth informed that following the Greener Select Committees meeting with Kelvin Hughes, West Berkshire Local Strategic Partnership Greener Sub-Committee Chair, it had been recommended that the cost of the local food base survey be scaled back to a more affordable option with the funding coming from West Berkshire Council and the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

**RESOLVED** that the draft recommendations be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

### **14. Waste Collection and Fly Tipping**

Andrew Deacon, Waste Manager, attended the meeting to update Members on statistics regarding assisted collections, wheeled recycling boxes and fly tipping.

Members were informed that the Council provided an assisted collection service. There were approximately 64,000 weekly waste collections and approximately 32,000 fortnightly green waste collections and approximately 32,000 fortnightly recyclable waste collections.

At the start of the new waste contract in 2008 there were about 641 assisted collections; in January 2010 this had increased to about 888.

Members were informed that the majority of people who had assisted waste collection had contacted streetcare enquiring about help. The service was there to help residents who were unable to get their recycling boxes to the street for collection.

With regards to wheeled boxes for recycling containers Members were informed that a number of different types of wheeled containers were available to assist residents in placing waste containers at the curb side for collection. The Council had highlighted a particular type of wheeled box through its waste newsletter; so far the supplier had sold 30 units. Through a future waste news letter further boxes would be highlighted.

Members were also shown a graph highlighting the level of fly tipping since the start of the integrated waste management contract. The graph highlighted the amount of fly tipping and the number of incidents that were collected by Veolia under the contract. Not all incidents of fly tipping were collected as they might have occurred on private land, in these instances the owner would be contacted and advised on the best course of action.

The committee were informed that if private data was found in material fly tipped then action would be taken against those concerned. In certain instances the Environment Agency would be called in to take action and prosecute offenders. Members were informed that incidents had occurred where households had hired house clearing companies who had then flytipped belongings, when evidence was available legal action would be undertaken.

Members questioned how many households put out the green recycling bins and what percentage used the green recycling boxes. Andrew Deacon said he would see if it was possible to produce more detailed recycling statistics.

Concern was raised about landowners having to be responsible for removing waste that had been dumped on their land. Members also discussed how in the USA local authorities were more proactive when the owner of land could not be identified and legal action was undertaken to acquire and sell the land.

### **15. Work Programme**

Members noted the Greener Select Committee's work programme.

**GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 - MINUTES**

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....



# Agenda Item 5.

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Greener Select Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	14 December 2010
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	N/A

**Purpose of Report:** To present the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and its Action Plan to the committee for consideration

**Recommended Action:** To consider the content and implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and make any appropriate recommendations

**Reason for decision to be taken:** The ROWIP has so far not been subject to scrutiny

**Other options considered:** None appropriate because the ROWIP is a statutory document

**Key background documentation:** West Berkshire Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2010 - 2020  
'The Economic and Social Value of Walking in England'. An independent report produced for the Ramblers' Association by Dr Mike Christie and Jon Matthews, 2003.

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priority(ies):

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic downturn** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce crime and the fear of crime**

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**
- CPT12 - Including Everyone**

- CPT13 - Value for Money**
- CPT14 - Effective People**
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First**
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:

encouraging non-car transport use; increasing physical exercise; improving road safety; boosting the rural economy; facilitating appreciation of the countryside; improving physical and mental wellbeing. All achieved through a strategic monitored plan for improvements to the access network.

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Hilary Cole - Tel (01635) 248542
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	hcole@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	2/12/10

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Elaine Cox
<b>Job Title:</b>	Senior Rights of Way Officer
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519069
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	elcox@westberks.gov.uk

## Implications

- Policy:** The policy proposals contribute directly to a number of corporate policies, especially those relating to quality of life, health, equalities and transportation. The ROWIP contains full references to these linkages.
- Financial:** The implications of all the ROWIP objectives are intended to be accommodated within existing budgets, plus external funding where applications for such funding are successful.
- Personnel:** The ROWIP affects personnel primarily of the Rights of Way Team in the Countryside section. There will be some indirect effects on staff of other departments, in line with the links to wider corporate aspirations.
- Legal/Procurement:** There will be some effects on legal staff, but an additional work load is not anticipated.
- Property:** There are implications only where specific improvement proposals affect Council-owned land.
- Risk Management:** A level of risk is indicated for each policy proposal in the draft ROWIP
- Equalities Impact Assessment:** EIA Stage 1 appended. EIA Stage 2 not required.

**NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.**

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# Executive Summary

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Public rights of way comprise 48% of the District Council's highway network. These footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic each possess different rights of access, but between them provide for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles.
- 1.2 The 700 mile network provides links between villages; access to the countryside from towns; car-free transportation links between facilities; safe non-road routes; and a rich means for locals and tourists to appreciate the AONB and other local countryside from a perspective other than roads.
- 1.3 All these uses contribute to reducing carbon emissions; improving people's physical and mental health through fresh air and exercise; and improving road safety through removing non-motorized users from roads. They contribute significantly to the health of the rural economy.
- 1.4 Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) are important means by which local authorities will identify the changes to be made, in respect of management and improvement, to their rights of way networks in order to meet the Government's aim of better provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with restricted mobility.
- 1.5 The assessment should include access in a broad sense, by considering the rights of way legal Definitive Map in conjunction with the wider highway network; for instance roads, cycle tracks, permitted routes, open access land and other land with permitted access and habitually-used routes.

## 2. Proposals

- 2.1 Following a wide consultation, several main themes emerged where improvements were needed, including a need for better maintenance and promotional publicity; encouragement of responsible behaviour; more links on the ground; and improved accessibility for all users.
- 2.2 The Action Plan forms the heart of the ROWIP, and includes statutory elements, so that it forms one single strategy for the future. It includes objectives for improvement work under the main themes.

## 3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Proposals for implementing the Action Plan using existing staff and funding resources are summarized

# Executive Report

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Public rights of way comprise 48% of the District Council's highway network. These footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic each possess different rights of access, but between them provide for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles.
- 1.2 Public rights of way are bound by the same laws which govern roads, but the ROW network serves many and varied functions.

## 2. The use and value of rights of way

- 2.1 The 700 mile network provides links between villages; access to the countryside from towns; car-free transportation links between facilities; safe non-road routes; and a rich means for locals and tourists to appreciate the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and other local countryside, from a perspective other than roads.
- 2.2 All these uses contribute to reducing carbon emissions; improving people's physical and mental health through fresh air and exercise; and improving road safety through removing non-motorized users from roads.
- 2.3 Use of rights of way is hugely beneficial to the rural economy, e.g. through use of B&B, local shops, pubs/cafes etc. In 2003, the Ramblers' Association study 'The Economic and Social Value of Walking in England' found that the 527 million estimated annual walking trips to the English countryside generated in the region of £2 billion and supported 210,000 full-time jobs. It also found that the total benefits from walking are in excess of the costs of restoration and maintenance of rights of way. The British Equestrian Trade Association 2005/6 national equestrian survey found that there are 1.3 million horses in Britain, owned and cared for by 1.2% of the population. The average annual expenditure per privately-owned horse is £2166.

## 3. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (Appendix B)

- 3.1 West Berkshire District Council, as highway authority, has a statutory duty to maintain its public rights of way in a suitable condition for the public use which is made of them. In 2000, the third National Rights of Way Condition Survey, undertaken by the Countryside Agency, indicated that no highway authority in England had met the target for all rights of way to be properly maintained by the year 2000.
- 3.2 Nevertheless, the Government aimed to achieve an improvement in defining, maintaining and publicizing the rights of way network. A statutory duty was introduced by section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, for each highway authority to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 3.3 Rights of Way Improvement Plans are important means by which local authorities will identify the changes to be made, in respect of management and improvement, to their rights of way networks in order to meet the Government's aim of better

provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with restricted mobility. In producing the Improvement Plan, the District Council is required to do the following:

- Assess the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
  - Assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way (and in particular by footpaths, cycle-tracks, bridleways and restricted byways), for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation, and the enjoyment of its area.
  - Assess the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially-sighted people, and others with mobility problems.
- 3.4 The assessment should include access in a broad sense, by considering the Definitive Map in conjunction with the wider highway network; for instance roads, cycle tracks, permitted routes, open access land and other land with permitted access and habitually-used routes.
- 3.5 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan must also include a statement of the action the District Council proposes to take to improve the network of rights of way and its management, having particular regard to the items listed above. Once the Improvement Plan has been published, the Council is required to review and, if necessary, amend and republish the plan at intervals of not more than ten years.
- 3.6 The Government has now stipulated that the ROWIP must form part of the new LTP.

#### **4. Consultations for the ROWIP**

- 4.1 Until the year 2000, local authorities had generally concentrated on their statutory duties to maintain rights of way, and also promoted them through publicized material. The ROWIP was an opportunity to take stock and to ask people what they wanted from the access network.
- 4.2 The consultations which were made are detailed at Appendix A. The Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum formed working groups to comment on various aspects of the document, and commented formally on the consultation draft. The comments were largely incorporated, and the ROWIP has been generally well received by them.
- 4.3 The random telephone survey of 800 households revealed that 70 per cent of West Berkshire households visit the access network each year, and 20 per cent visit daily. Around one third of visits included children, illustrating the popularity of the network with families. The survey revealed that people use the network for many and varied reasons. To go for walks is the most popular reason, particularly short walks of up to two hours. Other popular reasons include to observe wildlife, enjoy views, take picnics, walk the dog, ride and exercise horses, cycle, occupy the children, visit a pub or tea room, or access facilities by avoiding roads. Mention was made of the opportunity to pursue other hobbies and interests, e.g. history, natural history, photography, etc.

4.4 People particularly value the opportunity for exercise, fresh air and relaxation, and the scenery and peace and quiet offered by an interesting and varied access network. People enjoy the opportunity to be close to nature. Many also commented that they liked the fact that the routes were signposted and maintained, easy to get to, and close to home.

## **5. The ROWIP Action Plan**

5.1 The Action Plan forms the heart of the ROWIP, and includes statutory elements, so that it forms one single strategy for the future. The main themes for improvement work which emerged from the whole consultation formed the general headings for a list of Action Plan objectives. These themes are:

- A well-maintained access network
- A legally recorded public rights of way network
- An environmentally-sustainable access network
- Providing information / promoting the use of the access network
- Education / encouragement of responsible behaviour
- Development of new and improved access
- Physical improvements to the access network
- Improving accessibility for all users
- Working with partners
- Monitoring and continued consultation
- Funding
- Improving working practices and customer care

5.2 A summary of how the ROWIP Action Plan would contribute to Corporate objectives is at Appendix 4 of the ROWIP document itself.

5.3 The Action Plan is a strategic document, as the statute requires. As part of the consultation, however, people also made many site-specific requests for new or improved access.

## **6. Implementing the Action Plan**

6.1 The present rights of way staff resource is largely engaged in meeting statutory duties, but the ROWIP is a whole council document, and there are big opportunities for departments and teams to work together more effectively to deliver improvements.

6.2 For instance, improving rights of way for cycle use is already being discussed with the transport planners via the Cycle Forum. Regular vegetation cutting and litter clearance is undertaken by clients from the Phoenix Centre under the banner of

ROAR. Involvement with the LTP, LDF, and planning applications delivers improvements to the network via the planning process. The Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum is a statutory body which advises the District Council on access matters. Its recent consultation response to LTP3 is at Appendix C.

- 6.3 The lead in progressing the Action Plan will inevitably stay with the Rights of Way team, the authors of the ROWIP, but there are insufficient staff resources for the rights of way officers to make significant progress on delivery of the requests for site-specific new and improved access.
- 6.4 These site-specific requests have been transferred to a digitally-based map as a clearly-defined layer, to be available on the District Council's web site, and already available to all rights of way staff to refer to on a daily basis.
- 6.5 Many of the broad objectives in the Action Plan cannot be implemented without such site-specific works taking place on the ground, and so, where resources permit, the District Council will aim to implement the site-specific improvement requests where they are consistent with the broad objectives of the Action Plan. For instance, the site-specific improvement list might be used as starting point for planning an improved and promoted equestrian route. Reference will also continually be made to the site-specific improvement list during the day-to-day work of the Council, and opportunities to implement requests be taken wherever possible. The site-specific improvement requests may be implemented through a variety of means. The most likely will be through planning agreements; permitted path agreements with landowners; or through agri-environment schemes.
- 6.6 An important opportunity to assist in delivery is via parish plans. Such plans are drawn up with a mandate from the local community, and several relevant themes have emerged from parish plans to date:
- Improve cycleways and footpaths.
  - Protect and preserve the countryside.
  - Promote areas of historic and local interest to improve the economy.
  - Increase and improve information for the community through web sites, newsletters, booklets etc.
- 6.7 There is a great opportunity to encourage parish councils to use a greater range of their powers, e.g. they may create and maintain rights of way, and take action against illegal interferences.
- 6.8 Work has begun in assisting Chieveley to implement the access improvement elements of its parish plan, facilitated and aided by the New Access and Maintenance Working Group of the Local countryside Access Forum. A member of this working group is intending to attend the committee meeting. One important theme of this work is to try to create safe links where non-motorized users are at present compelled to use roads to link between off-road highway networks.
- 6.9 At present, the Rights of Way Team comprises 3.7 revenue staff, technical support, one Capital Projects Officer and a team of three site-based Rangers. The revenue



works budget of £36k, and this must be reserved for statutory work such as surface maintenance, tree clearances, etc. Any improvement work is presently dependent on the Capital budget of £183k.

- 6.10 A priority is presently being given to seeking external funding. There are several promising areas which could yield capital funds for improvements, including S.106 contributions, aggregates and landfill schemes, LEADER funds and AONB grants.
- 6.11 Appendix D is a copy of the Action Plan objectives which has been annotated to show recent progress.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix A - Consultations

Appendix B – West Berkshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2010 – 2020 (with its own appendices 1 to 4)

Appendix C - LTP response by Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum

Appendix D – Progress on Action Plan objectives

## **Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** Janice Bridger and Tony Vickers, Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum

**Officers Consulted:** Paul Hendry; Jon Thomas; Sallie Jennings; Stuart Higgins

**Trade Union:** Rosemary Culmer

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **A significant public consultation exercise took place, with the details listed below:**

A public consultation between summer 2005 and early 2006, involving a press release and targeted letters, including to all parish councils and neighbouring highway authorities. The consultation was replicated also on the West Berkshire Council web site.

District Council countryside staff manned 'consultation' stands at the Thatcham Rural Craft Day and Royal County of Berkshire Show, both in 2005.

A separate request for responses was sent to each parish council, to coincide with their parish plan processes.

The Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum (covering Reading and Wokingham Boroughs and West Berkshire District) worked on recommendations for improvements to access for those with restricted mobility; antisocial behaviour; and education of users/ the services provided by the three district councils. The Local Access Forum hosted a series of workshops involving main rights of way interest groups, addressing the interests of walkers, cyclists, equestrians, carriage drivers, recreational vehicle users, users with restricted mobility, and landowners.

Parish councils and major landowners were asked for their suggestions for suitable locations for the replacement of stiles with gaps or gates. Parish councils have been asked to suggest suitable locations for rights of way signposts showing destinations and distances.

West Berkshire Council's Environment and Public Protection Select Committee undertook, in 2005/06, a scrutiny exercise of rights of way, and the Council's Executive approved the recommendations in January 2006.

In 2005, Tourism South-East was commissioned to undertake a site survey of users of the District Council's countryside sites. It was also asked to undertake a random telephone survey of 802 households in West Berkshire and Reading, to request information on usage and reasons for non-usage of countryside sites and the wider rights of way network. A literature review of existing surveys accompanied this exercise, to complete a picture of usage and perceptions as at 2005.

Consultees on the first draft of the Improvement Plan were as follows: relevant internal West Berkshire Council departments; the Safer, Stronger and Sustainable Communities Committee; Natural England; all parish councils; neighbouring local authorities; the Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum; The Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Countryside Project; the West Berkshire Liaison Group on Disability; the Environment Agency; British Waterways; the Open Spaces Society; major landowners; access network user groups and a number of other interested individuals and parties.

The consultation was advertised on West Berkshire Council's web site and in the local newspaper.

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## **RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2010 - 2020**

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**WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL**

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1. Overview
2. Vision
3. West Berkshire's approach to creating its Rights of Way Improvement Plan
4. Themes for improvement
5. Objectives and Action Plan
6. Specific improvement projects
7. Funding and resources
8. Measurement and management of performance
9. Monitoring and sustainability

Appendix 1	Assessment of need
Appendix 2	Work carried out to date
Appendix 3	Statutory duties and powers
Appendix 4	Policy context

## 1. Overview

**“Local rights of way are both a significant part of our heritage and a major recreational resource”.** (DEFRA 2002).

- 1.1 West Berkshire possesses a rich network of linear routes and areas of land, away from roads, which are available for use by the public. This document refers to these collectively as the ‘access network’. This Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets out the District Council’s aims to improve the access network for the enjoyment of all its users.
- 1.2 The access network comprises ‘Definitive’ public rights of way; cycle tracks; routes permitted for use by landowners; informal routes used by the public; and land open for public access. Some remote rural roads are also similar in character to these other forms of linear access.

This Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets out the District Council’s aims to improve the access network for the enjoyment of all its users.

### **The value of the access network**

- 1.3 An improved and promoted network of public rights of way and other access routes carries benefits to quality of life at many levels:
- Use of rights of way as alternatives to transport by car improves air quality and road safety, reduces emissions, and eases congestion.
  - The access network offers a huge opportunity for people to enhance their quality of life in other ways, for instance, by taking exercise in a pleasant and traffic-free environment, and by using the rural network to observe the natural environment and other features of interest.
  - The access network is an important local amenity, especially in rural areas, where other facilities might be limited.
  - The access network offers opportunities for learning about wildlife, conservation and the workings of the countryside. Such opportunities attract local and rural income from visitors to an area such as West Berkshire, the majority of which comprises an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. That same network of ‘green lanes’ has the potential to be better managed, so as to increase its value for biodiversity.
  - Travelling through communities other than by private car increases people’s appreciation of their local area, and benefits social cohesion.
  - Finally, there are the unquantifiable but fundamental benefits to mental and spiritual renewal and relaxation.

### **The access network in West Berkshire**

- 1.4 Public rights of way are recorded in legal documents called the Definitive Map and Statement. They are all highways, for the purpose of 'passing and re-passing', only.
- 1.5 **There are 1183 km (735 miles) of public rights of way in West Berkshire, compared to a Council road network of 1272 km (790 miles). Public rights of way are made up of the following:**
- **61% public footpaths**, over which the right of way is on foot only.
  - **17% public bridleways**, for use by the public on foot, bicycle and on horseback or leading a horse.
  - **8% restricted byways**, used as for bridleways but with the addition of non mechanically-propelled vehicles, thereby giving a right of access for horse-drawn carriages.
  - **14% byways open to all traffic**, for use by all the above plus vehicular traffic, with the *main* use being by walkers and horse-riders. Vehicles must be taxed and insured, in the same way as for roads.
- 1.6 The Cycle Tracks Act 1984 allows new cycle tracks to be created, and Definitive footpaths to be converted to cycle tracks. Cycle tracks created in this way are highways but are not recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement. Cyclists may be required to share with other users.
- 1.7 Landowners sometimes allow the public to access their land, or linear access routes across their land. Such 'permissive access' may be formalized in an agreement, entitling the owner to Government Stewardship grants. Landowners have registered a total of 21km (13 miles) of linear permitted access with the District Council, and there are many more routes and areas provided for the public under the Stewardship grant schemes.
- 1.8 Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 created 'open access land', which in West Berkshire comprises registered common land and certain areas of heathland and downland. It covers 1.7 % of West Berkshire (1207 hectares). People may walk, run or sight-see on this land, but must act responsibly and with consideration for others, and between 1 March and 31 July, or at any other time in the vicinity of livestock, dogs are only allowed if on a short lead. There may be local restrictions.
- 1.9 Finally, there is the access which has no formal recognition, and which is used habitually by the public, perhaps by local agreement with the landowner. Linear access used by the public 'as of right' may acquire the status of a public right of way.

