Rights of Way Improvement Plan

2011/12 – 2015/16

April 2011

Rights of Way
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Hertfordshire

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1.   ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

1.1 **Introduction.**
 This is the second edition of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) for Hertfordshire. It provides the context for the future management of and investment in the rights of way network and other access activities, to meet the needs and demands of the people of Hertfordshire and those visiting the county. The first edition ran from 2006/07 to 2010/11. This second edition will run from 2011/12 to 2015/16.

1.2 **What is a Rights of Way Improvement Plan?**
 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act, 2000, Sections 60, 61 and 62 required all Highway Authorities in England and Wales to publish a RoWIP for their area. The plan should build upon the Highway Authority's existing duties to:

i.   maintain and keep the 'Definitive Map & Statement of Public Rights of Way'; and
ii.   ensure that the Rights of Way are adequately signposted, maintained and free from obstruction.

Statutory guidance indicates that RoWIPs should be incorporated into Local Transport Plans (LTP) to help address sustainable transport and road safety issues. It directs that they should also take into account wider agendas such as biodiversity, community safety, culture and tourism, local economic needs, health, recreation and social inclusion.

RoWIPs are to be the prime means by which Highway Authorities identify the changes and improvements to local rights of way networks, in order to meet the Government's aims of better provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with disabilities.

The RoW Improvement Plan is divided into two main parts: the Assessment and the Statement of Action.

1.2.1 **The Assessment.** The statutory guidance issued by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra, November 2002) indicated that, in drawing up their plans, Highway Authorities were required to make an assessment of:

i.   the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
ii.   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 together with the enjoyment of the local area; and
iii.   the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted people and those with mobility problems.

1.2.2 **The Statement of Action.** Highway Authorities were to produce a Statement of Action to address the issues identified in the assessment. In Hertfordshire the statement outlined strategic actions that could be used to bid for resources, especially from the LTP and were to be supported by work programmes.

1.3   **Second Edition updates of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.**
The regulations of the CRoW Act 2000 require local authorities to prepare their first RoWIP by 20 November 2007 and then review it not more than 10 years after its publication. In Hertfordshire the review of the RoWIP has taken place 5 years after publication to coincide with the LTP review.
The main change to this second edition Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Hertfordshire is that the plan now covers the whole of Hertfordshire. As described fully in Section 8 of this plan.

The emphasis of the first 5 years of the RoWIP 2006/07 – 2010/11 was to implement works in and around the main settlement areas of Hertfordshire. The main settlements were incorporated into 9 geographical areas. In turn 9 Area Implementation Plans were produced as a result of the RoWIP.
However from 2011/12 to 2015/16 all of Hertfordshire is open for improvements through the RoWIP. The boundaries of some of the existing 9 areas have been extended and 3 new areas have been allocated, to make 12 areas in total. All of Hertfordshire is now captured by the RoWIP and the Area Implementation Plans will be updated to reflect these changes.

1.4   **RoWIP and the Local Transport Plan (LTP).**
Both the Department for Transport (DfT) and Defra anticipated that a full integration of local transport and rights of way planning would take place from 2010 onwards and this has been achieved in Hertfordshire.

Guidance from the Department for Transport acknowledges that the Statement of Action will be relevant beyond transport and the LTP. RoWIP is therefore a separate, daughter plan within the LTPs, because not all of their potential improvements will be relevant to transport priorities. Other daughter documents to the LTP are:
- Walking Strategy
- Cycling Strategy
- Bus Strategy (and accompanying Intalink Strategy)
- Rail Strategy
- Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy for Schools and Colleges (SMoTS)
- Rural Strategy
- Road Safety Plan
- Speed Management Strategy
- Intelligent Transport Systems Strategy
- Transport Asset Management Plan
- Urban Transport Plans

