

## 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/liaison/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		

**West Berkshire District Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

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	

**West Berkshire District Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

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.