### **The duty to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

- 1.10 West Berkshire District Council (the 'District Council' or 'Council'), as highway authority, has a statutory duty to maintain its public rights of way in a suitable condition for the public use which is



- made of them. In 2000, the third National Rights of Way Condition Survey, undertaken by the Countryside Agency, indicated that no highway authority in England had met the target for all rights of way to be properly maintained by the year 2000.
- 1.11 Nevertheless, the Government aims to achieve an improvement in defining, maintaining and publicizing the rights of way network. A statutory duty was introduced by section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, for each highway authority to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, covering all its area.
- 1.12 Rights of Way Improvement Plans are important means by which local authorities will identify the changes to be made, in respect of management and improvement, to their rights of way networks in order to meet the Government's aim of better provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with restricted mobility. In producing the Improvement Plan, the District Council is required to do the following:
- Assess the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
  - Assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way (and in particular by footpaths, cycle-tracks, bridleways and restricted byways), for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation, and the enjoyment of its area.
  - Assess the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially-sighted people, and others with mobility problems.
- 1.13 The assessment should include access in a broad sense, by considering the Definitive Map in conjunction with the wider highway network; for instance roads, cycle tracks, permitted routes, open access land and other land with permitted access and habitually-used routes.
- 1.14 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan must also include a statement of the action the District Council proposes to take to improve the network of rights of way and its management, having particular regard to the items listed above. Once the Improvement Plan has been published, the Council is required to review and, if necessary, amend and republish the plan at intervals of not more than ten years.

## 2. Vision

- 2.1 A 'Vision' in the context of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is 'an inspirational and believable picture of the future'.

### **West Berkshire's vision for its access network:**

**'To enhance the opportunities for society, and its environment, to benefit at all levels from the public access network in West Berkshire'.**

### 3. West Berkshire's approach to creating its Rights of Way Improvement Plan

3.1 The overall approach to creating the Improvement Plan has been as follows:

- A. To carry out, including via consultation, a thorough assessment of the extent that the current access network meets the present and likely future needs of the public. **Appendix 1.**
- B. A record progress to date on work to maintain and improve the access network. **Appendix 2.**
- C. To record the District Council's statutory duties and powers in relation to the provision of public access. **Appendix 3.**
- D. To set the Rights of Way Improvement Plan in a wider policy context. **Appendix 4**
- E. Based on A to D above, to identify general themes for improvements needed, and to formulate a series of targeted objectives, which will achieve improvements to the access network and working practices, whilst maintaining and improving the delivery of the Council's statutory duties.

3.2 The District Council's work on public rights of way to date has been largely governed by the strategy document the 'Milestones Statement', which sets out measures to achieve a legally-defined, properly-maintained and well-publicized rights of way network. This Improvement Plan will contain proposals to continue with and improve this work, in the context of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and will therefore supersede the Milestones Statement.

## **4. The themes for improvement**

- 4.1 Out of the wide consultation emerged a clearer picture of the profiles of both users and non-users of the access network, plus a very high number of separate general proposals for improvements to the provision of public access, site-specific proposals for improvements, and additional access routes. As part of their work to identify the site-specific improvements, some consultees scrutinized the Definitive Map in great detail to identify anomalies and potentially useful changes and additions.
- 4.2 By using the details of the consultation responses, the Council's own experience and statutory duties, plus best practice, and the wider policy context, a series of clear themes for improvement have emerged, which are listed below.

### **A well-maintained access network**

- 4.3 There is a need to improve surface maintenance, signposting, and vegetation clearance along public rights of way, whilst retaining the character of the network. The number of unauthorized interferences with public rights of way needs to be reduced.

### **A legally recorded public rights of way network**

- 4.4 Applications for path orders need to be processed more quickly.

### **An environmentally-sustainable access network**

- 4.5 Improvements need to be made to preserve and enhance the biodiversity and historic character of public rights of way.

### **Providing information / promoting the use of the access network**

- 4.6 An increase is needed in the availability of access information and promotional material, along with an exploration of a greater use of a wider range of formats, to compliment relevant work carried out by others.

### **Education / encouragement of responsible behaviour**

- 4.7 There is a lack of understanding amongst certain people of their responsibilities and rights when using the access network. Such information must be disseminated much more effectively.

### **Development of new and improved access**

- 4.8 New or improved access should be sought where there is a proven need, to include links between population centres and facilities, including schools, and improved equestrian access away from busy roads.

**Physical improvements to the access network**

- 4.9 There are a number of positive steps that can be taken to make physical improvements to the network, ranging from destination signposts and surface works, to improved gate latches.

**Improving accessibility for all users**

- 4.10 There is a need to improve the provision and promotion of access for groups which either do not presently use the access network, or who possess restricted mobility.

**Working with partners**

- 4.11 The Council should improve its effectiveness by efficiently aligning its activities and aspirations with relevant activities and aspirations of others.

**Improving working practices and customer care**

- 4.12 Various steps can be taken to improve the efficiency of the Council in terms of delivering improvements to the access network, and its communication with the public about matters of access provision.

**Funding**

- 4.13 The Council should investigate opportunities for external funding for access projects.

**Monitoring and continued consultation**

- 4.14 Circumstances are always changing, and mechanisms are needed to ensure that the Improvement Plan remains effective and relevant.

## 5. Objectives

5.1 Again, by using the details of the consultation responses, the Council's own experience and statutory duties, plus best practice, and the wider policy context, a series of objectives have been developed under each theme. These objectives are listed in the Action Plan below, with additional explanatory notes where needed or helpful.

5.2 The columns of the Action Plan table are explained here:

### **'ROWIP reference'**

5.3 Each objective has been given a consecutive reference number, prefixed by 'ROWIP'.

### **'Rights of Way Improvement Plan themes and objectives'**

5.4 The main theme appears as a heading, and below in bold are listed the objectives, with explanatory notes where needed.

### **'Priorities'**

5.5 These are denoted by colour-coding in the table. Red and green codes apply to objectives which have not yet started in earnest. Red objectives are for attempted completion in years 1 to 2 following adoption of this Improvement Plan. Green objectives are for attempted completion in years 3 to 5. A third category of 'ongoing' applies to objectives which, by their nature, are ongoing activities, where work has already started.

### **'Benefits'**

5.6 These are described in terms of the main policy areas that the objective would help to implement. Appendix 4 gives more details about these.

### **'Reduce, manage or invest'**

5.7 In order to ensure that the District Council is making the best use of resources, an assessment for each objective has been made of whether the activity involves a reduction in resources, improved management of existing resources, or the investment of additional resources.

### **'Risk'**

5.8 The assessment of risk is the likelihood of failure of each objective.

### **'Resources'**

5.9 This lists the organizations or individuals who would be involved in implementing the objectives.

**‘Funding sources and scale’**

5.10 Appropriate types of funding sources are listed. These do not include possible additional external funding, because to seek such funding in the future is in itself an objective of the Improvement Plan. An indication of cost of completion of each objective is given, as such:

- £ Under £5000
- ££ Between £5000 and £50,000
- £££ Over £50,000

For ongoing objectives, the figure refers to the annual cost.

5.11 Many of the objectives are not aimed specifically at one type of access user over another. Different types of access are used by people for varied reasons and in varying ways. The following table lists some of these, and when implementing the objectives of this Improvement Plan, the columns in the table will be cross-referenced with each other, to make sure that all users have been considered and accommodated where possible.

<b>Access examples</b>	<b>Journey examples</b>	<b>Travel modes / user examples</b>
Public footpath	Work	Foot
Public bridleway	Education	Cycle
Restricted byway	Recreation	Horse
Byway open to all traffic	Access to services	Mobility vehicles
Cycleways	Exercise	Mechanically-propelled vehicles
Unclassified roads		Carriage
Wide road network		All abilities
Quiet Lanes		All ethnicity
Permissive access - linear		Runners
Permissive access - land		Dog walkers
Rights of way along towpaths		Buggies
Statutory open access land		Blind / partially-sighted
“De facto” routes		Restricted mobility of all kinds
		Children

## ACTION PLAN

Important notes concerning implementation of objectives appear at the end of this table

### KEY:

- PROW = 'public right(s) of way'; WBC = 'West Berkshire District Council'; AONB = 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'
- An indication of cost of completion of each objective is given as such: £ Under £5000    ££ Between £5000 and £50,000  
£££ Over £50,000
- Benefits: SSC: West Berkshire Sustainable Community Strategy; AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan; *Cultural Strat.*: Cultural Strategy; *Protect Public*: objective protects the public; LTP: Local Transport Plan; *Efficiency*: objective will result in efficiency savings. Refer to Appendix 4 for explanations of policies quoted in the Action Plan.
- Priorities are colour-coded: **High Priority** (guide: years 1 to 2)    **Medium Priority** (guide: years 2 to 5)    Uncoloured: Work already started and ongoing

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
A well-maintained and safe access network						
Produce a strategy to reduce the instances of laying of unauthorized tarmacadam surfaces on PROW and a policy to set out the District Council's approach to tarmacadam on PROW.	ROWIP 1	Protect public Efficiency	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Carry out a complete condition survey of all Definitive PROW at least every ten years.	ROWIP 2	Protect public Efficiency LTP	Invest	Medium	WBC Volunteers	Revenue Capital ££



Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Investigate the feasibility of a limited scheme to remunerate landowners for carrying out repair, maintenance and improvement works on PROW.	ROWIP 3	Efficiency LTP AONB	Manage	Medium	WBC Landowners	Revenue Capital £
Review measures to ensure that landowners maintain all hedges adjacent to PROW so as to prevent obstruction of PROW by overgrowth.	ROWIP 4	Efficiency LTP AONB	Manage	Medium	WBC Landowners	Revenue £
Formally adopt the draft policy governing the maintenance of PROW used for access to residential properties, farms and other private land or establishments.	ROWIP 5	Efficiency LTP	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Produce a design and consultation protocol for the repair, replacement and installation of bridges on PROW.	ROWIP 6	Efficiency LTP	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Review PROW sign and waymark designs to reduce future instances of fading and unauthorized relocation or redirection.	ROWIP 7	Efficiency LTP SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £(£)
Remedy all unresolved PROW signage defects by the end of April each year.	ROWIP 8	LTP SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC Volunteers	Revenue Capital ££
Produce a prioritization scheme for physical works, vegetation clearance and enforcement on PROW.	ROWIP 9	Efficiency LTP	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
A legally-recorded PROW network						
'Consolidate' and publish the Definitive Map and Statement in a clear and useable format.	ROWIP 10	Cultural Strat. SSC	Invest	Low	WBC	Revenue ££

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Each year to complete the processing of the annually-agreed list of applications for modification orders and path orders.	ROWIP 11	Efficiency LTP SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue ££
Produce a published prioritization scheme for dealing with applications for modification orders and applications for path orders.	ROWIP 12	Efficiency	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Carry out risk assessments for trees within PROW and formulate a prioritized plan of action to ensure the safety of PROW users.	ROWIP 13	Protect public Efficiency	Invest	Medium	WBC Volunteers	Revenue ££
Consider appropriate legal mechanisms to recognize acquisition of cycling rights along urban public footpaths.	ROWIP 14	Efficiency LTP	Invest	Medium	WBC Volunteers	Revenue ££
An environmentally-sustainable access network						
Investigate methods to prevent fly-tipping and littering of PROW and also improved methods for clearance of litter and fly-tipping when instances occur.	ROWIP 15	Protect public Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Meduim	Low	WBC AONB National Trails Office Volunteers	Revenue ££
Investigate improved sustainable procurement practices.	ROWIP 16	SSC AONB	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Introduce improved environmentally-sustainable working practices, which also protect and enhance biodiversity and historic landscape and features.	ROWIP 17	SSC AONB	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
<b>Providing information / promoting the use of the access network</b>						
<b>Increase the availability of PROW / access information and promotional material and explore greater use of a wider range of formats, to compliment relevant work carried out by others.</b>	ROWIP 18	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC AONB Access user groups Parishes	Revenue Capital ££
<b>Support parish councils, parish plan groups, and others, to increase the range and availability of promotional material for PROW / access.</b>	ROWIP 19	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Low	WBC Parishes AONB	Revenue Capital ££
<b>Education / encouragement of responsible behaviour</b>						
<b>Produce published material to provide information about PROW / access and about the responsibilities of PROW users, landowners and other bodies.</b>	ROWIP 20	Protect public AONB	Invest	Low	WBC AONB	Revenue ££
<b>Produce a formal policy for the management of vehicular use and vehicular surfaces, with the aim of improving the condition of PROW used by recreational vehicles.</b>	ROWIP 21	Protect public Efficiency LTP AONB	Manage	Low	WBC AONB	Revenue £
<b>Implement procedures to remove unsuitable PROW from published satellite navigation routes.</b>	ROWIP 22	Protect public LTP	Manage	Medium	WBC AONB	Revenue £
<b>Continue to contribute access information to the “Greenways” newsletter.</b>	ROWIP 23	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Explore opportunities to work with schools within the National Curriculum to increase understanding of the role of access within the countryside and the responsibilities of citizens.	ROWIP 24	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Manage	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB	Revenue ££
<b>Development of new and improved access</b>						
Seek to promote, improve and create (where necessary) safe and commodious links between, within and around population centres, rural and urban facilities, attractions and transport interchanges.	ROWIP 25	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB Parishes	Revenue Capital S.106 ££(£)
Seek to promote, improve and create (where necessary) suitable routes to school and consider an increased maintenance programme for these routes.	ROWIP 26	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Low	WBC Landowners AONB Parishes	Revenue Capital S.106 ££(£)
Seek greater partnership with businesses, landowners and partners, to secure the provision of additional permissive or Definitive access for all users.	ROWIP 27	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Manage	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB Parishes	Revenue Capital S.106 ££
Increase the provision of suitable equestrian routes where existing provision is low or fragmented, and where demand is high, especially routes which facilitate riding to and from livery yards without the need for horseboxes.	ROWIP 28	Protect public LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB Parishes	Revenue Capital S.106 £££

<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives</b>	<b>ROWIP Reference</b>	<b>Particular benefits of the objective</b>	<b>Reduce, manage or invest</b>	<b>Level of risk</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Funding sources and scale (£)</b>
<b>Develop circular interlinking equestrian and cycle routes around settlements (“community circuits”) which also link to longer rides.</b>	ROWIP 29	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB Parishes	Revenue Capital S.106 £££
<b>Investigate increased access for equestrians and carriages on West Berkshire-managed commons.</b>	ROWIP 30	SSC Cultural Strat.	Invest	Medium	WBC Access user groups	Revenue Capital S.106 ££
<b>Physical improvements to the access network</b>						
<b>Research and implement mechanisms to realign the road user hierarchy in favour of non-motorized transport modes, especially walking (Local Transport Plan 2, policy WI9).</b>	ROWIP 31	Protect public LTP	Invest	Medium	WBC	Revenue Capital S.106 £££
<b>Work with partners in rural areas to identify opportunities for improving the safety of the physical environment, in particular for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders (Local Transport Plan 2, policy RSI 7).</b>	ROWIP 32	Protect public LTP	Invest	Medium	WBC AONB Landowners	Revenue Capital S.106 £££
<b>Implement measures to ensure that all gates on equestrian routes are easily-openable from horseback, using best practice gate and latch designs and gate configurations. Consider the installation of mounting blocks where dismounting cannot be avoided.</b>	ROWIP 33	Protect public LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners Parishes AONB	Revenue Capital ££

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Increase the numbers of PROW signposts indicating destinations, distances and local attractions.	ROWIP 34	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Parishes AONB	Revenue Capital ££
Improve the signage of PROW in and around West Berkshire's countryside sites.	ROWIP 35	SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Low	WBC Volunteers AONB	Revenue Capital £
Implement measures to improve signage and promotion of all permitted access.	ROWIP 36	LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB DEFRA	Revenue Capital S.106 ££
Implement measures to improve management and promotion of open access land and links to and from access land.	ROWIP 37	SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners Parishes AONB	Revenue Capital S.106 ££
<b>Improving accessibility for all users</b>						
Identify routes and circuits which are suitable for promotion for use by those with restricted mobility, including within countryside sites. Promote and sign the routes in terms of grading and carry out works, where needed.	ROWIP 38	Protect public LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Volunteers Access user groups AONB	Revenue Capital £££
Continue to provide buggies, for those with restricted mobility, at West Berkshire countryside sites.	ROWIP 39	SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue Capital ££

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Continue to improve the accessibility of structures on rights of way, and introduce and implement new incentives for landowners to do likewise.	ROWIP 40	Protect public LTP SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Manage	Medium	WBC Landowners AONB DEFRA	Revenue Capital ££
Implement improved promotion of access to the PROW / access network for Walking the Way to Health participants.	ROWIP 41	LTP SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Medium	WBC	Revenue Capital ££
Establish greater dialogue with ethnic minority groups, children and young people and groups which traditionally do not visit the countryside, to produce an action plan to encourage and maintain participation.	ROWIP 42	SSC Cultural Strat.	Invest	Medium	WBC AONB	Revenue ££
Support measures to provide shower, clothes-drying and cycle-parking facilities at schools, work places and other destinations, to encourage non-car transport.	ROWIP 43	LTP SSC Cultural Strat.	Invest	Medium	WBC Businesses AONB	Revenue Capital S.106 £
Audit car park barriers on the access network, and seek to ensure that access is possible for horseboxes, where appropriate.	ROWIP 44	Protect public LTP AONB	Manage	Low	WBC Volunteers	Revenue ££
Seek new car parking, cycle parking and horsebox / trailer parking on the access network, where there is a potential need.	ROWIP 45	Protect public SSC Cultural Strat. AONB	Invest	Medium	WBC Landowners Parishes AONB	Revenue Capital S.106 ££

<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives</b>	<b>ROWIP Reference</b>	<b>Particular benefits of the objective</b>	<b>Reduce, manage or invest</b>	<b>Level of risk</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Funding sources and scale (£)</b>
<b>Working with partners</b>						
<b>Provide support, where needed, to other bodies whose aspirations compliment those of this ROWIP.</b>	ROWIP 46	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Medium	WBC	Revenue Capital S.106 ££
<b>Encourage parish councils to use their full range of powers where appropriate and support the appointment of parish council public rights of way officers.</b>	ROWIP 47	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Medium	WBC Parishes	Revenue £
<b>Arrange formal rights of way training for parish public rights of way officers, parish plan teams and voluntary groups.</b>	ROWIP 48	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Invest	Manage	WBC Parishes	Revenue £
<b>Continue to provide support and direction to voluntary groups and to encourage the participation of volunteers of all ages in access work.</b>	ROWIP 49	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Medium	WBC Volunteers	Revenue Capital ££
<b>Support the access work identified within parish plans and 'Area Visions'.</b>	ROWIP 50	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Invest	Medium	WBC	Revenue Capital S.106 ££
<b>Improving working practices and customer care</b>						
<b>Create a comprehensive PROW / access library incorporating controlled copies.</b>	ROWIP 51	Efficiency	Invest	Low	WBC	Revenue £
<b>Use all appropriate internal District Council communication channels to inform relevant parties of developments in PROW / access work.</b>	ROWIP 52	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £



Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Improve the efficiency and speed of use of available legal powers in relation to PROW.	ROWIP 53	Efficiency	Manage	Medium	WBC	Revenue £
Improve awareness of land management priorities and procedures amongst District Council PROW staff.	ROWIP 54	Efficiency AONB	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Liaise more closely with West Berkshire's Planning and Transport Strategy group, and other planning consultees, so as to benefit the PROW / access network.	ROWIP 55	Efficiency LTP	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
<b>Funding</b>						
Investigate the feasibility of a grant scheme for access work by parish councils, parish plan groups and others, taking into account funding already available.	ROWIP 56	Efficiency	Invest	Medium	WBC Parishes AONB	Revenue Capital £
Seek to involve community and special interest groups in funding and delivering small access schemes.	ROWIP 57	Efficiency	Manage	Medium	WBC Parishes Volunteers AONB	Revenue Capital S.106 £
Investigate opportunities for external and grant funding for PROW/ access projects.	ROWIP 58	Efficiency	Manage	Medium	WBC	Revenue £
<b>Monitoring / continued consultation</b>						
Continue to receive and consider requests for improved access, and to incorporate them into an annually-updated list of requests for specific access improvements.	ROWIP 59	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
The Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum to advise on implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.	ROWIP 60	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC Local Access Forum	Revenue £

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Particular benefits of the objective	Reduce, manage or invest	Level of risk	Resources	Funding sources and scale (£)
Learn and listen to views of others, at the same time seeking and implementing best practice in relation to PROW / access work.	ROWIP 61	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Implement an effective internal method of recording good practice and lessons learnt in PROW / access work, for the benefit of present and future staff.	ROWIP 62	Efficiency	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £
Produce an annual progress report on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Action Plan.	ROWIP 63	Efficiency SSC Cultural Strat.	Manage	Low	WBC	Revenue £

**Notes concerning implementation of selected objectives**

**ROWIP 2:** additional data to be gathered will include: improvements needed to route marking; basic tree safety survey; disabled access audit; locations of signposts subject to fading or unauthorized alteration; checks on advisory notices, e.g. restricted byways.