   'Roads in Hertfordshire' – guidance supporting document

1.5 **Strategic Environmental Assessment.**
The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) directive requires that all new strategies are assessed for their impact on the environment. Therefore this plan has undergone an appraisal to assess its effects on all SEA receptors (e.g. air and noise pollution, social exclusion, economic growth, climatic change factors). To summarise, the results of the appraisal show that Rights of Way have many beneficial effects on the environment and on people's quality of life, it has no negative effects. For more details of the assessment please refer to the Strategic Environmental Assessment on www.hertsdirect.org/ltp

2. THE HERTFORDSHIRE CONTEXT

2.1 **Hertfordshire Overview.**
Hertfordshire is adjacent to Greater London and is bisected by key transport routes to and from London and the major cities in the Midlands and the North. Hertfordshire is one of the most densely populated counties in the UK with a population of over 1 million in an area of 1,640 sq. km. The county is a mix of New Towns, Garden Cities and historic market towns with around 80% of the population living in these settlements which cover only 20% of its area. Conversely 20% of the population live in the remaining 80% which is considered rural. With its location close to London, 60% of the County is Metropolitan Green Belt, to prevent the spread and coalescence of settlements – the strength of which is constantly being tested by development proposals.

2.2 **Health in Hertfordshire.**
Hertfordshire is one of the healthiest counties in England, with life expectancy of 77 for men and 81 for women[1]. Over 70% of the population are described as being in "good health". Local authority areas with the highest levels of "not good health" are Stevenage (7.3%), Broxbourne and Watford. The lowest is East Herts.

Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield and North Herts have the highest levels of "long-term illness" (15.11%, 15.3% and 14.7% respectively of the county population). East Herts has the lowest with 12.5%.

2.3 **Age and gender of the population in Hertfordshire.**
The gender split of residents is roughly equal with around 49% male and 51% female. A quarter of the population is under the age of 20 whilst the elderly population is growing, with the number of people over 80 expected to increase by 20% by the date of the next census in 2011. The largest male age group is 35 – 39. For females it is 30 – 39.

2.4 **Ethnicity in Hertfordshire.**
Whilst Hertfordshire's population is predominantly white British (88.8%) it is diversifying, with non-white groups representing 6.3% of the population, comprising:
- Mixed   1.4%
- Asian   3.0%
- Black   1.1%
- Chinese / Other   0.8%

The most diverse area is Watford, followed by Hertsmere, St Albans and Three Rivers. The least diverse is East Herts.

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[1] Source: Health Profiles of Hertfordshire 2001, Public Health, Hertfordshire Health Authority
http://www.nhsinherts.nhs.uk/hp/Hertfordshire.htm

2.5 **Car ownership in Hertfordshire.**
The majority of households in Hertfordshire have access to at least one motor vehicle. The number of households without access to a motor vehicle ranges from 13% in East Herts to 23% in Stevenage.

2.6 **Travel and transport patterns in Hertfordshire.**
There are a number of key north-south links with both road and rail routes radiating from London. Three motorways cross the County: the M1, A1(M) and M25, whilst the M11 lies just to the east. It is estimated that there are four million road journeys taking place each day within the county. In addition, there is a comprehensive A-road network, which covers 1,864.2 miles (3,818km). Every day, 140,000 people commute out of the county (nearly 100,000 to London) and 85,500 enter the county, mostly from London and Bedfordshire.

Five branches of the National Rail network pass through Hertfordshire with further routes to the north west and north east. There are good suburban services into London, linking with Thameslink and the London Underground. Over 11 million rail journeys are made per year in Hertfordshire (over 60,000 daily commuter journeys to London).

There are 3 major airports adjacent or near to Hertfordshire: Luton in Bedfordshire; Stansted in Essex; and London Heathrow.

2.7 **Open spaces in Hertfordshire.**
Hertfordshire contains regionally important areas including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Colne Valley Regional Park, Lee Valley Regional Park, Watling Chase Community Forest, Heartwood Forest and numerous other parks, open spaces and Commons including Aldenham Country Park, Broxbourne Woods National Nature Reserve, Hatfield House and Knebworth House Estates and common land at the Ashridge Estate, Therfield Heath and Chorleywood Common to name but a few. Many of these have management plans that describe their policy context and guide their development.

