

## **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.