**ROWIP 7:** designs should respect the sensitivity of the landscape.

**ROWIP 9 :** base the priorities on statutory duties, and the aspirations in this ROWIP. To include items for regular maintenance, e.g. surface-dressing and maintenance of ditches and drains.

**ROWIP 10:** “consolidation” of the Definitive Map and Statement refers to the process of incorporating all legal changes into a newly-produced Map and Statement. As many known errors in the documents as possible need to be rectified prior to consolidation.

**ROWIP 11:** the list is to be agreed in advance by Council members with the advice of officers. Applications for modification orders are requests by the public for rights of way to be included in the Definitive Map and Statement. The District Council has a statutory duty to process such applications. Applications for path orders are requests for diversion, extinguishment or creation of rights of way and the Council may accept or reject these at its own discretion.

**ROWIP 12:** to include a consideration of an appropriate approach to unofficial changes to routes which have been generally accepted by the public.

**ROWIP 17:** work within the context of the biodiversity action plan and European Habitats Regulations 2007. Relevant procedures would include: vegetation clearance; the provenance of surfacing materials and their compatibility with local aesthetics, soil type and geology; surface repair specification and the need to reduce surface water run-off entering watercourses, and to accommodate future flash-flooding events and other effects of climate change. Also, the need to ensure that works are consistent with historic landscape characterization. Measures are needed in order to comply with the European Habitat Regulations.

**ROWIP 18:** examples of formats for promotional material: web sites, which also link to relevant work of others; layers on electronic maps; other electronic means; on-site weather-proof leaflet holders.

Examples of active promotion: local businesses and shops; village notice boards and newsletters; user group magazines; local papers and books; churches; museums; libraries; surgeries; leisure centres; gyms; attendance at shows and other events; Tourist Information Centres; Yellow Pages; CLIVE bus; school visits to farms; farm visits to schools/landowners to talk to schools; business and school travel plans; wardens on site to give advice; supporting, where possible, programmes of themed educational guided walks; considering the use of “footfall counters” to gauge demand for and use of routes; actively seeking improved transport services for recreational users; seeking the views of PROW users via regular liaison meetings; considering the use of “drop-in” surgeries; reports to the press; contact with Neighbourhood Action Groups; improved publicity for WBC work done; considering mailing of all households.

There is also a need to use imaginative means to introduce new perspectives regarding perceptions of the countryside. One example of how this might be achieved would be through links to the arts. Such approaches may also be beneficial for people who do not at present visit the countryside.

Particular emphasis to be made to the following, in promotional material: routes leading from local attractions or centres of population to the surrounding countryside; routes suitable for equestrians, cyclists, the unconfident, pushchairs, families, runners and those with restricted mobility; opportunities for healthy exercise; routes linking centres of population and facilities; provide a clearer indication of the ease of use of each route; increase the confidence of infrequent or non-users; show all available access, e.g. permitted paths, open access land, land provided by other bodies, other highways; information to enhance understanding of the countryside and encourage responsible behaviour; locations of facilities and small car parks, including those suitable for horseboxes and trailers; sustainable transport and principles of sustainable tourism; close working with tourism providers; use of marketing techniques and consumer profiling; themes and themed days out.

When checking for other relevant material produced by others, care must be taken to include information which is provided only on web sites.

**ROWIP 19:** provide guidance along the lines of the District Council's own objectives for promotional material, as appropriate.

**ROWIP 20:** particular emphasis to be placed on: where people may or may not go and their responsibilities are as highway users, including dog walkers; information about how to report irresponsible or illegal behaviour; responsible car parking in the countryside; respect for livestock and countryside property. Consideration might also be given to informing land managers of relevant information and good practice via short e-mailed articles and newsletters.

**ROWIP 21:** use of PROW by vehicles has the potential to cause surface damage, which reduces amenity value for others. Such a policy might include the production of promotional material, to indicate the locations of sustainable surfaces suitable for vehicular use, to explain the rights and responsibilities of vehicular users and to indicate locations for vehicular use other than on PROW. Mechanisms for management of vehicular use should follow DEFRA's 2005 guidance "Making the Best of Byways", which in essence states that education, surface improvements and police liaison should be undertaken before the use of traffic regulation orders is considered. Some measures might include securing the help of residents along the lines of West Sussex's "Path Watch" scheme; requests for voluntary reductions in vehicular use at certain locations; attendance at Neighbourhood Action Group meetings and use of neighbourhood wardens; selective use of CCTV and on-site surveillance at locations of particular problems; more effective dissemination of information, including erection of on-site notices, and requests that landowners refrain from using PROW as accesses where possible.

**ROWIP 27:** consider also the potential of the 'Extended Schools' programme.

**ROWIP 25 – 30:** attention is drawn to the work of the Trails Trust, which obtains funding to compensate landowners and to survey and install routes. The Improvement Plan has the potential to guide access requirements in the new DEFRA Higher Level Stewardship areas. The Forestry Commission has a concordat with the British Horse Society on equestrian access to its woodlands, and all its freehold has been dedicated for open access on foot under S. 16 CROW Act 2000.

**ROWIP 26:** all to be carried out in the context of school travel plans and other walking / cycling to school schemes.

**ROWIP 27:** such access would fulfil the following criteria: would provide new routes or access where there is a clear and demonstrated general need or desire; would reduce fragmentation of the network, as a result of natural and man-made barriers; would improve road safety and increase instances of travel other than by private motor transport; where permitted access is provided, would ensure provision is made for its future ongoing maintenance.

**ROWIP 28:** when providing such routes, it will be important to ensure that they are also suitable for other legitimate public users.

**ROWIP 32:** the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership educates drivers, for instance when in contact with non-vehicular users. The Department of Transport has been educating motorists concerning horses on roads. The success of the first West Berkshire “Quiet Lanes” scheme should be monitored and future extensions to the scheme considered.

**ROWIP 34:** consider also the use of multi-user destination signs.

**ROWIP 35:** consideration should be given to tailoring such signage to the interests of visitors to the countryside sites.

**ROWIP 36:** to include both linear access and access to land.

**ROWIP 38:** standardized signage, consistent with that used by other local authorities, should be sought. The use of Bucklebury Common should be considered, in the light of the Council’s Scrutiny recommendations.

**ROWIP 38-39:** those with restricted mobility would also include those in wheelchairs, the blind, partially-sighted, people with learning disabilities, people with young children and unconfident or novice visitors. There must be appropriate facilities on the routes, and additional facilities should be sought where there is a proven need. When considering suitable routes, regard will be taken of where needs may be concentrated, for example centres of population, including villages. The work should consider the future creation of a network of long-distance paths suitable for those with restricted mobility. It should also consider providing information on the physical conditions of PROW and locations of facilities and barriers to access, so people may plan their own excursions.

**ROWIP 45:** to include the implementation of measures to remove all gates and stiles which are not needed for the control of agricultural stock. The standard of accessibility to be sought is to allow for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Suitability of parking sites should be a function of the quantity and quality of the surrounding access network.

**ROWIP 50:** West Berkshire Council to monitor contents and offer assistance where resources permit.

**ROWIP 51:** a controlled copy is one which is the up-to-date version, to be replaced when updated or replaced. The library would contain, for example, good practice, literature, legislation, British Standards, links to relevant web sites and standard practices and procedures within the rights of way service.

**ROWIP 53:** consideration also to be given to more frequent prosecutions and publicity for both these and other legal actions taken.

**ROWIP 54:** this measure is with a view to achieving more effective dialogue with and co-operation from land managers without recourse to legal measures.

**ROWIP 55:** this will include: regular rights of way training for planning officers, to be provided by the PROW team; improved input into the strategic planning process and the production of a “topic paper” to govern the allocation of S.106 developer contributions towards access. There may also be opportunities to improve the representation of PROW in published transportation material. Liaison with other major planning consultees also needs to be improved, to ensure consistency of comments where possible.

**ROWIP 57:** this would include, for example, providing ideas for access network improvements to other organizations, in order to “pump prime” work which could otherwise be a low priority for the District Council.

**ROWIP 58:** to make use of recent guidance from DEFRA and Natural England.

**ROWIP 60:** reports will be presented to the Local Access Forum three times per year, or at least once per year.

**ROWIP 61:** this will come from a variety of sources, including by attendance at regional meetings involving PROW staff; training courses; Local Access Forum advice; site meetings; team meetings and future customer surveys.

**ROWIP 63:** to be supplied to the Local Access Forum and posted on the web site.

## **6. Site-specific improvement projects**

- 6.1 As a result of the public consultation, many requests for site-specific individual improvement projects were submitted. Broadly, these requests are for practical improvement projects on the ground; for altering the statuses of right of way (i.e. altering the types of users permitted along them); and for adding new routes to the access network.
- 6.2 These requests have come from the public during one short consultation exercise, and whilst they form a good basis to help to plan future work, the list is not exhaustive, and there will be additions and updates to be made as time progresses.
- 6.3 These site-specific requests have been transferred to a digitally-based map as a clearly-defined layer, to be available on the District Council's web site, and already available to all rights of way staff to refer to on a daily basis.
- 6.4 Many of the broad objectives in the Action Plan cannot be implemented without site-specific works taking place on the ground, and so, where resources permit, the District Council will aim to implement the site-specific improvement requests where they are consistent with the broad objectives of the Action Plan. For instance, the site-specific improvement list might be used as starting point for planning an improved and promoted equestrian route.
- 6.5 Reference will also continually be made to the site-specific improvement list during the day-to-day work of the Council, and opportunities to implement requests be taken wherever possible.
- 6.6 The site-specific improvement requests may be implemented through a variety of means. The most likely will be through planning agreements; permitted path agreements with landowners; or through Government Stewardship schemes.
- 6.7 The District Council acknowledges that the site-specific improvement requests are requests from the public, and therefore may have benefits for the public, but any attempts to implement new routes would go through the usual channels of consultation with owners and interested parties.

## 7. Funding and resources

- 7.1 Although the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is a District Council-wide function, the lead for the work will in the main come from the rights of way team in the Planning and Countryside Department at West Berkshire Council.
- 7.2 The rights of way team comprises three full-time and three part-time officers, plus technical support, and three full-time Countryside Rangers.
- 7.3 The work of the rights of way service is funded from a mixture of Capital and Revenue budgets. An additional small contribution comes from S.106 Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, planning agreements, for improvement works associated with development. The core annual Capital budget held by the Countryside and Environment Department for access schemes is approximately £ 175,000, and this budget delivers the majority of practical improvements to the network. The annual revenue budget is £ 276,000, which includes funds for salaries, equipment and works projects.
- 7.4 Advantage is, or has been, made of occasional offers of grant-aid, for instance from Natural England (for work on open access and National Trails), from the Government (for work following the floods of July 2007), and from the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 7.5 There are many other potential sources of funding for countryside access projects, especially where the involvement of local communities can be demonstrated. The Action Plan here proposes that greater advantage is taken of these in the future.



## **8. Measurement and management of performance**

- 8.1 Performance standards are written statements describing how well a job should be performed, and provide benchmarks against which to evaluate work performance. Whilst a staff job description describes the essential functions and the tasks to be carried out, performance standards define how well each function or task must be performed in order to meet expectations. Criteria for success need to be defined in terms of the four primary indicators of successful performance: quality, cost, quantity and time. Desired outcomes are described in specific, objective and verifiable terms, and formal monitoring of performance will take place via the Council's one-to-one coaching and appraisal processes.
- 8.2 Many of the Improvement Plan objectives will need to be implemented as specific projects, to be programmed concurrently with others. Principles of good project management practice, coupled with performance standards, will be applied to ensure that targets are met.
- 8.3 Until 2007/08, the performance of West Berkshire Council's rights of way service was measured through national Best Value Performance Indicator 178, which required an annual assessment of 'ease of use' of a random selection of 5% of the public rights of way network. Between 2006 and 2010, the result rose from 74% to 86%. The formal indicator BVPI 178 ceased in 2008, but the annual assessment will continue, because West Berkshire Council considers a commodious rights of way network to be a locally important area of delivery.

## 9. Monitoring and sustainability

### Monitoring

- 8.4 The public consultation exercise was, of course, a survey of the public's need at one time only. Some principles behind the objectives will endure, but there is a need to be aware of changes which may affect the relevance of both the objectives in the Action Plan, and the requests from the public for site-specific access improvements.
- 8.5 Proposals for monitoring the progress of implementation of the Improvement Plan, and monitoring the relevance of its content, are contained in the Action Plan. These are:
- Continue to receive and consider requests for improved access, and to incorporate them into an annually-updated list of requests for specific access improvements.
  - The Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum to advise on implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
  - Learn and listen to views of others, at the same time seeking and implementing best practice in relation to public rights of way / access work.
  - Implement an effective project-based internal method of recording current progress, good practice, and lessons learnt in public rights of way / access work, for the benefit of present and future Council staff.
  - Produce, with progress reports, an annually-updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan Action Plan.

### Sustainability

- 8.6 The Action Plan advocates the implementation of improved sustainable procurement and working practices, along with an introduction of improved environmentally-sustainable working practices, which help to protect and enhance biodiversity and historic landscape and features.
- 8.7 The implication of this is that all the actions in the Improvement Plan will be monitored for environmental effects. A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was carried out on Local Transport Plan 2 in 2006, including the Walking and Cycling Strategies, whose broad aspirations complement those of this Improvement Plan.
- 8.8 The SEA noted that, in the Walking and Cycling Strategies, an encouragement of walking and cycling could increase damage within sensitive areas, and care was therefore taken to ensure that walkers and cyclists would be encouraged to keep to dedicated paths and cycleways. Such a problem is unlikely to arise in this Improvement Plan, as it is concerned with dedicated paths, except in the case of statutory open access land and, in rare cases, permissive open access. Statutory open access land will, as a result of this Improvement Plan, be managed in conjunction with landowners, and the statute under which it was created bans any environmentally-damaging behaviour by the public.

## APPENDIX 1

### An assessment of the extent that the current network meets the present and likely future needs of the public.

- 1.1 A significant public consultation exercise has taken place, with the details listed below:
- A public consultation between summer 2005 and early 2006, involving a press release and targeted letters, including to all parish councils and neighbouring highway authorities. The consultation was replicated also on the West Berkshire Council web site.
  - District Council countryside staff manned 'consultation' stands at the Thatcham Rural Craft Day and Royal County of Berkshire Show, both in 2005.
  - A separate request for responses was sent to each parish council, to coincide with their parish plan processes.
  - The Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum (covering Reading and Wokingham Boroughs and West Berkshire District) has worked on recommendations for improvements to access for those with restricted mobility; antisocial behaviour; and education of users/ the services provided by the three district councils. The Local Access Forum has also hosted a series of workshops involving main rights of way interest groups, addressing the interests of walkers, cyclists, equestrians, carriage drivers, recreational vehicle users, users with restricted mobility, and landowners.
  - Parish councils and major landowners have been asked for their suggestions for suitable locations for the replacement of stiles with gaps or gates. Parish councils have been asked to suggest suitable locations for rights of way signposts showing destinations and distances.
  - West Berkshire Council's Environment and Public Protection Select Committee undertook, in 2005/06, a scrutiny exercise of rights of way, and the Council's Executive approved the recommendations in January 2006.
  - In 2005, Tourism South-East was commissioned to undertake a site survey of users of the District Council's countryside sites. It was also asked to undertake a random telephone survey of 802 households in West Berkshire and Reading, to request information on usage and reasons for non-usage of countryside sites and the wider rights of way network. A literature review of existing surveys accompanied this exercise, to complete a picture of usage and perceptions as at 2005.
  - Consultees on the first draft of the Improvement Plan were as follows: relevant internal West Berkshire Council departments; the Safer, Stronger and Sustainable Communities Committee; Natural England; all parish councils; neighbouring local authorities; the Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum; The Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Countryside Project; the West Berkshire Liaison Group on Disability; the Environment Agency; British Waterways; the Open Spaces Society; major landowners; access network user groups and a number of other interested individuals and parties.

- The consultation was advertised on West Berkshire Council's web site and in the local newspaper.

**Consultation results**

**Targeted consultation and workshops**

- 1.2 The press release and targeted consultation letters produced over 100 separate responses. The tables below summarize the points made in these responses, and also include the recommendations made by the Local Countryside Access Forum workshops.

**WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP  
CONSULTATION RESPONSES  
(ALL EXCEPT TOURISM SOUTH EAST RESEARCH)**

N. B. Respondents included focus groups and access user groups, denoted in the table as FG and UG respectively.

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Routine maintenance &amp; enforcement issues:</b>						
Better/more frequent clearance of obstructing vegetation, repair of surfaces & defective barriers	2	4	FG / UG	3	FG	3 / FG
Better surface construction for PROW used by horseriders			UG			
Removal of logs placed across access to PROW			FG			
Removal of litter	2	5	FG	1		2
Removal of ruts			FG		1	
Landowners encouraged to repair ruts caused by farm/forestry vehicles		1				
Better drainage of paths prone to flooding/use of board walks		2 / UG				1
Field gates to be properly maintained and easy to open & close		UG				
Signposts to be situated where easily visible from public roads, & more frequent clearance of vegetation obscuring signs (particularly on roads)		1		1		
Reduce slippery nature of some country lanes			FG			
Secure removal of as much barbed wire as possible		UG				
Stop ploughing of cross-field paths, or at least ensure that they are re-instated quickly		3 / UG				FG

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Improvements to working practices/management of the work load:</b>						
Easier reporting of problems, e.g. "one-stop" helpline, ID path no. on signposts; stickers on posts stating where problems can be reported; web-based report form to which a photo could be attached		1 / FG				1
Quicker resolution of problems once reported to Council		2				
More feedback on problems reported to Council		1 / FG		1		
Quicker & better use of available legal powers		3 / FG				
Establish criteria for prioritisation of maintenance work		1				
General condition survey every 4 years, followed by prioritisation of work according to published criteria		1				
More regular inspection & maintenance of promoted routes & these routes given priority for replacement of stiles with gates		1				
More co-operation with planning colleagues to secure S.106 contributions for improvements; new PROW links to countryside condition of all planning approvals for major development; no PROW cut off by new roads	1	1 / FG				FG
Closer liaison with horseriders by staff who manage the road network			UG			
Sponsorship by local businesses; explore other sources of funding		1 / FG				
More partnerships with businesses and landowners to develop eco-tourism & farm diversification		1				
Users should pay for access	1					
Carry out economic impact assessments of PROW work to show value for money	FG					
Pay landowners to do work on PROW	FG					
More pro-active measures to prevent illegal use			FG			
Ban four-wheel-drive vehicles on vulnerable routes, particularly in winter (users extended this to banning heavy agricultural equipment as well)	FG	3 / FG x 2 / U	FG		1 / FG	1 / FG

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Improvements to working practices/management of the work load (continued):</b>						
Stop-up paths which cause anti-social behaviour if not needed for public use						1
Re-instate PROW lost when trunk roads were built			UG			
Determine why some bridleways are under-used, and implement measures to increase their use			UG			
Expand work with individuals through "adopt a path", & groups such as parish councils, user groups and volunteers, particularly to clear seasonal vegetation growth, pick up litter, report problems		4 / FG				
Work more closely with environmental organisations e.g. Environment Agency		1				
Work more closely with BBOWT		1				
When working with voluntary groups, including parish councils, try to establish procedures which reduce "red tape"		2				
Secure a higher profile for West Berkshire's PROW section		1	1			
Publicity for successful prosecutions e.g. for dog fouling		FG				
Greater protection for The Ridgeway		2				
<b>Physical improvements:</b>						
Create well-signed, wheelchair-usable routes about 2 km long from every town & village, with better surfaces (not loose gravel, not tarmac) & widening of narrow paths, with use of board walks, and diversions away from permanently muddy & rutted areas; to benefit all users, including the less mobile	1	10 / FG / UG	FG			1
Replace stiles with swing gates for those with restricted mobility, particularly on utilitarian routes between settlements; establish prioritisation criteria for this work		13 / UG				2
Replacing stiles with gates, and laying hard surfaces, is often not appropriate for country footpaths; can consume a large part of a small budget; gates are not always livestock proof; gates need more regular maintenance	FG	6 / FG				1