2.8 **Linear routes in Hertfordshire.**
Hertfordshire contains more than 1,937 miles (3,127km) of Public Rights of Way (PRoW). This network of 5,220 individual Rights of Way is maintained by the County Council or its agents. Additionally there are approximately 24 miles (38km) of cycle tracks, which are not part of the road network.

2.9 **Other access areas.**
There are also a number of other organisations that provide access in Hertfordshire. British Waterways, for example, manage the Grand Union, and the Lea and the Stort canals. These provide both waterborne transport routes and access opportunities along their towpaths. Other organisations include; Borough and District Councils, Crown Estates, Forestry Authority, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, National

Trust, Thames Water and the Woodland Trust and other individual landowners, who provide access over their private land.

2.10 Strategies and Plans affecting the delivery of the RoWIP.
The issues facing Hertfordshire are complex and require a range of inter-related solutions. These range from the County Council's Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Strategy and list of Challenges, which direct the County Council's service delivery, to local plans and strategies that address issues identified by national government. The following plans and strategies will affect the delivery of the RoWIP.

2.10.1 The Local Transport Plan, Goals & Challenges.
The promotion of sustainable transport and road safety is achieved through the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The new LTP, LTP3 for the plan period 2011–2031, sets out the County Council's vision and strategy for the long term development of transport in the County:

Hertfordshire's Transport Vision Statement is:
To provide a safe, efficient and resilient transport system that serves the needs of business and residents across Hertfordshire and minimises its impact on the environment.

The Local Transport Plan sets out 5 goals for transport, which take into account wider impacts on climate change, health, quality of life and the natural environment. These are:

- Support economic development and planned dwelling growth
- Improve transport opportunities for all and achieve behavioural change in mode choice
- Enhance quality of life, health and the natural, built and historic environment for all Hertfordshire residents
- Improve the safety and security of residents and other road users
- Reduce transport's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and improve its resilience.

Further to these 5 goals 13 challenges will provide more detailed aims for what needs to be achieved.

Hertfordshire LTP3: Goals and Challenges

GOAL - Support economic development and planned dwelling growth
1.1 Keep the county moving through efficient management of the road network to improve journey time, reliability and resilience and manage congestion to minimise its impact on the economy.
1.2 Support economic growth and new housing development through delivery of transport improvements and where necessary enhancement of the network capacity.

GOAL - Improve transport opportunities for all and achieve behavioural change in mode choice

2.1   Improve accessibility for all and particularly for non car users and the disadvantaged (disabled, elderly, low income etc).

2.2   Achieve behavioural change as regards choice of transport mode increasing awareness of the advantages of walking, cycling and public transport, and of information on facilities and services available.

2.3   Achieve further improvements in the provision of public transport (bus and rail services) to improve accessibility, punctuality, reliability and transport information in order to provide a viable alternative for car users.

GOAL - Enhance quality of life, health and the natural, built and historic environment of all Hertfordshire residents

3.1   Improve journey experience for transport users in terms of comfort, regularity and reliability of service, safety concerns, ability to park and other aspects to improve access.

3.2   Improve the health of individuals by encouraging and enabling more physically active travel and access to recreational areas and through improving areas of poor air quality which can affect health.

3.3   Maintain and enhance the natural, built and historic environment managing the streetscape and improving integration and connections of streets and neighbourhoods and minimising the adverse impacts of transport on the natural environment, heritage and landscape.

3.4   Reduce the impact of transport noise especially in those areas where monitoring shows there to be specific problems for residents.

GOAL - Improve the safety and security of residents and other road users

4.1   Improve road safety in the county reducing the risk of death and injury due to traffic accidents.

4.2   Reduce crime and the fear of crime on the network to enable users of the network to travel safely and with minimum concern over safety so that accessibility is not compromised.

GOAL - Reduce transport's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and improve its resilience.

5.1   Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport in the county to meet government targets through the reduction in consumption of fossil fuels.

5.2   Design new infrastructure and the maintenance of the existing network in the light of likely future constraints and threats from changing climate, including the increasing likelihood of periods of severe weather conditions.

These challenges will be delivered through schemes and interventions developed, in the main, in the urban transport plans and county-wide themes (such as rural transport and cycling). The proposed short term (2 years) and longer term interventions are set out in the Implementation Plan, Volume 3 of LTP3.

Rural schemes, which address rural transport and travel issues, are now selected by Hertfordshire Highways based upon their likely achievement of LTP targets, via a process called Programme Entry as explained in the Implementation Plan.

It is recognised that a significant contribution can be made by the RoW network, through projects to develop sustainable transport links between settlements and key employment sites.

2.10.2 Health care and 'Keeping Hertfordshire Healthy'

'Keeping Hertfordshire Healthy' is one of the 3 strategic priorities for the single health authority presently responsible for health care in Hertfordshire, following the merger of the East and North PCT with the West Hertfordshire PCT. As part of the "Keeping Hertfordshire Healthy" the health authority seeks to promote healthy living, exercise and improved diet through education, information and enhanced individual responsibility. (E & N Herts and W Herts PCTs Strategic Plan refresh 09/10-13/14.)

Much of the new health authority's work to improve the health of the population of Hertfordshire and to tackle inequalities is dependent on effective partnership working with both district & borough councils and the county council.

The primary health authority's work with the county council focuses on the Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) and their joint responsibilities to meet the health improvement targets.

2.10.3 Change4life.

In 2009 the NHS started a national campaign 'Change4life.' It aims to prevent people from getting overweight by helping them to 'eat better and move more.' There are various strands to this campaign including 'walk4life' and 'bike4life' I
See www.nhs.uk/change4life

2.10.4 Sport and Physical Activity.

Sport is championed nationally by 'Sport England' whose objectives are to encourage people to start, stay and succeed in sport. It has a broad definition of sport, and rambling, cycling, horse riding and horse carriage driving are recognised as sports by Sport England.

2.10.5 Herts Sports Partnership, established in 2003 is one of many county sports partnerships which assist the government and Sport England in the delivery of its sports strategy locally. The Partnership is involved with Hertfordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Herts Sports Partnership's vision is;
'Working together to encourage more people to be more active more often.'

The partnership works alongside a number of partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors, bringing together expertise, resources and ideas from all sides of the sports world in Hertfordshire and beyond. The Herts Sports Partnership provides a central and co-ordinated sports service for the whole county to benefit from.

2.10.6 The Walking for Health (WfH) scheme.

The WfH scheme run nationwide by Natural England, aims to get more people walking in their own communities particularly those who take little exercise or who live in areas of poor health. The concept of health walks was started by an Oxfordshire GP, for his patients at Sonning Common Health Centre in April 1995.

In Hertfordshire there are 10 WfH groups providing regular walks in Bishop Stortford, Broxbourne, Dacorum, Hertford, Hertsmere, Hitchin, Letchworth, Stanborough at Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage and Ware.

Growing medical evidence shows that access to the natural environment improves health and wellbeing, prevents disease and helps people recover from illness.

Through Natural England, the Department of Health is working with WfH in developing a Physical Activity Care Pathway pilot. The "pathway" is a means by which frontline health professionals can identify sedentary patients who would benefit - in terms of physical health - from increased levels of physical activity.

2.11 **Economic Development Strategy.**

In recognition of the challenges facing the economy Hertfordshire established a new economic partnership, 'Hertfordshire Works' in March 2009, representing public, private and community sectors to enable partners to work in a more effective and co-ordinated manner in responding to the recession.

The Hertfordshire Works Board comprises the following partners: Hertfordshire County Council, University of Hertfordshire, Exemplas, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Government Office for the East of England, Business Link, Hertfordshire's District and Borough Councils, Chair of countywide Business Forum, Representatives of Colleges of Further Education and Representatives of Voluntary and Community sector.