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Physical improvements (continued):</b>						
Maintain individuality of paths to fit the location & circumstances		UG				
Artificial surfaces to be local natural material		UG				
Remove all gates and stiles which are not needed for the control of stock		UG				
No new stiles unless a proven current need which gates would definitely not fulfil		1 / FG				
Dog gates on stiles						1
Mounting blocks where dismounting is necessary			FG / UG			
All gates on equestrian PROW to be openable from horseback			FG			
No steps on paths unless essential		FG				
All promoted recreational routes should be made suitable for the less-mobile, & should be information in all promotional leaflets about suitability for those with restricted mobility		1 / FG				
Better signage & waymarking of paths to reduce trespass & facilitate use (but do not over-waymark)	1	6 / UG		2	FG	1
Use paint markings for waymarking, as this fades less & is more easily renewed		1				
Remove proliferation of ugly signs					1	
Better signage of paths on National Trust land/all NT paths marked on Ordnance Survey maps		UG				1
Discourage landowners from erecting fences alongside PROW, creating alleys. Remove existing unnecessary fences		UG				1
Widen all fenced rural paths to at least 2 metres		UG				
Widen all fenced urban paths to at least 3 metres		UG				
Better litter clearance & prosecution of offenders; organizers of sponsored walks to clear litter & their signs after walks		4	FG	1		
Diversion of cross-field paths on to headlands to avoid need for disruptive & expensive re-instatement		1				
Introduce measures to reduce the amount of traffic on roads used to link paths, or to lower speeds; install horse warning signs on roads where necessary	1	1	UG			



Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Physical improvements (continued):</b>						
Better kept verges along roads, including removal of open drainage channels & obstructing signs and litter, so can be used by walkers & cyclists		1	FG / UG	1		
Eliminate dog-legs in urban fenced paths		UG				
Raise parapets on bridges used by horseriders, to current safe height of 1.8 metres			UG			
Creation of new paths/new access (not site specific):						
Work towards creation of a network of long-distance paths suitable for the less-mobile		1				
Better off-road links between settlements (e.g. minimum of two routes connecting neighbouring villages)	1	3 / FG / UG		1		
Better off-road links from urban areas into countryside		1 / FG / UG				
More safe off-road links from rural path networks to rural shops & pubs, bus stops and railway stations	1	1 / FG / UG				
More footpaths to link doctors' surgeries to green space & countryside for 'healthy walks'	1					
Provide public path access (walking, cycling & horseriding) to & between all areas of public open space, conservation, historical or landscape interest	1	1 / UG				
Create direct crossings of motorways, railways & rivers so maximum of 2km between crossings		1 / UG				
Create links between paths which end on busy roads		1 / UG	UG			
More access to banks of small rivers & streams, including River Lambourn in Newbury	1	2 / FG / UG				
Improved access to the southern bank of the River Thames		4 / UG				
More use of agricultural support payments & Forestry Commission schemes for more access, particularly field margins & woods near roads	1	2	UG			
More permitted paths, including for horseriders	FG	1	FG			
Avoid permitted bridleways on footpaths, unless no other available route and the surfaces & widths are suitable, or are made so		UG				

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Creation of new paths/new access (not site specific) (continued):</b>						
More nature trails		1				
More paths alongside roads (safe footways)	1	1				
More footpaths for children to walk to school	1	1				
Improved access to woodland		1				
Fill all gaps in network by creation of new paths, especially links between bridleways		1 / UG	UG			
Use old railway tracks for public access		1				
More routes for cyclists, including better surfaces on cycle routes in the countryside, & upgrading footpaths for use by cyclists	1			2		
Only create shared cyclepaths if they meet national standards for width, and users can be segregated		UG				
More routes for horseriders due to loss of open land and growing numbers of riders; particularly better riding access to routes so do not need to use trailers			FG / UG			
Create more equestrian routes in areas where there are many livery yards, but a poor off-road riding network			UG			
Discover and legally define lost bridleways; support the Discovering Lost Ways project & seek to recruit horse riders to help		1	UG			
Upgrade footpaths and bridleways to provide more links between equestrian routes			UG			
All new routes should be bridleways or restricted byways, to cater for all non-motorised users			UG			
Encourage landowners to provide access which improves the local PROW network for equestrians			UG			
Develop circular interlinking horseriding routes around settlements (community circuits) which can be linked to form longer rides			UG			
Develop linear north-south routes to improve access for horseriders to the urban areas of Newbury & Thatcham			UG			
Upgrade suitable cycle tracks & bridleways for use by carriage drivers			FG			
More routes for motorcyclists to satisfy demand & reduce pressure on sensitive sites & routes	1					
Create or recognise rights over more routes which can be used by vehicles					FG	
Quicker resolution of PROW modification order applications		1			FG	
Greater ability to move paths	FG					

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Promotion of use of access:</b>						
Grading of paths e.g. by means of different coloured signs, to show which are suitable for those with restricted mobility; information to be in leaflets & on site		1 / 2 x FG				
Establish series of graded walks throughout West Berkshire, to help walking for health		1				1
Advance warning of barriers for those with restricted mobility		FG				
More promoted off-road circular walks & rides, with leaflets		3 / FG	FG		FG	2
Promote circular routes for vehicle users on routes with sustainable surfaces					FG	
Show destinations & distances on signs where appropriate		UG				
More maps & signs with destinations & distances showing local walks & rides, & walks around attractions & hotspots (country parks/Thames), including routes for those with restricted mobility; all towns & parishes to have leaflets, sponsored by adverts for local businesses, inc. B&Bs, pubs etc; to show safe car parks; maps sent to all householders in parish	1	10 / FG				4
More information about routes & parking places in village newsletters & on village notice boards, in newspapers, local shops, libraries, doctors' surgeries, hairdressers, leisure centres, local shows, tourist information centres, K&A canal centres, etc.		2 / 2 x FG				1 / FG
Maps near path signs to show people where the paths lead						1
Maps to show permitted paths e.g. on parish maps		1				
Maps to show locations of car parks		1				
Brail interpretation boards at main tourist attractions		1				
Inclusion of pram-friendly walks in National Childbirth Trust's guides		1				
Better marketing of tourism potential of access to countryside, e.g. details of organizations which run guided walks and B&Bs. Availability of leaflets on the West Berkshire web site		6				1

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Education/liason/raising awareness of access issues:</b>						
More education about the responsibilities & needs of the Council, landowners and users (e.g. warning of approach of cyclists, problems of loose dogs), by means of. school visits to farms / farmers' visits to schools / publicising good practice / paths near to towns to display the Country Code / clear signage	2 / FG	3 / 2 x FG	1 / FG / UG		FG	
Appoint wardens to give advice to users & landowners						1
Promote use of PROW in schools		FG				
Introduce orienteering to schools e.g. on Greenham & Padworth Commons		1				
Consult/talk to farmers more, particularly before work on PROW takes place	1 / FG	1		1		
More reports to press on progress/events		1				
Stop discouraging motorcyclists, as they contribute to the local economy & are legitimate users; only illegal use causes problems					2	
Re-introduce liaison meetings for all users; more consistent liaison with users; let users know about rules & regulations		1	FG		FG	
Raise awareness by horseriders of the opportunities to help themselves						
Council to keep a list of horseriding contacts who are involved with PROW			FG			
Communicate more with parish councils						FG
More information on web site about routes in poor condition, so that these can be avoided by vehicle users					FG	
Determine why horseriders use unauthorized routes & educate them about where they can go			FG			
Produce an annual report						FG

Improvements sought (general)	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Provision of ancillary facilities:</b>						
More car parks e.g. small-scale car parks in every village; sufficiently large for room to unload wheelchairs, & horse trailers where near bridleways (& not restricted by low height barriers); level & well-surfaced for those with restricted mobility; car parks possibly on industrial sites & at pubs		6	1 / FG / UG			1
Make car parks safer		1				
More accessible toilets in rural areas		2 / FG		1		
Need areas for quad biking, & four wheel drive circuits		75			1	
Need areas for children to skateboard and use BMXs						1
Better public transport to encourage use of PROW		1 / FG				
Climbing frames & other activities along routes, to keep children's interest		1				
Facilities for drying clothes at schools	1					
Showers in work places		FG				
Buggies for less-mobile for hire at popular sites		FG				

What do not like about use of access/problems caused by public access	Number of respondents categorised by type					
	Land-owners	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle users (MPV)	Parish councils
<b>Illegal or antisocial behaviour:</b>						
Rubbish left by users & fly tippers	2	5 / FG x 2	1	1		2 / FG
Unauthorised use of field margins, particularly in vehicles	2					
Damage caused to surfaces, & conflicts with walkers by use of footpaths by horseriders & trail bikes	1 / FG	2 / FG	1	1		3
Conflict caused by illegal motor bike use			FG			FG
Misuse of green lanes and towpaths by vehicle users	2	1		1		
Users breaking fences & other acts of vandalism	1					FG
Spoiling of grass crops by users who trespass	1					
Dog fouling & uncontrolled dogs	1 / FG	2 / FG	FG			
Walkers' cars parked in private lanes & blocking gateways & PRow	2		FG			
Vandalising of gates to allow access for motorcycles, particularly in Sulham Woods						1
Cutting of fences so dogs can get through						1
Erection of tall fences to obscure views						2
Vandalism & damage to remote buildings	1					
PRow provide access for hare coursers	1					
Since introduction of open access land, some people think that they can walk anywhere		FG				
<b>Conflicts between lawful users:</b>						
Damage & conflict caused to byways by four wheel drive vehicles		1 / FG	FG / UG			1
Conflict between walkers, horseriders and cyclists on narrow paths	1	FG	FG			
Conflict between horseriders & fast motorcyclists on byways			1			
Use of landowners' heavy vehicles on byways, destroying surfaces			1			
Very muddy & rutted bridleways due to horses, farm machinery & bad drainage				1		

Anger of some motorists towards horseriders who use linking roads			UG			
Speed & volume of traffic on linking country roads			1 / FG / UG			
Conflicts between horses kept on stud farms and users of PROW	1					
Conflict with ramblers on byways					FG	
<b>Condition of network:</b>						
Overgrowing hedges & surface vegetation	1	3 / FG	FG	1		1
Poor state of surfaces of routes	1	3 / FG	1 / UG		1	FG
Cross-field paths not reinstated after ploughing (or poor re-instatement)		FG				FG
Council does not clear headland paths	2					
Time & trouble needed to keep paths on land clear	1					
Inadequate signage	FG	1 / FG	FG		FG	
Broken, high & slippery stiles; barbed wire near stiles		1 / FG				1
Logs placed across access points			FG			
Sharp stones used to surface PROW used by horseriders			UG			
<b>Deficiencies in access provision:</b>						
Gaps in PROW network so use of roads is necessary; lack of circular routes (disjointed network)		1 / FG x 2	FG / UG		FG	
Lack of PROW in housing estates		FG				
Natural & man-made barriers which fragment the equestrian network e.g. Kennet and Avon canal, River Kennet, River Thames, M4, A34, railway lines, towns & built up areas			UG			
Lack of PROW where horses are kept, leading to need for horse trailers			UG			
Urbanization of public paths with concrete bridges, removal of native hedges etc		FG				
Noisy routes e.g. by motorways		FG				
Loss of circular routes when trunk roads were constructed: rights of way not re-instated, bridges inadequate			UG			
Lack of parking for horse boxes & trailers			UG			
<b>Deficiencies in the provision of information/education of users:</b>						
Do not know where can go		FG			FG	
Lack of knowledge of people from towns	FG		FG			
Many paths not shown on maps e.g. in parks, National Trust areas		FG				
<b>Deficiencies in management of use:</b>						
Traffic regulation orders & threats of closure					1	

Legislation which restricts legitimate interests to satisfy selfish anxieties					1	
Lack of awareness by West Berkshire highways engineers of the needs of horseriders when using roads			UG			
<b>Reasons why do not use public paths:</b>						
Too much effort to walk on PROW		FG				
Safety/security problems, or fear of such problems		FG	FG			
Lack of a culture for walking		FG				

What like about use of access	Number of respondents categorised by type				
	Walkers	Horse-riders/ carriage Drivers	Cyclists	Vehicle Users (MPV)	Parish councils
Segregation from vehicles (safe & pleasant because no vehicles)	7	FG	1		
Opportunities to be close to nature	2/ FG	FG			
Opportunities to enjoy the countryside	6 / FG	FG		1	
Ability to slow down and relax; peaceful	4 / FG	FG		FG	
Exercise in a pleasant environment	FG	FG			
Challenge of countryside horse rides		FG			
Variety which improves welfare of horses		UG			
Use of forgotten paths	1		1		
Paths are within easy reach of home	1				
Good range of paths & lanes	2	1	1	1	
Well signed/waymarked paths	2 / FG		1	1	
Easily walkable paths	FG				
Easy car parking	2				
PROW are generally well maintained	1				1
Improvements to The Ridgeway for walkers	1				



- 1.3 The following summaries are taken both from the Tourism South-East report. Where figures are given, unless stated, they are derived from the Tourism South-East random telephone survey.

### **Visit characteristics**

- 1.4 It emerged that 70% of households had visited the access network during the previous twelve months, with around 20% of these visiting daily, 16% visiting several times a week and 21% visiting at least once a week. 24% visit at least once a month.
- 1.5 Approximately one third of visiting parties included children under the age of sixteen, illustrating the popularity of the access network with families. Overall, the three main group compositions are lone adults, two adults, and two adults with children.
- 1.6 The majority of visitors are from the B/C1/C2 socio-economic profile.

### **Reasons for visiting the access network**

- 1.7 The survey revealed that people use the network for many and varied reasons. To go for walks is the most popular reason, particularly short walks of up to two hours. Other popular reasons include to observe wildlife, enjoy views, take picnics, walk the dog, ride and exercise horses, cycle, occupy the children, visit a pub or tea room, or access facilities by avoiding roads. Mention was made of the opportunity to pursue other hobbies and interests, e.g. history, natural history, photography, etc.
- 1.8 People particularly value the opportunity for exercise, fresh air and relaxation, and the scenery and peace and quiet offered by an interesting and varied access network. People enjoy the opportunity to be close to nature. Many also commented that they liked the fact that the routes were signposted and maintained, easy to get to, and close to home.

### **Ethnicity of users**

- 1.9 The overwhelming majority of users of the access network are 'white'. Only 2% of participating households in the random telephone survey described themselves as 'non-white'. Only 3% of the population of West Berkshire, however, belongs to an ethnic minority other than 'white'.

### **Disability**

- 1.10 Of the 802 households participating in the random telephone survey, 10% have one or more residents registered as disabled. Of these, around half had visited the access network during the last twelve months.

### **Mode of transport to reach the access network**

- 1.11 The car and on foot proved equally important as modes to reach the starting point for an outing to the access network. The choice of modes is governed by convenience. Over half of households usually travel less than two miles to visit the countryside. A quarter travel between two and five miles, but only 3% travel more than twenty miles.

**Visitor knowledge**

- 1.12 Given the high number of local visitors, and visitors from neighbouring districts and counties, it is not surprising to find that most visitors are well- acquainted with the area, relying on their local knowledge. 73% of on-site country park visitors said they used local knowledge to find out about country parks in West Berkshire, and 85% said they used local knowledge to find out about public rights of way in West Berkshire.
- 1.13 Visiting households asked where they would like to find information about West Berkshire’s countryside. 37% replied that they would like to be able to find information from their local paper, 31% in their local library, 28% on the internet and 20% would like to be able find information at supermarkets. Other popular information sources include; Tourist Information Centres (17%), through mailing (16%) and in local shops (11%). Remaining sources of information include Ordnance Survey Maps, books on the local area, public notice boards, walking magazines, council offices, local museums, and through the church.

**Awareness of rights of way (household survey only)**

- 1.14 The overwhelming majority of households (94%) are aware of rights of way in West Berkshire.

**Visitor satisfaction among visitors with restricted mobility**

- 1.15 Visitors with restricted mobility, interviewed as part of the household survey, are split in their opinions regarding suitable provision for them on rights of way. Around a quarter of households (25%) rated the provision as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’, whilst nearly 30% rated provision as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Over a quarter felt information provision for the less mobile was ‘fair’. The remaining 18% felt they could not give an opinion.

**Views on future improvements**

- 1.16 Households visiting public rights of way were invited to select, from a list, the improvements they would like to see. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Improvements to rights of way, household survey results		
	Base	%
Improve maintenance of paths i.e. cutting back brambles, nettles, removing litter	214	38
Improve signposting for footpaths, cycle paths, bridleways etc	171	30
More information on walks, rides, rights of way	123	22
More signs at beginning of a path showing the destination	96	17
Improve path conditions i.e. smoother, even surfaces	94	17
Replace stiles with kissing gates	84	15
More information along the route	83	15
More paths suitable for pushchairs, wheelchairs or people who have difficulty walking	78	14
More paths suitable for walkers	78	14
More parking near access points/suitable places to unload from car	67	12
More bridleways suitable for horse riders	47	8
More suitable places to unload from horse box	28	5

More dedicated routes for use by motorised vehicles e.g. motorbikes & four wheel drives	25	4
Other improvements	274	48

*N.B. Multiple responses permitted*

- 1.17 1.16 48% of households made alternative suggestions ('other improvements' in the table). These include more cycle paths, easier access, clear cycle routes, banning of vehicles), more information on routes, more car parking, more seating, banning of dogs, banning of horses, introduction of more cafés, more rubbish bins, free maps, banning of dumping of waste, and wider improvements for disabled visitors.

### **Non/lapsed visitor characteristics**

- 1.18 The households which had not visited a public right of way in West Berkshire in the last 12 months were asked if anyone in their household had ever visited a public right of way in West Berkshire. 70% of these households (162) had used a public right of way at some point in the past. These households have been termed 'lapsed users'. The remaining 72 households (30%) had never visited public rights of way in West Berkshire and are classified as 'non users'. Lapsed users were asked how long ago their last visit was to public right of way in West Berkshire. Over a quarter of lapsed users (28%) last visited between 1 and 2 years ago. A further 18% last visited between 2 and 3 years ago. Nearly half of lapsed users, however, last visited a public right of way more than 4 years ago.

### **Reasons for not visiting**

- 1.19 Over a third of non or lapsed visitors said they had mobility or sight problems which prevented them from visiting the countryside. 18% (42 households) cited a lack of time, whilst 14% cited no particular reason. 3% of households felt unsafe using public rights of way; reasons given included fear of falling on uneven surfaces, coming into contact with unsavoury characters, and anti-social behaviour. 50 non and lapsed user-households (21%) mentioned alternative reasons why they have never or not recently visited a public right of way in West Berkshire. 8 households mentioned the distance they would have to travel. Other comments included a lack of information on what public rights of way are or where they are located. Non-visitors cited a lack of information as a major reason for not visiting.
- 1.20 Non and lapsed user households were asked to comment on what factors may encourage them to visit public rights of way in West Berkshire. In total 156 comments were made, however of these 112 (72%) were not interested in visiting or were no longer able to visit. The remaining comments were that 22 households would be encouraged to visit if they were more aware of what was on offer, for example more advertising and more information, and 10 households would be encouraged to visit if public rights of way were better maintained. In addition, 3 households felt access for the elderly and the disabled needed improving. Other suggestions included improving public transport, providing more facilities, improving public safety, and reducing incidents of vandalism and littering.
- 1.21 Households including members with restricted mobility, which had not visited a public right of way in the previous 12 months, were asked what would encourage use of countryside rights of way. Most said that physical improvements were needed on the ground, such as smoothing

paths, providing more disabled parking spaces, widening gates, introducing signs for visually-impaired visitors, improving public transport for the disabled and improving disabled access at facilities e.g. toilets and shops.