Hertfordshire Works' vision for economic development in Hertfordshire is:
 "By 2021, Hertfordshire will have a resilient and low carbon economy characterised by quality jobs, innovative and dynamic business, supported by a well skilled, workforce and an entrepreneurial culture, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions."

Underpinning this vision is a strategy which articulates how this vision will be achieved. The strategy has five key objectives

– Creating a vibrant, low carbon economy
– Stimulating enterprise, innovation and inward investment
– Developing a well skilled workforce
– Providing quality locations and infrastructure
– Creating Vibrant Towns and Vibrant Communities

Each of these themes is accompanied by Action Plans which are currently are being taken forward by specific task groups involving a wide number of representatives from the partnership.

The Rights of Way network brings economic benefits to Hertfordshire in various ways. The network is an integral part of the leisure and tourism industries. Users spend time in pubs and shops along the network and stimulate sales in accessories needed for taking part in activities on the network. Also the maintenance of the network provides additional work to a multitude of local farmers along with small and larger contractors across Hertfordshire.

2.12 Policy Planning Guidance 17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'.
PPG17 requires District and Borough Councils to prepare strategies for assessing and meeting the needs of local people in the same way as the CRoW Act, 2000 requires Highway Authorities to prepare Rights of Way Improvement Plans. The two are seen to be complementary.

2.13 Tourism, Leisure and Culture
East England Tourism (EET) delivers the regional tourism strategy and marketing plan on their behalf.
The Hertfordshire Tourism and Leisure Partnership has a Service Level Agreement with EET.

The Hertfordshire Tourism and Leisure Partnership promotes culture and tourism in the county and recently launched their new website
www.enjoyhertfordshire.com

'Love to…' is a county wide cultural participation initiative. Inspired by the 2012 Games it will support the Cultural Olympiad in Hertfordshire, over the next three years and beyond.
Key partners are:
• HCC and all districts and borough councils, 'Herts Is Ready For Winners', Lee Valley Park Authority, Herts Association of Cultural Officers, Broxbourne Housing Association, and Saracens Community Foundation.

Love to… will inspire people to take up a new creative challenge or cultural/sporting activity locally. The possibilities are endless with 'Love to sing', 'Love to cycle', 'Love to Paint', 'Love to …'.almost anything. In the current economic situation 'Love to…' is seen as a way of providing free and low cost opportunities for everyone to take part in and encourage them to be more mentally & physically active.

<u>Cultural Strategies</u>. Individual Borough and District Councils have prepared cultural strategies. Six of these local cultural strategies contain reference to, and actions associated with, public open space, countryside and rights of way.

2.14 Biodiversity.

The Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is the policy document that relates to biodiversity. It provides a 50 year vision for Hertfordshire, the main aims of which are:

i.   to establish a plan partnership by identifying and consulting with key partners in the process;
ii.   to produce an overview of our present knowledge about the biodiversity resource in the county;
iii. to prepare a series of prioritised habitat action plans that will guide work to protect, restore and re-create a sustainable level of biodiversity;
iv.   to identify within each habitat action plan, detailed targets reflecting both national and local importance for the first ten years;
v.   to identify a list of priority species and to prepare concise target statements for each;
vi.   to identify within each habitat and species action plan, delivery mechanisms and sources of finance and advice;
vii. to publish the plan and implement the agreed programme of action; and
viii. to establish a long term monitoring programme to measure the effectiveness of the plan in achieving national and local targets.

These are translated into 7 Habitat Action Plans and 18 Species Action Plans e.g. The area of woodland in Hertfordshire will have been increased from 15,000 ha to approximately 20,000 ha, in 50 years time.

3. HERTFORDSHIRE'S RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

3.1 Introduction to the Rights of Way Network

Hertfordshire has 1942 miles (3,127km) of Public Rights of Way with 5,221 paths recorded in the Definitive Map & Statement, .(excluding unclassified county roads.) The Definitive Map and Statement is the legal document recording public rights of way and was last updated in May 2010. Public Rights of Way are highways that allow the public a right of passage and are maintained by the County Council and its agents.

3.2 Types of Route.

The following shows the different types of Rights of Way, with the percentage of the network that they make up.

Public Footpaths 70% provide the right to walk with any 'normal accompaniment' (e.g. dog, pram or a wheelchair). There is no right to ride or wheel a bike, nor to ride or lead a horse, or to drive a horse drawn carriage
Public Bridleways 21% allow the right to walk, ride or lead a horse or to drive animals. There is no right to take a horse drawn vehicle along a bridleway.
BOATs (Byways Open to all Traffic) 5% provide rights to vehicular traffic (motorised or horse drawn) but to be used mainly for the purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used.
Restricted Byways (RB) 4% have been introduced by the CRoW Act, 2000. They replace RUPPs (Road Used as a Public Path.) On a Restricted Byway the public has a right of way on foot, on horseback or leading a horse, and a right of way in or on vehicles other than mechanically-propelled vehicles, thereby giving a right of way for pedal cyclists and drivers of horse-drawn vehicles.

The extent to which the PRoW network can be accessed by users is:
> 100% by walkers;
> 30% by cyclists and horse-riders;
> 9% by carriage drivers;
> 5% by drivers of motorised vehicles.

3.3 The Definitive Map and Statement.

The Definitive Map shows recorded rights of way and is conclusive evidence of public rights. It is without prejudice to routes that may currently be unrecorded or rights that may not be shown. The Definitive Statement is a supporting document that describes in written word the routes shown on the map.

The first Definitive Map & Statement (DMS) for Hertfordshire was published in 1953 using information collected through a series of parish based surveys. It has since been updated and re-published on a number of occasions. The current version was published in May 2010.

Copies of the Definitive Map and Statement are held at County Hall in Hertford. Copies of the relevant areas are held at District / Borough and Parish Councils,

and in major public libraries. The DMS can be viewed on the county council's website at www.hertsdirect.org/rowmap. Small paper extracts of the DMS are available on request from the Rights of Way Service at County Hall, Hertford.

The DMS can be modified where there is sufficient evidence to show it to be incorrect or though a legal order to create, divert or extinguish a Public Right of Way.

The provisions of CRoW Act 2000 mean that the DMS is to be closed in 2026 for "Modification" applications based on historical evidence. With this in mind, it is proposed that a vision for Hertfordshire should be:

"To create, by 2026, an accessible and integrated off-road network for non-motorised users based on rights of way and other routes, that meets the current and perceived future needs and demands of Hertfordshire's residents and visitors"

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AND DEMANDS

4.1 **Sources**

In making an assessment of peoples' "needs and demands" information was gathered from two broad areas:

- <u>Existing research (Secondary research)</u> where the information looks at the national perspective.
- New research (Primary research) where the information was gathered from <u>specific surveys in Hertfordshire.</u>

All the information was founded on 5 key headings:

- Who uses the network? (The user groups)
- Why people use the network? (Motivation)
- Knowing where to go on the network (Information)
- Getting to the network (Transport)
- How easy is the network to use? (Ease of use).

4.2 **The methodology of Primary Research in Hertfordshire.**

To answer the questions above the following studies and surveys were conducted, to establish local need and demand. They tested whether or not the services currently provided were valued and met expectation and demand.

a).General Interest Groups and Public Survey.

During September 2003, the County Council undertook a survey to find out how people got to the countryside and how well routes were used. The survey was sent to:-

114 parish councils

110 ethnic minority organisations

68 riding schools

11 day care centres for the disabled

49 youth and community groups

125 recipients of the 'Walks and More' publication

26 babysitting and childminding groups

55 Countryside Management Service (CMS) Walk Wardens

It was also available on the County Council's website for 6 weeks.

b). A User Focus Group.