### **National figures relating to the use of the access network**

- 1.22 There are a number of sources for national figures relating to the use of the access network.
- 1.23 It has been noted that, nationally, 60% of men and 70% of women are insufficiently physically active to benefit their health. Around 25% of all journeys nationally, and 80% of journeys of less than one mile, are made on foot.
- 1.24 Research for the Countryside Agency on rights of way use and demand in 2000 revealed that, in just over 50% of households, at least one member had used public rights of way in the previous year. The most popular activities were walking and cycling. 30% of households felt that there were not enough paths, whilst 40% considered provision to be adequate. 70% of households (including a third of those where nobody had undertaken any activities in the countryside in the previous year), said that they would increase activity, particularly walking and cycling, if more paths and tracks were available. Of the 44% of households where no use was made of rights of way, 16% cited health, and 13% their age, as barriers to participation. Other reasons for making no use of rights of way included having no time. The research also revealed that many people believe that public rights of way are frequently obstructed, or so poorly maintained as to be difficult to use.
- 1.25 The Department for Transport Cycling Personal Travel Factsheet, 2007, summarized findings on levels of cycling, as at 2005. One in six adults said that cycling was an important form of transport for them personally. Those who cycle more frequently are more likely to consider this an important form of transport. The majority of adults agree that everyone should be encouraged to cycle to benefit their health, the environment and to ease congestion. Many adults are, however, concerned about the safety of cycling. More than half were frightened by the idea of cycling on busy roads.
- 1.26 44% of people aged 5 and over have access to a bicycle. Bicycle ownership is much higher amongst children than adults. 58% of all car trips are under 5 miles, equivalent to a half-hour cycle ride. Around 3 in 10 car users say they would reduce their car use if there were more cycle tracks away from roads, more cycle lanes on roads or better parking facilities for cycles. 68% agree that cycles should be given more priority on roads.

### **National picture concerning equestrianism**

- 1.27 Leisure riding remains the main national equestrian activity, but research shows that a shortage of places to go riding, and lack of opportunity, were often-cited deterrents. As with cyclists, many riders are frightened by the idea of using roads because of vehicular traffic.
- 1.28 The British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) 2005/6 national equestrian survey states that:

- 43% of British households (11 million) have a household member with some form of interest in equestrianism (including racing);
- 4.3 million people have ridden in the previous 12 months (the 1999 estimate was 2.4 million, indicating a substantial growth);
- 65% of equestrian participants are from socio-economic groups C, D and E;
- 75% of horse riders are female; 31% of horse riders are aged under 16; 18% are aged 16 to 24;
- the urban/rural split amongst frequent riders is 50:50;
- horse owners, carers and riders in Britain spend over £4 billion per year in gross output terms;
- there are 1.3 million horses in Britain, owned or cared for by 720,000 people (1.2% of the UK population);
- the average annual expenditure per privately-owned horse is £2166;
- leisure riding is the main equestrian activity, showing an increase of 5% in just over 5 years;
- riding has become far less seasonal: 95% of riders now ride all year round, compared with 61% in 1995.

### **Use by mechanically-propelled vehicles**

- 1.29 The network is also used very regularly by many off-road drivers of mechanically-propelled vehicles, who have a legal right to traverse byways open to all traffic.

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## APPENDIX 2

### Work to date to maintain and improve the access network.

#### **Legal definition of the public rights of way network**

- 1.1 West Berkshire Council is legally responsible for producing the Definitive Map of public rights of way. This document is, in law, conclusive, and therefore a very high degree of care is required in its preparation.
- 1.2 The former Berkshire County Council produced 'consolidated' Definitive Maps and Statements in 1991 and 1994. Consolidation means inclusion of all the known changes made to the network since 1954 and 1956, which were dates at which the information contained in the first Definitive Maps, for the areas which now comprise West Berkshire, was correct. Legal changes are translated to the Definitive Map via 'modification orders'. The County Council's successor, West Berkshire District Council, published the first West Berkshire Consolidated Definitive Map and Statement in March 2000, which shows all the legal changes to the network since 1994. This map was supplied to all local councils, user groups and landowners' organizations, and is available for free public inspection.
- 1.3 The 2000 Consolidated Definitive Map is far from complete. Claims that rights of way exist which are not recorded on the map may be made by anyone, and these need time-consuming and thorough investigation. There are also errors and anomalies in the Definitive Map and Statement, which need to be corrected.
- 1.4 Since 2000, further legal changes have taken place, and legislation in 2006 converted all former 'Roads Used as Public Paths' (RUPPs) to Restricted Byways. The District Council wishes to consolidate these changes within a new published map in the near future. The Definitive Map is held as both a hard copy and in digitized form.
- 1.5 Applications from landowners for the diversion, extinguishment, or creation of rights of way are regularly received. Most applications are made on the grounds that they are in the interests of the owner or occupier, and the administration costs for the preparation of the necessary orders are charged to the applicants. Such public path orders are also made by the District Council in association with new developments.

#### **Maintenance of the public rights of way network, etc.**

- 1.6 The physical condition of the rights of way network is identified from many sources. The County Council and subsequent District Council have in the past undertaken surveys of the condition of all their rights of way, with 'General Condition Surveys' having taken place in 2002 and 2009. Reports of problems are received from the public, rights of way staff and volunteers. All reported problems are entered on the rights of way database system, which is continually updated. Reported problems are addressed using letters and negotiation, legal powers, the District Council's Rangers, volunteers, and other bodies or contractors where appropriate. A simple prioritization procedure addresses each in terms of danger level, usage level, degree of obstruction, benefit to the public once resolved, cost/time effectiveness in resolving, the level of complaint, and potential for deterioration.

- 1.7 The District Council's duty to ensure that public rights of way are maintained in a condition suitable for their public use means that substantial amounts of resurfacing and drainage are often required each year. Reported cases requiring attention are prioritized (using the above criteria), resulting in the compilation of an annual programme of works to be carried out by contractors. Due to difficulties that can occur in accessing sites, much of the work is concentrated into the summer months.

### **Landowners / other bodies**

- 1.8 Landowners may possess their own duties of maintenance, e.g. they must clear rights of way of vegetation from their land or boundaries, and have some responsibilities for maintenance of routes which are used by virtue of private easement. British Waterways helps to maintain the sections of the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath (a public footpath) for which it is the owner. The District Council works very closely with the National Trails Office to maintain The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.
- 1.9 A number of parish councils have been keen to use their powers with regard to the provision of public access, and the District Council responds to requests for advice and assistance. In return, parish councils assist by providing local knowledge and advice on many access matters. The relationship with parish councils was enhanced by the 'Parish Paths Initiative', during which a District Council officer helped parishes to undertake local maintenance and promotional projects. This scheme has now officially ended, but the legacy of closer working with certain parish councils remains.
- 1.10 Maintenance and improvement works are also carried out by other bodies, such as the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Countryside Project, Sustrans, and voluntary groups. All must consult the District Council prior to working on rights of way.

### **Ploughing and Cropping**

- 1.11 For the past few years the District Council has written to landowners twice a year to remind them of their statutory duties to reinstate ploughed rights of way and to keep them free of obstruction by crops. Improved recording of information has aided the targeting of potential problem areas in advance.

### **Bridges**

- 1.12 All bridge structures are recorded by the District Council's Highways and Transport department, and are inspected regularly for structural soundness. The results of the inspections reveal relative priorities for repair or replacement, which are implemented by the department's bridge engineering team. Requests from the public for alterations to bridge designs, to facilitate easier use, are introduced into this system and carried out as soon as practicable.

### **Volunteers**

- 1.13 In recent years, the help of volunteers has greatly increased the rate of resolution of path problems, and data from surveys by volunteers have improved the maintenance of accurate path records. The volunteers concentrate on vegetation clearance, waymarking, gate-installation and litter clearance. Volunteer groups from the Ramblers' Association, adults with learning disabilities



from the Phoenix Centre ('ROAR'), the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Countryside Project, and many other groups and individuals, are to be thanked for their continued excellent work.

### **Signposting**

- 1.14 Over the last few years, the repair and replacement of defective signposts and waymarks has taken place during the winter months, when there is a reduced need for vegetation clearance. During the winter of 2007/08, all outstanding reported signposting and waymarking defects were resolved, and the Council aims to resolve all subsequent reported problems each winter. Destination/distance information has been added to some suitable roadside signposts, following consultation with landowners and parish councils. The District Council's promoted routes are all distinguished by recreational route signage.

### **Private and illegal use**

- 1.15 The surface conditions of certain rights of way are adversely affected by their use, the effect being a function of the level and type of use and the local physical conditions. The District Council has a duty to maintain all rights of way to a standard suitable for the use which is made of them, but there are exceptions, e.g:
- Where use is by virtue of a private easement (formal or informal). In these cases the Council may come to an arrangement with the landowner, and/or users, regarding maintenance.
  - Where the status of the right of way does not permit the use which is being made of it, and/or the use of a right of way is rendering the surface inconvenient for others. Signage, plus dialogue with user groups, have to date been used to address this problem when it occurs, but the efficacy of this approach has been limited. A written procedure has recently been produced, to guide the Council towards appropriate remedies.
- 1.16 In the past, liaison with vehicular users and other user groups has taken place through the 'RUPPs and Byways Users' Group', at which attempts were made to reach a consensus on priorities for repair, and mechanisms to restrict or manage vehicular use of vulnerable rights of way. Inappropriate vehicular use is a matter for police enforcement, and recently the police have undertaken patrols of The Ridgeway National Trail as part of an action plan designed to protect and improve the condition of this important route.

### **Routine maintenance – vegetation**

- 1.17 Vegetation clearance is undertaken on a pro-active basis throughout the summer and winter. Clearance of certain well-used paths takes place several times during the summer, and the winter is reserved for clearance of woody growth, both on these paths and on other routes, where such work during the summer would not be appropriate due to the possible presence of nesting birds. The District Council's promoted routes are checked annually, and works are carried out to maintain safety and usability.
- 1.18 A proportion of the annual maintenance budget was diverted in 2002 towards the employment of a third Public Rights of Way Maintenance Ranger, and this minor reorganization has resulted in a greater flexibility of the Ranger team and much more efficient working routines.

## **Trees**

- 1.19 The rights of way network embraces many ancient highways, and these in particular may accommodate established trees within their boundaries. The District Council has a duty of care to rights of way users and manages the trees where a safety problem or potential problem comes to light. Boundary trees and trees within neighbouring properties might also potentially affect public rights of way users, and owners are contacted when their action is required.

## **Publicity for the rights of way network**

- 1.20 West Berkshire Council has aimed to develop a promoted range of recreational routes which are readily-accessible, easy to use and offer a wide choice in terms of their length, character and appeal to all types of user. The enjoyment of West Berkshire's countryside by the use of its public rights of way network has been encouraged through publications from many sources produced by the former County Council, the former Newbury District Council and its successor West Berkshire Council, along with user groups, commercial organizations and others. The volume of this literature has increased in recent years. The completion of the signing and waymarking of all public paths in West Berkshire in 1997, and the subsequent ongoing work to maintain this standard, has allowed people to use guidebooks and leaflets with increasing confidence.
- 1.21 Currently available from West Berkshire Council is a series of walks and cycle/equestrian rides; promotional material relating to access across West Berkshire's managed commons; publications from the Tourism section of the Council, designed to guide and welcome visitors to West Berkshire; and recently-published maps for walking and cycling in Newbury and Thatcham, plus a guide along some recommended rural cycle routes.
- 1.22 Amongst user groups and others, the Ramblers' Association is particularly active in producing high-quality publications describing circular walks and rides respectively. A number of parishes publish guides to their access networks, in partnership with the District Council. The National Trails Office produces a range of publicity material for The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails. Sustrans actively promotes long-distance cycle routes through the district.
- 1.23 The District Council's bi-annual magazine 'Greenways' contains up-to-date information on the work of the rights of way and countryside teams, plus events information for the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre.
- 1.24 There are methods of promotion other than by the distribution of publications, and West Berkshire's Countryside Rangers regularly lead guided walks through the District Council's managed countryside sites. Council staff also lead guided walks as part of a contribution to the 'Walking the Way to Health' scheme. Guided walks are also organized by others, including the Ramblers' Association, the National Trails Office, the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust and the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Countryside Project.

## **Disabled access to the countryside**

- 1.25 Following the Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005, the District Council included a simple assessment of the suitability of paths for those with restricted mobility in the 2002 and 2009 General Condition Surveys. A further survey of all reported stile and gate problems has been carried out by volunteers, and reports are also received from the public. The information

from these sources has been used to guide a steady programme of installation of easily - accessible structures (where structures are required), largely with the help of volunteers from the Ramblers' Association.

### **Permissive access**

- 1.26 Access permitted by landowners contributes hugely to the general access network. The District Council is not aware of many of the informal local arrangements, but advises landowners, on request, of the legal considerations when allowing the public across their land, and may provide its own 'permitted path' waymarks for certain suitable routes. Permissive access is also provided by landowners under the DEFRA Stewardship schemes, details of which are held on DEFRA's website and posted on site notices.

### **Database Development**

- 1.27 Central to the District Council's aim of developing efficient methods of working is the rights of way database. This has been in existence since the early 1990s (when it was one of the first of its kind), and has in 2009 been upgraded to an improved access map-to-database electronic link system, which stores information and improves the effectiveness of general working methods, feedback and on-site surveys.

### **Systems analysis and improvements**

- 1.28 Over the past few years, several measures have been introduced to increase working efficiency. In particular, the database has been further developed and used to streamline some work processes and to group similar work items into discreet planned projects.

### **Communication with the public**

- 1.29 The Council aims to acknowledge all requests for service from the public, and aims to provide progress reports and/or feedback once the service has been delivered.

### **Planning application consultations**

- 1.30 The rights of way team comments on all planning applications which lie close to a public right of way, and applies planning policy, plus its statutory duties, to help to protect and improve the network through the planning system.

### **Open access land**

- 1.31 The District Council is in the process of surveying all the open access land in the district, and has helped some landowners to introduce management measures through the installation of gates and provision of information for the public.

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## APPENDIX 3

### The District Council's statutory duties and powers in relation to the provision of public access

#### **Statutory duties of West Berkshire Council**

- 1.1 The District Council's fundamental statutory duties as both highway and surveying authority are to:
- Assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway, including a duty to prevent, as far as possible, the stopping up or obstruction of highways. This will include a duty to maintain rights of way in a suitable condition and safe for the public use which is made of them.
  - Keep the Definitive Map and Statement under continuous review and up-to-date, as evidence for alterations or additional routes comes to light.
  - Establish a Local Access Forum.
  - Prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
  - Protect users of rights of way from reasonably foreseeable risk (Health and Safety Legislation).
- 1.2 Related to these two main themes are other duties, for instance to provide adequate grass or other margins by a carriageway, where necessary or desirable for the safety or accommodation of ridden horses; to have regards for the needs of people with restricted mobility when authorizing structures on rights of way; to signpost rights of way where they leave roads and to sign rights of way to help people follow the routes. The Council must also arrange to keep copies of the Definitive Map and Statement available for public inspection.
- 1.3 Under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, the Council must not discriminate against people with restricted mobility in the standard of provision of services.
- 1.4 Two National Trails traverse West Berkshire: The Ridgeway and the Thames Path. The principle of National Trails was established under statute in 1949. Natural England and West Berkshire Council work together to secure their management and implementation.
- 1.5 There is a duty across the whole Council to conserve biodiversity, set out by statute in 2006, which states: "every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity". The duty applies to all local authorities; community, parish and town councils; police, fire and health authorities; and utility companies.

#### **Powers of West Berkshire Council**

- 1.6 Various statutes confer powers on the District Council, and the most frequently-used and potentially useful of these are as follows:

- To make legal orders to create, divert or extinguish rights of way and, acting as the traffic authority, to make permanent and temporary traffic regulation orders to regulate the use of rights of way.
  - To authorise new stiles or gates; to maintain stiles or gates and to require the removal or widening of gates. To enter into agreements with landowners to carry out such work in the interests of those with restricted mobility.
  - To require the abatement of nuisance caused by adjacent barbed wire and the cutting or felling of trees or hedges that are overhanging or a danger.
  - To fence dangerous land adjoining a right of way.
  - To prosecute if expedient for the promotion and protection of the interests of the inhabitants of the area.
  - To 'consolidate' the Definitive Map and Statement, by incorporating all legal changes into one document and republishing.
  - To appoint wardens.
- 1.7 Part 1 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 set out new areas of land for public access. Such open access land in West Berkshire comprises registered common land and certain areas of heathland and downland. As the access authority, the District Council possesses powers of management, which include the making of byelaws; the appointment of wardens; the installation of notices; and agreements with owners relating to the construction of access to land.

#### **Powers and duties of other bodies**

- 1.8 For footpaths and bridleways, a **parish council** may carry out maintenance and erect lighting or erect notices warning of local dangers. It may prosecute those who crop or plough without restoration, or obstruct any right of way. It may signpost and waymark rights of way (with the consent of the District Council) and create new footpaths or bridleways with the consent of the landowner.
- 1.9 Any stile or gate across a right of way must be maintained by **the landowner** in a safe and convenient condition. Where vegetation in the ownership of land adjacent to a right of way grows to cause obstruction to the public, the District Council has powers to require removal of the obstructing vegetation by the owner or occupier. An owner or occupier must also ensure that no obstruction or other inconvenience to the public is caused by ploughing and cropping of a right of way. Under certain circumstances, a landowner may exclude the public from statutory open access land, following a serving of Notice on Natural England.

- 1.10 'Towpaths' in West Berkshire lie along the banks of the River Thames and the Kennet and Avon Canal, and may or may not also be public rights of way (public rights of way are separate and distinct from any rights of towage). **British Waterways** has a duty to maintain its commercial and cruising waterways in a suitable condition for vessels driven by mechanical power. British Waterways takes the view that this duty does not oblige it to maintain towpaths, but in practice it sometimes does so, for instance sections of the Kennet and Avon Canal footpath for which, as owner, it permits access for cycling. British Waterways is under a general duty to have regard to the desirability of preserving for the public any freedom of access to towing paths and open land.
- 1.11 **The Environment Agency** is under a general duty to promote the use of its land for recreational purposes, but has no specific duty to maintain towpaths.
- 1.12 Where towpaths coincide with public rights of way, the statutory responsibility to maintain the right of way rests with the District Council.
- 1.13 Powers have been conferred by statute on statutory undertakers (e.g. water or gas companies) to excavate any highway for the purpose of installing or repairing pipes or cables.

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## APPENDIX 4

### Setting future work in a policy context

- 1.1 The Improvement Plan has the potential to aid the delivery of a number of aspirations of the District Council, and there is also a wealth of work being carried out by other bodies, organizations and even individuals which complements this work. Cross references are made to the work of others in the Action Plan section of this document, and care has been taken to ensure that the objectives of this Improvement Plan serve to augment relevant work by others where possible. The necessity to work with partners in order to achieve certain objectives is essential.

### Policies of West Berkshire Council

- 1.2 The **West Berkshire Partnership** brings together representatives from the District Council, the police, health services, voluntary and community services and the private sector, to work more closely and effectively to improve the quality of life of West Berkshire residents. Its **Sustainable Community Strategy, 'A Breath of Fresh Air'** sets a clear vision and direction for West Berkshire to 2026, focusing on improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the district, in partnership with key local stakeholders.
- 1.3 Under the key theme of 'Accessible', relevant priority outcomes are to seek to limit future traffic growth; improve accessibility in rural areas and ensure local services remain accessible to the population they serve. Under the 'Stronger' theme, a relevant priority is to reduce inequality in the health of local people, and under the 'Greener' theme, to protect the countryside; increase the diversity of local wildlife and encourage sustainable travel.
- 1.4 The **Council Plan** sets the Council's priorities for 2007 – 2011. Some relevant aims are to:
- Improve the condition of the district's extensive highway network.
  - Protect and enhance the natural environment of West Berkshire.
  - Promote well-being through the adoption of healthy lifestyles.
  - Engage communities and individuals through the encouragement of volunteering and community participation.
  - Support people with special educational needs or disabilities.
  - Increase access to services and opportunities for all.
- 1.5 The Rights of Way team at West Berkshire Council is part of the Planning and Countryside department. **Service Plans** provide information on how corporate plans are implemented. Service Plan objectives are agreed following consideration of the Council's corporate priorities, legislative demands and pressures on the service.
- 1.6 'The Time of Our Lives' is a **Cultural Strategy** for West Berkshire. It describes the contribution that cultural activities make to quality of life, and the actions that are needed to ensure that cultural activity continues to play a full role. It acknowledges the vital part that enjoyment of the rural environment via the district's rich access network plays in the leisure time activities of residents. Some relevant specific priority outcomes in the document are to:

- Increase the number of volunteering opportunities in cultural activities and projects that offer access to training in vocational skills and qualifications.
  - Ensure that local services remain accessible to the population they serve.
  - Ensure that access for those with restricted mobility is improved, and adapted equipment and technology is provided, to overcome the barriers to participation faced by those with sensory and mobility impairments.
  - Protect the countryside and increase the diversity of local wildlife.
  - Use historic characterization results to understand and protect the nature and value of the historic environment.
  - Protect vulnerable scheduled monuments.
  - Increase the range of opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the natural environment.
  - Increase the numbers of volunteers actively involved in conservation and management programmes.
  - Encourage sustainable travel.
  - Increase the number of voluntary clubs and societies organizing high-quality cultural activities across the district.
  - Target the most disadvantaged communities by cultural practitioners.
  - Improve links between secondary schools and community-based cultural organizations.
  - Reduce inequality in the health of local people.
  - Increase levels of physical activity.
  - Increase the numbers of people referred to cultural activity programmes, in order to benefit their physical or mental health.
- 1.7 The Government is encouraging Rights of Way Improvement Plans to be integrated into, or aligned with, authorities' **Local Transport Plans (LTPs)**, and a statement of the progress of the Improvement Plan has already appeared in West Berkshire's LTP2.
- 1.8 LTP2 sets out the Council's transport planning policy framework, covering a period of 5 years (2006/07 - 2010/11). West Berkshire's vision for transport is "to develop effective sustainable transport solutions for all". This means delivering a transport system which supports the economic vitality of West Berkshire, as well as providing opportunities for people to get to the services they need, in a way that does not harm the environment of the district and beyond. It also means that this has to be done in a way that makes the best use of the resources available. The effectiveness of the Council's and partners' actions is therefore critical in all areas of delivery.
- 1.9 Seven specific strategies have been identified as key to delivering LTP2: accessibility; road safety; passenger transport; walking; cycling; freight and travel planning. The approach to the District as set out in LTP2 recognizes the diverse characteristics across West Berkshire. As a result, three broad geographical areas have been identified: the urban areas of Newbury and Thatcham; the eastern urban area and rural West Berkshire. The strategies most important for the Improvement Plan are:
- The Walking Strategy – seeks to ensure that the pedestrian route network facilitates easy access to major destinations and addresses 'severance' on routes e.g. major roads and unclear routes between transport interchanges.
  - The Cycling Strategy – replicates the general aspirations of the Walking Strategy, to ensure permeability for cyclists across the urban environment. In addition the Cycling strategy aims to direct all new cycling infrastructure towards assisting the

network of strategic cycle routes, including the provision of good linkages to and from significant trip generators such as places of employment, residence, retail, education and leisure.

- The Accessibility Strategy – this has many links to the Walking and Cycling strategies, but in particular aspires to support all sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling and public transport) and optimize the uptake and use of these modes.
- 1.10 The next LTP is currently being developed and will be in place by April 2011. It will link with the authority's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The new LTP will provide a longer-term vision for transport across the district, in line with the Local Development Framework, to 2026. The long-term vision will be supported by 3-year implementation plans.
- 1.11 The new LTP needs to take account of the priorities coming from Central Government through 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS), 2008. These new priorities will help to direct the development of the new LTP and update the current LTP objectives. The main DaSTS priorities are:
- To **support** national **economic** competitiveness and **growth**, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks.
  - To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of **tackling climate change**.
  - To **contribute to better safety, security and health**, and longer life-expectancy, by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health.
  - To **promote** greater **equality of opportunity** for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society.
  - To **improve quality of life** for transport-users and non-transport-users, and to promote a **healthy natural environment**.
- 1.12 The **Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 to 2016** is a document that provides a broad strategy for Berkshire. The present plan advocates the use of Council powers to promote alternative modes of travel than by car, including in relation to major developments.
- 1.13 The **West Berkshire District Local Plan** precedes the future Local Development Framework. One relevant aim is that the transportation needs of new development should be met through the promotion of a range of facilities associated with new transport modes, including walking and cycling. Its recreational aims include safeguarding public rights of way, and also to seek improved access to the countryside, in a manner which conserves its landscape and wildlife value, is sustainable in the long-term, and which minimizes the conflict between users, landowners and local residents.
- 1.14 The **Highway Maintenance Plan** provides guidance on delivery of best value highway maintenance, consistent with the aims of the Council Plan. It seeks to attain this by providing a safer highway network, improving travelling conditions for all highway users, and ensuring greater care of the local environment. A 'sister' document, the draft **Network Management Plan**, has also been developed to define the strategy for managing use of the road network. These both form part of the Council's draft **Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP)**. Public rights of way have been incorporated into these two plans.

### **Other relevant policies and work**

- 1.15 The **Mid and West Berkshire Local Countryside Access Forum** was set up in 2003. It is run jointly by West Berkshire District Council, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council. It is a statutory body which must advise the three Councils on improvement to public access to land and linear access for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment of the area. It must comprise representatives of access users, land managers and others with relevant interests. It meets three times per year and to date has advised on many matters, including via working groups addressing encouragement of responsible behaviour and improved access for those with restricted mobility.
- 1.16 The Local Countryside Access Forum has proved invaluable, not only through guiding the work of West Berkshire Council but also through imparting a wide perspective and combined experience to the advice that is given.
- 1.17 As well as formal policies, there is much relevant work being carried out within various departments of the Council with which the Improvement Plan must be incorporated.

### **Parish plans**

- 1.18 A Parish Plan gives local people the opportunity to engage with their fellow residents, community groups, service-providers and others in setting out a vision for how they want their village or town to develop over the next 5-10 years. It examines all aspects of local life and uses consultation with the community to provide the foundations for an action plan, which prioritises local issues, identifies key partners for delivery and sets target dates for the completion of projects. Several relevant themes have repeatedly emerged from Parish Plans to date:
- Improve cycleways and footpaths.
  - Protect and preserve the countryside.
  - Promote areas of historic and local interest to improve the economy.
  - Increase and improve information for the community through web sites, newsletters, booklets etc.

### **National Trails Management Strategies**

- 1.19 Two National Trails pass through West Berkshire, The Ridgeway and the Thames Path, both of which utilize public rights of way. National Trails provide a nationally and internationally-recognized series of walks and rides. In West Berkshire, the Thames Path is promoted for use by walkers and The Ridgeway for use by walkers, equestrians, cyclists and carriages.
- 1.20 The delivery of high-quality National Trails depends on a partnership between many organizations, including Natural England, local authorities, voluntary bodies, landowners and occupiers, private sector companies and local individuals and communities. Proposals for specific projects and long-term ongoing management are contained in the Ridgeway and Thames Path Management Strategies, endorsed by the National Trails Management Group, of which West Berkshire Council is a member.
- 1.21 West Berkshire Council contributes to the upkeep and management of its two National Trails. The work is based on three main principles:

- To enable as many people as possible to enjoy access to the National Trails.
- To protect the ecological, cultural, and landscape features of the areas through which each Trail passes.
- To provide sufficient information about the facilities and services that people need in order to enjoy the routes, however long they wish to stay.

### **North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2009-2014**

1.22 The vision for the North Wessex Downs AONB is of ' vast, dramatic, undeveloped and locally-distinct chalk downlands, with extensive areas of semi-natural chalk grassland, contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable lands and intimate and secluded valleys, all rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage; a landscape that stands apart from the increasing urban pressures that surround it; where people live, work and relax; and where visitors are welcomed and contribute to a vibrant rural economy'.

1.23 The Delivery Plan includes several objectives relevant to the access network:

- To encourage diverse and viable agriculture, forestry, horseracing and other land-based enterprises that support the delivery of a wide range of public benefits, including the conservation and enhancement of the area's special qualities and features; the provision of access opportunities, and support for local markets.
- To provide transport that is more sustainable and meets the needs of residents of, and visitors to, the North Wessex Downs.
- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and enjoy the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs, whilst minimising the impacts of visitors.
- To promote a recreation and tourism sector that is well-managed, sustainable, and adds value to the local economy, whilst respecting the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.

### **Forestry Commission**

1.24 The Government, through the Forestry Commission, is by far the largest owner of woodlands nationally. Its policy is to allow access to all its woods on a permissive basis, provided there are no legal or management constraints.

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## APPENDIX C

### COMMENTS OF THE MID & WEST BERKSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ON WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL'S LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2011 - 2026

The Local Access Forum (LAF) exists, as a statutory body under Section 94 of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, to advise Reading Borough Council, the West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council "as to the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area".

We did not avail ourselves of the opportunity to comment on the earlier draft of the West Berkshire Council's Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2026 (LTP3), so we take this opportunity to comment in some detail on Chapters 1-5. Our comments on later chapters follow after that.

Some of our Members represent the interests of people who wish to use the entire highway network (except motorways), as is their right, by non-motorised means. With increased motorised traffic, these people have been progressively driven off the highways, until it has become normal for 'highway engineers' to see leisure use of highways on foot, by bike, on horseback or by horse-drawn carriage, as a nuisance. If we are to be truly sustainable and fair to all road users, the West Berkshire Council's LTP must consider the interests of these forms of travel **first**. If their confidence in the safety of the highway network for leisure is restored, they will also use it for utility journeys.

- 1.5 We trust that the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will take account of the increasing use of disabled buggies/scooters. These help to reduce vehicular transport and greatly assist less able, often elderly people to access the highway network. However, there is a lack of suitable safe routes for these scooters in particular, also for wheelchairs, bicycles and pedestrians, on many routes used by vulnerable groups unable for various reasons to use motor vehicles. Because routes into and through the countryside often involve sections which are unsafe for these users, there is a clear equalities' impact.

We also trust that the EIA will assess the impact of LTP policies on equestrians, that is, those engaged in the racing industry, the sport/leisure horse industry and those who drive horse carriages. These legitimate users of the road network are usually not catered for but need to use the road network for training, accessing their training areas, as well as for recreational purposes. This vulnerable group of legitimate highway users, has been recognized as vital to the local economy (see West Berkshire Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy CS13).

- 3.4 We welcome, in the overall Vision, replacement of "develop" (the LTP) with "deliver", in recognition that plans need to be deliverable, based on identified resources. The LAF would expect to see elements of the linked Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) delivered through the resources assigned to the LTP, linked as shown in figure 2.1.

- 4.8 We welcome the emphasis on health benefits from walking and cycling and note that these methods of commuting and informal recreational use of the rights of way network (including by horse-riders and carriage drivers) can make a significant contribution to the economy of the District and to the welfare of the local population. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle by use of the highway (including

rights of way) network and exercise in urban and country parks also contributes indirectly to a lively local economy.

- 4.14 Noting the desire to shift commuting journeys from congested roads to other forms of travel, the LAF would urge that public rights of way used for this are not 'urbanised' more than necessary to achieve that laudable aim. Highest priority should be given to providing safe road crossings and sections beside busy or unlit road for cyclists and pedestrians wishing to make commuter journeys this way (see 4.35-6). These routes need to be pleasant and safe for users to obtain potential 'positive benefits for health' (see also 4.20, 4.27 & 4.48). They also need a higher priority in terms of maintenance.
- 4.15 The significant impact on non-motorised users should be spelled out here. Large vehicles, even on minor roads, are a major impediment to use of those roads by vulnerable non-motorised users (NMUs) - and to use of the rights of way network, which often cannot be used without using roads. We suggest additional wording (underlined): *'However, there are also widespread concerns regarding the problems arising from Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) using the local road network. These often relate to road safety, and the impact on the natural and built environments, the impact on use by vulnerable non-motorised users (walkers, disabled scooters, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), and the impact on local communities'*
- 4.17 Add in 'which deters non-motorised travel' to read *'to certain roads, and the volume and size of lorries on many rural routes which deters non-motorised travel'.*
- 4.27 Fear of traffic on an often short journey between home and countryside means people often choose to take their car, instead of walking or riding direct from home or stable. Where possible, to reduce carbon emissions, safe routes should be created from where people live direct to countryside.
- 4.35 '*Difficulty in walking, particularly for older people*' should be added to the list. This is an important issue with the increasing number of older people.
- The issue of railway, canal and A4 forming a serious barrier to sustainable means of North-South travel are highlighted. The LAF urges greater priority to be given to creating safe and pleasant crossings of these barriers for leisure use as well as utility journeys, although often crossings suitable for non-motorised use can and should be provided alongside existing road crossings.
- 4.36 Additional issues which make cycling unattractive are:
- Difficulty in carrying shopping and more than one child
  - lack of recent cycling experience especially for older people who may well not wish to learn (balance problems)
  - the desire to arrive smartly dressed.
- 4.37 Recreational use of the countryside often unavoidably involves a vehicular journey to access the start of a walk, bike or horse ride. Adequate parking facilities need to be provided for horse-boxes as well as cars throughout the District, as often as possible at or near pubs, village halls and other places with toilet provision. Recreational routes that pass railway stations or bus stops



ought to be actively promoted, in conjunction with transport providers - for whom recreational users can provide much needed off-peak revenue to help sustain essential services to rural communities. The carriage of bikes on rural buses should be encouraged, as happens in other countries.

#### 4.40 onwards: Highway networks.

'Highways' include the rights of way network. There is no mention of highway networks for NMUs for utility & recreational purposes which would support sustainable travel, eg greenways, quiet lanes. This is odd considering the need to develop sustainable travel and the implementation of quiet lanes in Bucklebury. The LAF would like to see more sections of road that are very lightly trafficked by vehicles managed primarily for NMUs, with clearer signage and possibly a different maintenance regime, which would actively discourage use of these routes by vehicles, other than for access. An example is Lawrences Lane, Thatcham, which could become the main access route for all NMUs to the Pang Valley.

#### 4.45 onwards: Safe & Healthy travel

There is nothing in this section about fear of non-motorised users of vehicles while using roads. The perception of danger is a major factor in limiting road usage by NMUs. It needs to be included - and addressed.

4.45 A lack of awareness of the high impact on equestrian activities needs to be acknowledged, considering the importance attached to the equestrian economy in the [Planning] Core Strategy by adding '*and equestrian use of the rights of way network*' at the end of the sentence.

4.49 Enjoyment of countryside access can best be encouraged at an early age, leading to healthier lifestyles for future generations. The LAF would urge those who influence school travel plans (SMOTS) and educational programmes for schools in the District to include supervised nature walks within these, taking advantage of the extensive rights of way network and country parks. Every primary school should investigate and promote safe off-road routes to and from school into nearby countryside. Farmers, landowners and parish councils should encourage responsible access by family and school groups on permitted paths and rights of way (6.4.54).

4.50 Cross boundary issues also arise with the rights of way network. A particular issue is the Wayfarers Walk extension into Wiltshire and (via Test Way) Hampshire from Inkpen, where access from the road network by four-wheel-drive vehicles and motorbikes onto a remote byway needs coordinated management by three highway authorities.

5.3 & 5.6 The LAF is somewhat concerned that the mention of 'leisure' use in LTP2 Objectives (third bullet point) has disappeared from LTP3 Goals for 2011-2026. The rights of way network clearly has a significant and growing role in helping achieve many of the goals in Figure 5.1, as set out in preceding sections of the document. By failing to feature leisure uses among these goals explicitly, we fear that it will be regarded as an afterthought rather than a reason for travel in its own right, especially using non-vehicular means and the rights of way network. In the document overall, there is a tendency not to recognize that

much travel is for recreational/leisure purposes and that this contributes to many local businesses, either directly or indirectly.

- Fig 5.1 There are several spelling mistakes in the text on this figure.
- 6.2.22 This is an excellent summary of the potential increased role of the rights of way network in the local transport network. The LAF is pleased to see this embedded in the LTP, with the proviso that it does not reduce the amenity value for all those user groups who legitimately use the rights of way network for recreation.
- 6.3.24 The LAF is pleased to see explicit mention of the need to improve links between Thatcham and the Living Landscape but improved access to the countryside also needs to be provided for equestrians who stable their horses in this area. For example, the LTP does not appear to recognize that there is a 20+ horse livery yard close to Thatcham station, a similar business enterprise in Ashmore Green, plus many small equestrian establishments which, to thrive, would like access to a safe highway network. However, the above-mentioned railway and canal form serious barriers to achieving this. We urge the Council to give priority to this recognised need by creating multi-user, off-road (restricted byways), routes for **all**.
- 6.3.47 Horse riding and carriage driving should be included as leisure activities which require access to the countryside from this area (see comment to 6.3.24 above).
- 6.4.5 Use of the word 'perhaps' is odd here considering the emphasis on the racehorse industry in the [Planning] Core Strategy.
- 6.4.9 As this paragraph relates to sustainable tourism, horse riding should be included. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is highly suited to equestrian tourism which occurs now but appears to go unnoticed by the planners.
- 6.4.10 The LAF is pleased to see the LTP say the Council "will do all it can" to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders on rural roads in the AONB. We would ask that priority is given to provision of safe 'behind-the-hedge/fence' routes, particularly for equestrians, on roads that link bridle ways, restricted byways and byways, to enable more circular leisure routes to be provided. This will support the aim of promoting 'sustainable tourism, leisure opportunities (6.4.21 & 29) and sustainable travel.
- 6.4.12 **Transport corridors.** It is vital that the ability of NMUs to cross major roads is maintained so that the rights of way network does not become fragmented. A comment to this effect should be included. Nor is there mention of the need to maintain safe, off-road, crossings of the railway line, to stop fragmentation of the rights of way network.
- 6.4.22 The Forum supports the implementation of the DfT recommendation to reduce speed limits on all minor roads.
- 6.4.28-29 Once again, there is lack of awareness of equestrian leisure/sport, even in the AONB area. Horse riding and carriage driving need to be included. See

comment above to 6.4.9. The heading of 'walking and cycling' needs to be replaced with 'non-motorised travel'.

6.4.54 Equestrians require safe routes to the countryside perhaps more than any other user group.

6.5.7 Include mention of equestrians here to support CS13. This area is home to what is probably the most prestigious equestrian teaching establishment in West Berks, Hall Place, located in Tilehurst. This business, in part, relies on private access to the countryside to ensure the safety of its customers because little, if any, recognition has been given in the past to the safety of these vulnerable users on the roads. The Forum would support speed restrictions in the vicinity of stables, in much the same way as in the vicinity of schools.

#### 6.5.10 & 6.5.30 Developing the Transport Vision for the Eastern Area

The negative impact which the major transport routes have on sustainable travel and the rights of way network (walking, cycling, equestrian travel), especially with respect to crossing the major routes (eg. A4, railway line), needs to be mentioned and addressed.

6.5.39& 6.5.46 To support LDF policy CS13, the Council should assess the needs of equestrians in these areas (if it is not known already from the District Profile) and include equestrians here.

6.6.21 Include 'equestrian routes'. Again, there is no mention of equestrian travel in the sentence. In a survey in 2005 for the ROWIP, 340 horses were counted in a 5 mile radius of Stratfield Mortimer kept in at least 25 establishments. This equates to £1million into the local economy. Equestrians desperately need safe access to the countryside because of the negative impact of vehicular traffic on the roads connecting the rights of way network. This needs to be recognized if the CS13 is to be supported by the LTP

6.6.29 Include 'vulnerable, non-motorised users'.

In Section 7 (Transport Policies and Supporting Plans), the LAF is pleased to note that the RoWIP is mentioned as a 'Key Strategy or Plan for Delivery' of 'Accessibility (Quality & Inclusion) - K4', and 'Health & Leisure - K14' (Figure 7.1). Also in 'Supporting Policies' SC1 (walking, as a travel choice) as a means of delivering the RoWIP.