The group included - 6 horse riders, 8 walkers, 7 cyclists, a horse carriage driver and 2 motor vehicle users. The group was asked for views on rights of way based on the following 3 questions:

   i.   What are the current key issues that prevent or detract from the experience you are seeking when using local rights of way?
   ii. What are the improvements we could make that would enable you to use local Rights of Way and increase your enjoyment of them?
   iii. How do you see the local Rights of Way network in 10 years time?

c). A General Public Focus Group.
A second focus group was set up with 30 individuals who responded to the General Interest Group and Public Survey [a. above] and who had expressed interest in providing further detail. The aim of the group was to discuss key findings in order to:
  i.   Confirm that they were priority issues;
  ii. Identify and discuss realistic possible solutions; and
  iii. Identify quick wins and longer term objectives.

d). A Parents Survey.
A survey of parents with children in toddler groups and pre-schools was used to understand their current and future needs.

e). A Satisfaction and Significance Survey.
People were asked about the importance of footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and byways as well as how satisfied they were with the current provision.

f). A Level of Use Monitoring survey.
50 "Walk Wardens" and "Footpath Friends" were sent a survey asking them to review the condition of selected paths and measure the frequency of use. They looked at the condition of the structures, way marking and general ease of use.

g). Local Access Forum (LAF).
The LAF is an advisor to the Council on public access to land for recreation and has been involved in the development of the RoWIP providing advice on a number of occasions.

h). Land owners and managers.
A meeting was held with the National Farmers Union and Country Land and Business Association.

i). Hertfordshire Rights of Way officers.
Meetings were held with officers from the Rights of Way Unit who had detailed knowledge and extensive experience of the network.

Where specific requests for improvement have been highlighted from any of the primary methods of research in Hertfordshire they have been assessed and included in the Area Implementation Plans. (See section 8.) Since their inception the Area Implementation plans have been considered as 'living' documents in which new ideas and requests can be assessed, prioritised and included as they arise.

4.3 **Who uses the network?**
In Hertfordshire the main users are walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Others include carriage drivers and motorised users. Each group contains sub groups e.g. walking can cover running, dog walking, pushing a pushchair or access by wheelchair.

4.3.1 <u>Walkers, dog walkers & runners.</u>
Nationally walking is the most popular form of leisure activity, ahead of cycling and horse riding, in the countryside.[2]

Almost half of people surveyed in the 'National Rights of Way Use and Demand Survey' said at least 1 person in their household had walked in the countryside in the last year. The majority made journeys of, less than 5 miles (8 kilometres) and over half started from their homes.

Walkers are the only users with access over the entire PRoW network and encounter fewer problems compared with riders and drivers.

Walkers prefer flat, firm and well drained surfaces such as turf or dry earth. Uneven, yielding or sticky surfaces like rough ground, mud or sand take more concentration and can slow the user down. Many walkers find artificial surfaces and uneven terrain tough on their feet.

4.3.2 <u>Cyclists.</u>
The Countryside Agency's 'National Rights Of Way, Use and Demand Survey' showed that 23 per cent of households had at least one member who participated in cycling in the countryside in the previous year. 32 per cent of households said they would increase cycling as an activity if more provision was available. Availability of local rights of way for cyclists is very different in different parts of he country but most cyclists experience difficulty in finding safe, attractive, and sufficiently long routes away from busy roads, for which there is increasing demand,

4.3.3 <u>Equestrian users.</u>
'Horse riders, are faced with serious problems over higher status paths, averaging out at one every 2.4 km at National level'[3]
During 2000, the British Horse Society (BHS) surveyed riders in Hertfordshire. The research showed that 89% of respondents were riding daily or several time's each week. Also, that:
  i.   the majority of riders were female;
  ii.   horse riding contributed nearly £1.8 million to the local economy;
  iii.   37% of respondents were dependent on local access to safe off-road routes;
  iv.   the average ride was 1 hr 21 min. Nearly half of this was spent on roads and 43 min. on bridleways, tracks and private land;
  v.   10% of respondents regularly crossed dual carriageways;
  vi.   50% of the respondents had faced verbal abuse from other road users and 25% had suffered physical intimidation;
  vii.   5% of respondents had been in a road accident involving a horse and motor vehicle in the previous twelve months; and
  viii. there are a number of non-definitive riding routes built on old railways which provide extensive facilities.