Policy LTP SC1 and LTP SC2. Given the emphasis on walking & cycling, it needs to be made clear that these activities should not be to the detriment of the equestrian industry – see policy CS13 which supports opportunities for equestrians to enjoy the countryside. Thus, taking over of bridleways by cyclists should not be supported in areas where the land use supports equestrian activities.

Highway Management Policy LTP NMP1. 'all users' is mentioned several times. It would be re-assuring to know if this includes ALL non-motorised users who use or would like to use roads to link up the rights of way network, eg equestrian businesses such as livery yards, riding schools etc.

- 7.10 Highway Maintenance. It would be reassuring if 'all users, including non-motorised users' was added, if, indeed, non-motorised users are included here.
- LTP K8 Add in other road users (underlined): ii Improving safety for vulnerable road users of all ages, such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and those who use mobility scooters.
- 7.11.4 Equestrians are inexcusably left out of the vulnerable group. However, many have ceased using the road network, and hence the rights of way network, because of **fear of being seriously injured or killed**. They do not wait to become a KSI statistic. The document does not recognize this and yet the Council supports the equestrian industry (CS13).
- 7.16.3 Add in 'or the rights of way network' to read: '*The travel and transport aspects of development need to be planned in a way that links well with existing networks and delivers enhancements. New development should not implement measures that have an adverse impact on existing transport networks or services **or the rights of way network***'.
- 7.17 Health and Leisure. Carriage driving is not mentioned. Routes for equestrians are not mentioned. This is discriminatory. Both should be included. There are probably more equestrians out there using the network than there are cyclists and more equestrians out there who would like to use the network. The only problem is that no counts have been done.
- 7.5.20 The LAF would like to see, under Policy LTP SC6 'Branding, Marking & Promotion', some mention of the potential for marketing West Berkshire's AONB in particular as a destination for sustainable day-trip and short break leisure tourism involving use of the rights of way, with access from railway stations in the district. The potential for attracting visitors from London, the Midlands and the rest of the southeast, as well from overseas during and after the coming Olympics, needs to be highlighted in the LTP.
- 7.7 The LAF is pleased to see the rights of way network mentioned in LTP K4, with the objective of improving Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance of the network for disadvantaged groups of all kinds.
- 8.10 The community interest groups ought to be specified to ensure all legitimate road users are covered.

We note, under 'Monitoring of Delivery' in Figure 9.1, the proposed indicator 'ease of use of rights of way'. The LAF would like to be involved in developing that indicator in a way that truly reflects the 'ease of use' and accessibility by/for all user groups.

Adrian Lawson  
Chairman  
19 November 2010

## APPENDIX D

### WEST BERKSHIRE ROWIP - ACTION PLAN UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2010

Priorities are: **H** High Priority (guide: years 1 to 2) **M** Medium Priority (guide: years 2 to 5) **O** Ongoing (work already started and ongoing)

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Priority	Progress September 2010
<b>A well-maintained and safe access network</b>			
Produce a strategy to reduce the instances of laying of unauthorized tarmac surfaces on PROW and a policy to set out the District Council's approach to tarmac on PROW.	ROWIP 1	H	
Carry out a complete condition survey of all Definitive PROW at least every ten years.	ROWIP 2	O	Completed 2009.
Investigate the feasibility of a limited scheme to remunerate landowners for carrying out repair, maintenance and improvement works on PROW.	ROWIP 3	M	
Review measures to ensure that landowners maintain all hedges adjacent to PROW so as to prevent obstruction of PROW by overgrowth.	ROWIP 4	M	Underway via use of 2009 survey data
Formally adopt the draft policy governing the maintenance of PROW used for access to residential properties, farms and other private land or establishments.	ROWIP 5	H	Draft produced and being used as a procedure. Adoption in progress.
Produce a design and consultation protocol for the repair, replacement and installation of bridges on PROW.	ROWIP 6	M	
Review PROW sign and waymark designs to reduce future instances of fading and unauthorized relocation or redirection.	ROWIP 7	H	
Remedy all unresolved PROW signage defects by the end of April each year.	ROWIP 8	O	Annual winter signposting programme resumes soon for 2010/11.
Produce a prioritization scheme for physical works, vegetation clearance and enforcement on PROW.	ROWIP 9	H	Prioritisation scheme in progress. Annual maintenance and improvement programme continues, using the 'Milestones Statement' basic prioritisation criteria.
<b>A legally-recorded PROW network</b>			
'Consolidate' and publish the Definitive Map and Statement in a clear and useable format.	ROWIP 10	M	
Each year to complete the processing of the annually-agreed list of applications for modification orders and path orders.	ROWIP 11	O	2010/11 case aprogramme on target for completion.

<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives</b>	<b>ROWIP Reference</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Progress September 2010</b>
<b>Produce a published prioritization scheme for dealing with applications for modification orders and applications for path orders.</b>	ROWIP 12	H	Draft produced and being followed.
<b>Carry out risk assessments for trees within PROW and formulate a prioritized plan of action to ensure the safety of PROW users.</b>	ROWIP 13	H	In progress using 2009 survey data. To concentrate on hazards and heavily-used routes, mechanism to evaluate the trees yet to be decided.
<b>Consider appropriate legal mechanisms to recognize acquisition of cycling rights along urban public footpaths.</b>	ROWIP 14	M	
<b>An environmentally-sustainable access network</b>			
<b>Investigate methods to prevent fly-tipping and littering of PROW and also improved methods for clearance of litter and fly-tipping when instances occur.</b>	ROWIP 15	H	
<b>Investigate improved sustainable procurement practices.</b>	ROWIP 16	H	An initial meeting with WBC sustainability officer held.
<b>Introduce improved environmentally-sustainable working practices, which also protect and enhance biodiversity and historic landscape and features.</b>	ROWIP 17	H	To be discussed with WBC's ecologist Oct/Nov 2010
<b>Providing information / promoting the use of the access network</b>			
<b>Increase the availability of PROW / access information and promotional material and explore greater use of a wider range of formats, to compliment relevant work carried out by others.</b>	ROWIP 18		WBC web site to be improved to provide more user-friendly information and searches for access information (agreed with Local Access Forum)
<b>Support parish councils, parish plan groups, and others, to increase the range and availability of promotional material for PROW / access.</b>	ROWIP 19	O	Support given (advice, maps and sometimes financial) on a reactive basis.
<b>Education / encouragement of responsible behaviour</b>			
<b>Produce published material to provide information about PROW / access and about the responsibilities of PROW users, landowners and other bodies.</b>	ROWIP 20	H	Initial consideration given.
<b>Produce a formal policy for the management of vehicular use and vehicular surfaces, with the aim of improving the condition of PROW used by recreational vehicles.</b>	ROWIP 21	H	Draft approved by LAF and being followed by WBC as a procedure.
<b>Implement procedures to remove unsuitable PROW from published satellite navigation routes.</b>	ROWIP 22	M	
<b>Continue to contribute access information to the "Greenways" newsletter.</b>	ROWIP 23	O	Contribution made twice a year.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Priority	Progress September 2010
Explore opportunities to work with schools within the National Curriculum to increase understanding of the role of access within the countryside and the responsibilities of citizens.	ROWIP 24	M	
<b>Development of new and improved access</b>			
Seek to promote, improve and create (where necessary) safe and commodious links between, within and around population centres, rural and urban facilities, attractions and transport interchanges.	ROWIP 25	O	
Seek to promote, improve and create (where necessary) suitable routes to school and consider an increased maintenance programme for these routes.	ROWIP 26	O	Some improvements carried out following requests from the School Travel Plan Officer.
Seek greater partnership with businesses, landowners and partners, to secure the provision of additional permissive or Definitive access for all users.	ROWIP 27	O	One HLS access scheme has recently been submitted for comment, and DEFRA officers have been made more aware of the need to consider access as an option for HLS payments.
Increase the provision of suitable equestrian routes where existing provision is low or fragmented, and where demand is high, especially routes which facilitate riding to and from livery yards without the need for horseboxes.	ROWIP 28	O	The LAF working group has chosen the Chieveley area as a pilot to implement improvements identified in the Chieveley Parish Plan. WBC rights of way officers are assisting with the work.
Develop circular interlinking equestrian and cycle routes around settlements ("community circuits") which also link to longer rides.	ROWIP 29	O	The LAF working group has chosen the Chieveley area as a pilot to implement improvements identified in the Chieveley Parish Plan. WBC rights of way officers are assisting with the work.
Investigate increased access for equestrians and carriages on West Berkshire-managed commons.	ROWIP 30	O	
<b>Physical improvements to the access network</b>			
Research and implement mechanisms to realign the road user hierarchy in favour of non-motorized transport modes, especially walking (Local Transport Plan 2, policy WI9).	ROWIP 31	O	
Work with partners in rural areas to identify opportunities for improving the safety of the physical environment, in particular for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders (Local Transport Plan 2, policy RSI 7).	ROWIP 32	O	
Implement measures to ensure that all gates on equestrian routes are easily-openable from horseback, using best practice gate and latch designs and gate configurations. Consider the installation of mounting blocks where dismounting cannot be avoided.	ROWIP 33	O	Rights of Way Officer Sallie Jennings is starting this project and will liaise with the BHS.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Priority	Progress September 2010
Increase the numbers of PROW signposts indicating destinations, distances and local attractions.	ROWIP 34	O	
Improve the signage of PROW in and around West Berkshire's countryside sites.	ROWIP 35	M	Some Walk4Life waymarks have been installed as part of Natural England's scheme for 1 mile and 1-3 mile routes. More routes likely to be identified and waymarked in the future.
Implement measures to improve signage and promotion of all permitted access.	ROWIP 36	M	
Implement measures to improve management and promotion of open access land and links to and from access land.	ROWIP 37	M	
<b>Improving accessibility for all users</b>			
Identify routes and circuits which are suitable for promotion for use by those with restricted mobility, including within countryside sites. Promote and sign the routes in terms of grading and carry out works, where needed.	ROWIP 38	O	Two projects now underway, led by a volunteer working with WBC. These are at Purley and Tilehurst. The WBC Disability Panel will be consulted on plans in November 2010.
Continue to provide buggies, for those with restricted mobility, at West Berkshire countryside sites.	ROWIP 39	O	
Continue to improve the accessibility of structures on rights of way, and introduce and implement new incentives for landowners to do likewise.	ROWIP 40	O	Ongoing work to replace defective stiles with more accessible structures. In addition, the Ramblers' Work Party continues to install one gate every two weeks.
Implement improved promotion of access to the PROW / access network for Walking the Way to Health participants.	ROWIP 41	H	Some Walk4Life waymarks have been installed as part of Natural England's scheme for 1 mile and 1-3 mile routes. More routes likely to be identified and waymarked in the future.
Establish greater dialogue with ethnic minority groups, children and young people and groups which traditionally do not visit the countryside, to produce an action plan to encourage and maintain participation.	ROWIP 42	M	
Support measures to provide shower, clothes-drying and cycle-parking facilities at schools, work places and other destinations, to encourage non-car transport.	ROWIP 43		
Audit car park barriers on the access network, and seek to ensure that access is possible for horseboxes, where appropriate.	ROWIP 44	H	



Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives	ROWIP Reference	Priority	Progress September 2010
Seek new car parking, cycle parking and horsebox / trailer parking on the access network, where there is a potential need.	ROWIP 45	O	
<b>Working with partners</b>			
Provide support, where needed, to other bodies whose aspirations compliment those of this ROWIP.	ROWIP 46	O	
Encourage parish councils to use their full range of powers where appropriate and support the appointment of parish council public rights of way officers.	ROWIP 47	O	WBC planning to produce a simple guide for parish councils on what improvements they can make to the access network and where WBC or other bodies can assist. Ongoing support and advice given.
Arrange formal rights of way training for parish public rights of way officers, parish plan teams and voluntary groups.	ROWIP 48	O	
Continue to provide support and direction to voluntary groups and to encourage the participation of volunteers of all ages in access work.	ROWIP 49	O	'ROAR, the two Ramblers' Work parties and parish-based volunteers are all supported despite the recent loss of the Capital Projects Officer who was doing this work.
Support the access work identified within parish plans and 'Area Visions'.	ROWIP 50	O	Support given, work led by Corporate Policy section.
<b>Improving working practices and customer care</b>			
Create a comprehensive PROW / access library incorporating controlled copies.	ROWIP 51	H	The internal WBC electronic library is being improved at the moment.
Use all appropriate internal District Council communication channels to inform relevant parties of developments in PROW / access work.	ROWIP 52	O	
Improve the efficiency and speed of use of available legal powers in relation to PROW.	ROWIP 53	O	Much work has been done in the last two year and this is greatly improved. Further consideration is being given to how to improve the efficiency of legal processes in relation to enforcement.
Improve awareness of land management priorities and procedures amongst District Council PROW staff.	ROWIP 54	H	Ongoing training taking place.
Liaise more closely with West Berkshire's Planning and Transport Strategy group, and other planning consultees, so as to benefit the PROW / access network.	ROWIP 55	O	WBC rights of way officer attends the LTP3 planning meetings and the Cycle Forum. LTP officers are informed of relevant rights of way work.

<b>Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) themes and objectives</b>	<b>ROWIP Reference</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Progress September 2010</b>
<b>Funding</b>			
<b>Investigate the feasibility of a grant scheme for access work by parish councils, parish plan groups and others, taking into account funding already available.</b>	ROWIP 56	M	WBC planning to produce a simple guide for parish councils on what improvements they can make to the access network and where WBC or other bodies can assist.
<b>Seek to involve community and special interest groups in funding and delivering small access schemes.</b>	ROWIP 57	O	
<b>Investigate opportunities for external and grant funding for PROW/ access projects.</b>	ROWIP 58	O	Some external funding has been secured. Possible sources being investigated as part of present service reviews.
<b>Monitoring / continued consultation</b>			
<b>Continue to receive and consider requests for improved access, and to incorporate them into an annually-updated list of requests for specific access improvements.</b>	ROWIP 59	O	Annual ongoing process of planning and implementation.
<b>The Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum to advise on implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.</b>	ROWIP 60	O	
<b>Learn and listen to views of others, at the same time seeking and implementing best practice in relation to PROW / access work.</b>	ROWIP 61	O	
<b>Implement an effective internal method of recording good practice and lessons learnt in PROW / access work, for the benefit of present and future staff.</b>	ROWIP 62	H	Shared electronic system being increasingly used.
<b>Produce an annual progress report on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan Action Plan.</b>	ROWIP 63	O	Annual progress report on the Action Plan to be presented.

# Agenda Item 6.

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Renewable Energy in West Berkshire</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Greener Select Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> December 2010
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	N/A

## Purpose of Report:

This report is in response to two separate but related Council motions, dated March and September 2010, concerning renewable energy within West Berkshire and West Berkshire Council.

## Recommended Action:

- 1) That the LSP Greener Partnership are best placed for taking on responsibility for, and producing, a West Berkshire Renewable Energy Strategy.
- 2) That the Council Energy Team finalise an Energy Strategy, to include policy on renewable energy, for West Berkshire Council.

## Reason for decision to be taken:

To set out the Council's current position regards renewable energy in West Berkshire

## Other options considered:

## Key background documentation:

'The Energy Act 2008', 'The Climate Change Act 2008', 'The UK Renewable Energy Strategy 2009', 'Berkshire Renewable Energy - 2020, Evidence Base & Recommendations' 2010.

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priority(ies):

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic downturn** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce crime and the fear of crime**

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**

- CPT12 - Including Everyone
- CPT13 - Value for Money
- CPT14 - Effective People
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Hilary Cole - Tel (01635) 248542
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	hcole@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	01 December 2010

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Adrian Slaughter
<b>Job Title:</b>	Building Energy Officer
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 503265
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	aslaughter@westberks.gov.uk

## Implications

<b>Policy:</b>	This report identifies a need for a West Berkshire Renewable Energy Strategy in support of UK targets and also explains that an overarching Energy Strategy is currently being developed for West Berkshire Council. Production of these Strategies / Policies will be done in consultation with local stakeholders and Council Services to ensure that implications for Council policy are clearly understood.
<b>Financial:</b>	The introduction of a Council Energy Strategy will improve the targeting of the Carbon Management budget, making this more objective.
<b>Personnel:</b>	None identified at this stage
<b>Legal/Procurement:</b>	The introduction of a Council Energy Strategy will provide a more structured approach to the procurement of goods, services and specialist support.
<b>Property:</b>	The introduction of a Council Energy Strategy should ensure that energy efficiency and renewables are considered as part of the scoping and design stages for building refurbishment and new building works where it is more cost effective.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment:</b>	None identified at this stage

**NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.**

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated		<input type="checkbox"/>
Task Groups within preceding six months		
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>

# Executive Summary

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is in direct response to two separate but related Council motions on renewable energy, dated March and September 2010, which were passed for consideration to the Greener Select Committee. The motions can be found in full in Appendix A and B respectively.
- 1.2 The aim of the report is to first put into context the national, regional and local policy and financial drivers for renewable energy. It will then provide a high level summary of the current level of renewable energy within West Berkshire Council and West Berkshire. Finally it will outline the potential next steps for consideration by the Greener Select Committee.

## 2. Background & Context

- 2.1 The last few years, and especially the last 6 months, have seen a number of developments relating to sources of renewable energy, encouraging administrations to adopt a more proactive stance at the national, regional and local level.
- 2.2 In 2007, the UK agreed with other EU Member States to an EU-wide target of 20% of the EU's *total energy consumption* to come from renewable sources by 2020. The UK share of this overall target is to achieve 15% of the UK's total energy consumption to come from renewable sources by 2020.
- 2.3 One of the drivers employed by the Government is greater financial support for renewable energy in the form of the 'Feed in Tariff' and the 'Renewable Heat Incentive'.
- 2.4 The situation with regards the South East Plan, referred to in Appendix A, is currently unclear. Revoked by the Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, this action has, however, been successfully challenged in the High Court. The case was specifically concerned with housing targets but it means that the South East Plan is legally still in force.
- 2.5 Since late August 2010, when the Government removed the restriction on Local Authorities being able to take full advantage of the Feed in Tariff (FITs) the Energy team have been liaising with other Berkshire Local Authorities, external organisations, key West Berkshire Council Service Areas and renewable energy suppliers.
- 2.6 In order to move forward, there first needs to be greater clarity of where, as a Council and as a District, we are currently positioned with regards to renewables
- 2.7 Drawn from SEE-STATS and Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) figures, Table 1 in Appendix D shows the latest available information for Berkshire with regards the level of energy from renewable sources as a percentage of total energy consumption (3.1%). It also uses available planning information, and the assumption that all projects will be implemented, to predict a 'Business as Usual' scenario of 5.3% of total energy consumption in Berkshire coming from renewable sources by 2020.

- 2.8 As part of a larger piece of work across Berkshire started by the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board, the LSP Greener sub-partnership is currently undertaking a feasibility study for district energy schemes in West Berkshire.
- 2.9 Appendix D, Table 2, highlights that within West Berkshire Council there are a number of current sites with renewable energy generating technologies installed. The total peak capacity of all these technologies is 746 kW or 0.7 MW.
- 2.10 The Council is also working with 'Partnership for Renewables', an arm of the Carbon Trust, to review the potential for large wind turbine development on its own land. This study has now identified a preferred site and further consultation work is required to ensure that this is feasible and does not impact on any other Council strategy.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommendations**

- 3.1 With West Berkshire being part of the area covered by the overall target for the Thames Valley and Surrey region there is an absence of specific Local Authority targets within the South East Plan. There is therefore a requirement for a more detailed bottom-up study for renewable energy within West Berkshire. Encompassing the results of high level Berkshire studies already undertaken by Thames Valley Energy and potentially looking in more detail at those sites identified in Appendix C, it is recommended that responsibility for undertaking such a study best sits with the LSP Greener sub-partnership.
- 3.2 The Cleaner Greener group responsible for delivering the Council's Cleaner Greener agenda have made a request of the Energy Team for a generic high level Council Policy on renewable energy. To include policy and procedure for large and small scale implementation of renewable energy, this will be taken on as part of a more expansive piece of work to design and implement an Energy Strategy for West Berkshire Council

#### **Recommendations**

- 3.3 **That the LSP Greener Partnership are best placed for taking on responsibility for, and producing, a West Berkshire Renewable Energy Strategy.**
- 3.4 **That the Council Energy Team finalise an Energy Strategy, to include policy on renewable energy, for West Berkshire Council.**

# Executive Report

---

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is in direct response to two separate but related Council motions on renewable energy, dated March and September 2010, which were passed for consideration to the Greener Select Committee. The motions can be found in full in Appendix A and B respectively.
- 1.2 As there is considerable overlap between the two individual motions it was agreed with the chairman of the Greener Select Committee that they could be dealt with in one report.
- 1.3 The aim of the report is to first put into context the national, regional and local policy and financial drivers for renewable energy. It will then provide a high level summary of the current level of renewable energy within West Berkshire Council and West Berkshire. Finally it will outline the potential next steps for consideration by the Greener Select Committee.

## 2. Background and Context

- 2.1 The last few years have seen a number of developments relating to sources of renewable energy, encouraging administrations to adopt a more proactive stance at the national, regional and local level. This section reviews the key policies and drivers that will impinge on West Berkshire and sets the context within which any renewable energy strategy will have to be delivered.

### National

- 2.2 In 2007, the UK agreed with other EU Member States to an EU-wide target of 20% of the EU's *total energy consumption* to come from renewable sources by 2020. The UK share of this overall target is to achieve 15% of the UK's total energy consumption to come from renewable sources by 2020.
- 2.3 The UK Renewable Energy Strategy, 2009, outlines the path to achieving this target by 2020 and the size of the challenge.
- 2.4 One of the drivers employed by the Government is greater financial support for renewable energy in the form of the 'Feed in Tariff' and the 'Renewable Heat Incentive'.
- 2.5 Introduced in April 2010, the 'Feed in Tariff' scheme (FITs) guarantees a minimum payment for all electricity generated by certain types of microgeneration technology up to 5 MW, as well as a separate payment for the electricity exported to grid. The tariff levels vary depending on the microgeneration technology installed and any payments are in addition to the bill savings made by using the electricity generated on-site.
- 2.6 The technologies covered by FITs are:
  - (a) Solar Photovoltaics,



- (b) Wind,
- (c) Hydro,
- (d) Anaerobic Digestion, and
- (e) MicroCHP (limited to a pilot at this time).

2.7 Within the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), it was confirmed that in the next formal review of FITs, due in 2012, the scheme will be refocused on the most cost effective technologies. The Government have also reserved the right to undertake an earlier review if take up is greater than expected. At this moment in time it is unclear what impact this may have but it could involve changing the tariff levels for each technology.

2.8 The CSR also confirmed that the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) will go ahead in June 2011. This scheme is similar to FITs in that it guarantees payment for heat generated by certain types of renewable heat technologies. Unlike FITs, there is no export tariff as there is no 'national grid' for heat. However, there is no upper limit on the size of the technologies that can be employed and therefore the scheme is open to large community type projects such as combined heat and power (CHP).

2.9 The technologies covered by RHI are:

- (a) Air source heat pumps,
- (b) Ground source heat pumps,
- (c) Solar thermal heat and hot water,
- (d) Biomass heat generation and CHP
- (e) Anaerobic digestion to produce biogas for heat generation, and
- (f) Liquid biofuels (but only when replacing oil fired heating systems).

2.10 More detailed information on FITs and RHI can be found on the Department for Energy and Climate Change website.  
([http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what\\_we\\_do/uk\\_supply/energy\\_mix/renewable/renewable.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what_we_do/uk_supply/energy_mix/renewable/renewable.aspx))

### **Regional**

2.11 The situation with regards the South East Plan, referred to in Appendix A, is currently unclear. Revoked by the Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, this action has, however, been successfully challenged in the High Court. The case was specifically concerned with housing targets but it means that the South East Plan is legally still in force.

### **Berkshire**

2.12 One of the key Strategic organisational groups in Berkshire is called Climate Berkshire. This is a partnership of Local Authorities and other key organisations from across Berkshire. Working to address the challenges and opportunities

associated with climate change at a strategic level across the County, the partnership reports to the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board. Its mission is to provide leadership through encouraging organisational commitment, providing and informing strategic direction and assisting in the delivery of projects. It will pave the way to the development of a market in low carbon technology in Berkshire.

- 2.13 Working very closely with a local renewable energy consultancy, Thames Valley Energy, Climate Berkshire has produced two reports on renewable energy in Berkshire. The second of these reports, titled 'Berkshire Renewable Energy – 2020 Evidence Base & Recommendations', identifies a number of renewable energy opportunities across Berkshire representing an initial high-level scan rather than a bottom-up scoping. The list representing those opportunities in West Berkshire is reproduced in Appendix C.

### **West Berkshire**

- 2.14 Within the district of West Berkshire, as part of the development of a Local Development Framework for West Berkshire, the West Berkshire Planning Service has proposed a Core Strategy for 'Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency' (CS16). This strategy outlines new development target values for carbon dioxide emissions associated with renewable energy in all major residential and non-residential development. This is based on the estimated carbon dioxide emissions of the development after the installation of energy efficiency measures related to either the Code for Sustainable Homes, BREEAM or equivalent has been applied.
- 2.15 The Local Development Framework, and CS 16, referred to in paragraph 2.14 has very recently undergone an independent review by the Planning Inspector. The review has been suspended and results will not be known until the report is published later in 2011.
- 2.16 The Town and Country Planning Association have recently published two guides regarding community energy 'Urban Planning for a Low Carbon Future' & 'Planning, Development and Delivery'. These guides provide some of the information needed for West Berkshire to recognise and understand the opportunities for decentralised energy in the District.
- 2.17 The Government's White Paper introducing the Localism Bill, entitled "Local Growth: realising every place's potential", was published this month. When the Localism Bill becomes law, local communities may start bringing forward proposals themselves, possibly in the form of Community Land Trusts, which are mechanisms for public bodies to hold land on behalf of a community. The Council may wish to investigate the most appropriate financial vehicle that would assist the development of renewable energy technologies in the District, such as an Energy Services Company (ESCO). This information/research could be used to help develop and build on the existing Core Strategy policy CS16, which could be included in the Council's forthcoming Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document.
- 2.18 Although FITs were introduced in April 2010, see paragraph 2.5, it wasn't until late August 2010 that the Government removed the restriction on Local Authorities taking full advantage of the scheme by being able to sell electricity back to the national grid. Since August the Energy team have been liaising with other Berkshire Local Authorities and some of the potential scheme suppliers who have appeared since the introduction of FITs.

- 2.19 Research led by Reading Borough Council, and supported by Climate Berkshire and Thames Valley Energy, has looked at different Solar Photovoltaic investment options currently available on the market for implementation within a Local Authority. The three options considered were 'private investment', 'Council investment' and a combination of the two.
- 2.20 One of the issues arising out of this research is that there are a number of 'leaseback' or financial loan schemes on the market targeted specifically at Schools. Under current Department for Education guidance, with the exception of loan schemes run by the Local Authority, it appears that governing bodies may only borrow money with the written permission of the Secretary of State.

### **3. Where are we now?**

- 3.1 In order to move forward, there first needs to be greater clarity of where, as a Council and as a District, we are currently positioned with regards to renewables. Given the timescales it is not possible within this report to provide a detailed study of current and planned renewable energy installations. Instead it will use historical studies undertaken by Thames Valley Energy, available planning information, and local knowledge to provide a high level indication of current levels of renewable energy in West Berkshire Council and West Berkshire.

#### **Berkshire**

- 3.2 Drawn from SEE-STATS and Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) figures, Table 1 in Appendix D shows the latest available information for Berkshire with regards the level of energy from renewable sources as a percentage of total energy consumption (3.1%). It also uses available planning information, and the assumption that all projects will be implemented, to predict a 'Business as Usual' scenario of 5.3% of total energy consumption in Berkshire coming from renewable sources by 2020.

#### **West Berkshire Partnership**

- 3.3 As part of a larger piece of work across Berkshire started by the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board, the LSP Greener sub-partnership is currently undertaking a feasibility study for district energy schemes in West Berkshire. The initial desk top study has now been focused on one potential village where further detailed investigation is being undertaken.

#### **West Berkshire Council**

- 3.4 Appendix D, Table 2, highlights that within West Berkshire Council there are a number of current sites with renewable energy generating technologies installed. The total peak capacity of all these technologies is 746 kW or 0.7 MW.
- 3.5 The Council is also working with 'Partnership for Renewables', an arm of the Carbon Trust, to review the potential for large wind turbine development on its own land. This study has now identified a preferred site and further consultation work is required to ensure that this is feasible and does not impact on any other Council strategy.
- 3.6 A very recent development is that the Energy Team have been contacted by a number of developers enquiring about the potential for Solar Parks on Council

owned land. A number of other Local Authorities have been investigating the potential for Solar Parks and notably Cornwall County Council have reached the stage where they have identified land and a preferred partner organisation with whom they will work with to develop the sites.

#### **4. Conclusion & Recommendations**

- 4.1 The full impact of the financial incentives introduced by the Government, FITs and RHI, are yet to be seen as they have either only just been introduced or will not come into play until 2011. There is also the added complication that not all renewable energy schemes require planning permission, raising concerns regards how the necessary detailed and accurate information could be sourced.
- 4.2 There is a degree of uncertainty surrounding the long term viability of the South East Plan, the current situation is that CALA Homes has won its latest legal wrangle with the Government and the court has placed a temporary block on the Government's claim that its plans to abolish Regional Strategies must be regarded as a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 4.3 With West Berkshire being part of the area covered by the overall target for the Thames Valley and Surrey region there is an absence of specific Local Authority targets within the South East Plan. There is therefore a requirement for a more detailed bottom-up study for renewable energy within West Berkshire. Encompassing the results of high level Berkshire studies already undertaken by Thames Valley Energy and potentially looking in more detail at those sites identified in Appendix C, it is recommended that responsibility for undertaking such a study best sits with the LSP Greener sub-partnership.
- 4.4 Coming out of this study, would be a Renewable Energy Strategy for West Berkshire and associated local targets that will be transparent, repeatable, meaningful and support the national target of 15% of the UK's total energy consumption to come from renewable sources by 2020.
- 4.5 As alluded to in paragraph's 2.18 to 2.20, the Council's Energy Team are currently proactively engaged with other Berkshire Local Authorities, external organisations / suppliers, and internal Service Areas in looking at the potential implementation of renewable energy in the Council's estate.
- 4.6 The Cleaner Greener group responsible for delivering the Council's Cleaner Greener agenda have made a request of the Energy Team for a generic high level Council Policy on renewable energy. To include policy and procedure for large and small scale implementation of renewable energy, this will be taken on as part of a more expansive piece of work to design and implement an Energy Strategy for West Berkshire Council.
- 4.7 Any specific renewable energy policy has to be in context of the current situation and where the Council wishes to position itself with regards renewable energy technologies in a developing and evolving market. The question that needs to be answered is 'does the Council wish to adopt a high risk strategy by being seen as a leader, implementing relatively new technologies in potentially untested situations?', or, 'does it prefer to adopt a low risk strategy by following the market, allowing others to take the risk?'

- 4.8 There also needs to be an understanding that renewables is not the only solution to energy concerns and that they need to be considered as part of a balanced strategic approach to energy reduction and efficiency.

### **Recommendations**

- 4.9 **That the LSP Greener Partnership are best placed for taking on responsibility for, and producing, a West Berkshire Renewable Energy Strategy.**
- 4.10 **That the Council Energy Team finalise an Energy Strategy, to include policy on renewable energy, for West Berkshire Council.**

### **Appendices**

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Appendix A – Council Motion dated March 2010

Appendix B – Council Motion dated September 2010

Appendix C – West Berkshire selected site opportunities

Appendix D – Renewable Energy Statistics

### **Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** Cllr Hilary Cole

**Officers Consulted:** John Ashworth, Gabrielle Esplin, Philip Newton, Alistair Buckley, Anthony Armitage, Andy Green, Andrew Deacon

**Trade Union:** N/A

## **Appendix A – Council Motion dated March 2010.**

1.1 At the meeting of Council on 4 March 2010 the following motion was submitted in the name of Councillor Royce Longton:

1.2 “This Council notes:

(a) That generation of energy from renewable sources must be a significant factor in any realistic solution to the problems posed by climate change;

(b) That the South East Plan sets targets for renewable electricity generation in the Thames Valley and Surrey of 140 MW by 2010 and 209 MW by 2016;

(c) That indicative targets for West Berkshire, derived from these figures by Thames Valley Energy, are 12.5 MW by 2010 and 18.5 MW by 2016;

(d) That the renewable electricity generating capacity in West Berkshire at the end of 2009 was only 0.4 MW, or approximately 3.5% of the 2010 target, a lower percentage than achieved by any of the other Berkshire authorities.

This Council therefore resolves:

(a) To take urgent and concerted action to stimulate renewable electricity generation within West Berkshire with the objective of achieving the 18.5 MW target by 2016;

(b) To be equally vigorous in seeking to meet emerging targets for the generation of heat and other forms of energy using renewable technologies.”

1.3 The motion was put to the vote and passed and subsequently passed to the Greener Select Committee for consideration.

## **Appendix B: Council Motion dated September 2010.**

This Council:

1. Welcomes the recent statement from Climate Change Secretary Chris Huhne that local authorities are to be allowed to sell surplus electricity generated by renewable technologies to the national grid;
2. Notes that early estimates from the LGA suggest that across the country this could yield anything up to £100 million per year;
3. Also notes that this will drastically reduce any disincentive to investing in photovoltaics and other renewables on Council buildings, currently imposed by the high capital cost, and indeed that it could provide a valuable source of income assisting the Council in maintaining its services in these difficult financial times;
4. And therefore resolves to move swiftly towards maximising the potential to generate environmentally sustainable green energy on its offices, schools, leisure centres and other property.”

## Appendix C: West Berkshire selected site opportunities

The following information has been reproduced from a high level study undertaken by Thames Valley Energy into renewable energy in West Berkshire and identifies sites with potential that may be worth further more detailed investigation.

- Biomass CHP (new mixed) –
  - AWE Aldermaston – 12 MWe, 46 MWth
  - AWE Burghfield – 4 MWe, 14 MWth
- Biomass CHP (existing high demand) –
  - Southern Refining, Membury – 1.1 MWe, 4 MWth
- Onshore wind (cluster large turbines) – *site to be advised* – 4 MWe
- Onshore wind (single on-site) – New Greenham Park – 2 MWe
- Landfill gas electricity – Beenham landfill – 0.1 MWe
- Bio/sewage gas electricity – *site to be advised* – 0.5 MWe
- Hydro electricity –
  - Streatley weir – 0.1 MWe
  - Aldermaston Wharf – 0.07 MWe
  - Old Mill Hotel – 0.03 MWe
  - Newbury centre sites 1 & 2 – 0.02 MWe
  - Thatcham & Colthrop – 0.02 MWe
  - Brimpton Mill – 0.02 MWe
- Solar PV (LA arrays) – Faraday Road & *other sites* – 0.04 MWe
- Solar PV (existing homes) – 879 existing homes – 0.9 MWe
- Landfill gas waste heat – Beenham landfill – 0.02 MWth
- Solar thermal (new/existing homes) – 1,046 homes – 2.9 MWth
- Biomass heat-only (large residential/district heating) –
  - Cold Ash 2,176 residents, hotel, 3 schools – 5 MWth
  - Aldermaston 927 residents, 2 hotels, 2 schools – 2 MWth
  - Lambourn 2,955 residents, 1 vets, 1 hotel, 1 school – 7 MWth
  - Kintbury 2,086 residents, 1 hotel, 1 school – 5 MWth
  - Mortimer 3,099 residents, 2 schools – 8 MWth
  - Hermitage 1,537 residents, 2 schools – 4 MWth
  - Compton 1,407 residents, 2 schools – 4 MWth
- Biomass heat-only (medium residential/hotels/schools) –
  - Padworth 228 residents, 1 hotel, 2 schools – 0.6 MWth
  - Bradfield 520 residents, 2 schools – 1.3 MWth
  - E. Ilsley - *tba* residents, 1 hotel, 1 school – *tba* MWth
  - Yattendon - 331 residents, 1 hotel, 1 school – 0.8 MWth
  - Woolhampton - 684 residents, 2 schools – 1.7 MWth
  - Streatley - 307 residents, 1 hotel, 1 school – 0.8 MWth
- Biomass heat-only (small residential/schools) –
  - Snelsmore Common - *tba* residents, 1 school – *tba* MWth
  - East Garston - 532 residents, 1 hotel – 1 MWth
  - Midgham - 371 residents, 1 hotel – 1 MWth
  - Great Shefford - 970 residents, 1 school – 2 MWth
  - U. Bucklebury - 914 residents, 1 school – 2 MWth
  - Beenham - 796 residents, 1 school – 2 MWth
  - Stockcross - 679 residents, 1 school – 2 MWth
  - Chieveley - 587 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth
  - Hampstead Norreys - 541 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth
  - Enborne - 492 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth



Chaddleworth - 482 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Beedon - 440 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Inkpen - 382 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Brimpton - 357 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Brightwalton - 350 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Aldermaston Wharf - 320 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Ufton Nervet - 317 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Englefield - 303 residents, 1 school – 1 MWth  
Curridge - *tba* residents, 1 school (+existing boiler) – *tba* MWth  
Wickham - *tba* residents, 1 school – *tba* MWth  
Southend - 765 residents – 2 MWth  
Upper Lambourn - 431 residents – 1 MWth  
Beech Hill - 311 residents – 1 MWth  
Aldworth - 308 residents – 1 MWth  
Eastbury - 293 residents – 1 MWth

## Appendix D: Renewable Energy Statistics

**Table 1: Summary of current renewable energy in Berkshire, as a percentage of consumption. (taken from report by Thames Valley Energy, Feb 2010)**

	<b>End 2008</b>	<b>End 2009</b>	<b>2020, business as usual planned</b>
Electricity	7.2%	7.3%	8.9%
Heat	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%
Transport	2.0%	3.2%	8.3%
<b>All Energy</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>

**Table 2: Summary of current renewable energy in West Berkshire**

	<b>Solar PV</b>	<b>Wind</b>	<b>Biomass</b>	<b>Solar Thermal</b>	<b>Ground Source Heat Pumps</b>	<b>CHP</b>
<b>West Berkshire Council</b>	2 sites with another in pipeline	1 site under investigation for potential large scale wind turbines	3 sites	2 sites	2 sites	
<b>West Berkshire Council Contractors</b>						1 site (Northcroft Leisure Centre)
<b>West Berkshire Partnership</b>						1 site (Brightwalton Village)
<b>District*</b>	6 sites	13 sites	3 sites	2 sites		1 site

\* data for the district is based on approved planning applications and current local knowledge.

## Equality Impact Assessment Template – Stage One

<b>Name of item being assessed:</b>	Renewable energy in West Berkshire
<b>Version and release date of item (if applicable):</b>	
<b>Owner of item being assessed:</b>	Adrian Slaughter
<b>Name of assessor:</b>	Adrian Slaughter
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	3rd December 2010

### 1 What are the main aims of the item?

The report to which this assessment refers sets out the Council's current position with regards renewable energy in West Berkshire. It recommends the implementation of a West Berkshire district, and a separate West Berkshire Council, renewable energy strategy in order to help achieve national renewable energy targets. At this stage the recommendations are high level and should they be accepted then the strategies will need to be written and go through the agreed Council consultation process. Therefore this decision does not impact any individual group or groups at this stage.

### 2 Note which groups may be affected by the item, consider how they may be affected and what sources of information have been used to determine this.

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this.

**Further Comments relating to the item: No impacts have been identified.**

<b>3 Result (please tick)</b>	
	<b>High Relevance</b> This needs to undergo a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.
	<b>Medium Relevance</b> This needs to undergo a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment
	<b>Low Relevance</b> This needs to undergo a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment
X	<b>No Relevance</b> This does not need to undergo a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment

For items requiring a Stage 2 equality impact assessment, begin the planning of this now, referring to the equality impact assessment guidance and Stage 2 template.

<b>4 Identify next steps as appropriate:</b>	
<b>Stage Two required</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Owner of Stage Two assessment:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Timescale for Stage Two assessment:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Stage Two not required:</b>	<b>Yes</b>

Signed: Adrian Slaughter

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010

Please now forward this completed template to the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.