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[2] Source: The State of the Countryside 2004 – The Countryside Agency
[3] Source: The Rights of Way Condition Survey 2000, The Countryside Agency

The BHS is working to create a national bridle network. This will consist of existing national routes e.g. the Ridgeway and the Pennine Bridleway, regional routes e.g. the Swan's Way and the Icknield Way, and promoted circular rides. The aim is to build a comprehensive network of community circuits linked together by linear routes.[4]

Within Hertfordshire, there are 11 centres with links to the Riding for the Disabled Association. They organise riding and/or carriage driving for any disabled person who might benefit.

4.3.4 Carriage Drivers.
'Carriage drivers and motorists, fared worst, faced with serious problems…, and they averaged out every 0.74 miles (1.2 km) at National level' encountering twice as many problems as other users'[5]

Carriage driving organisations in Hertfordshire include the Chiltern Harness Driving Club and a branch of the British Driving Society. Their membership is about 300. Also within the region is the East Anglian Carriage Driving Group (EACDG) which is affiliated to the British Horse Driving Trials Association (BHDTA). Their membership numbers 100 plus. All groups run events between March and October. They develop partnerships with landowners, with the purpose of providing circular routes and organised drives; carry out training and seek to extend the length of safe, useable routes.

4.3.5 Motorised users.
These include users of all off road motor vehicles including motorbikes, quad bikes and 4X4s. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act banned the use of Roads Used as Public Paths by recreational motor vehicles, by reclassifying them all as Restricted Byways. Where claims for rights of way based on past use by horse drawn traffic are made, this will also now only lead to Restricted Byway status. Motorised users may now only use the remaining Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) parts of the Rights of Way network.

4.3.6 People with Limited mobility
There are numerous users who face restricted access on the rights of way network. These range from those who use a pushchair for young children, to those that are elderly or have a physical disability and need walking sticks or other aids.

The Disability Rights Commission has found that:
'8.5 million people in the UK that have some form of disability, and 1 in 10 of those people use a wheelchair'

Further research points to the fact that:;
'1 in 4 households has at least one disabled person as a household member. Nearly half the population benefits from changes, which are often made in the name of minority groups'.[6]

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[4] http://www.ride-uk.org.uk/intro.htm
[5] Source: The Rights of Way Condition Survey 2000, The Countryside Agency
[6] Source: The Paths for all Partnership (2003). ' Access for all – outdoor access for people with disabilities.'

There are approximately 42 day care centres and social clubs for adults with disabilities in Hertfordshire but it remains difficult to accurately assess how many potential limited mobility users there are within the county. The 2001 Census helped identify the age range of Hertfordshire's population and therefore assumptions can be made, such as those in the population who potentially have young children or who are elderly. This indicates those that may have some mobility issues but such assumptions are recognised to be tenuous.

The national Rights of Way condition survey (2000) identified that more than 80% of paths showed no disability provision, based on a survey of approximately 2% of the total network and that:

- not all people with limited mobility use wheelchairs and some only have problems with specific obstructions such as stiles and steps;
- surfaces like concrete and tarmac are excellent for wheelchair / pushchair users and should be flat with a minimum of cross slopes or loose stones, especially on corners or where the path is raised;
- the availability of 'all terrain' pushchairs has increased the expectation of parents who are now able to use more routes. people who cannot bend easily will find problems with overhanging vegetation and stiles;
- wheelchair users can experience difficulties when faced with a gradient steeper than 1:40 (2.5%), although some stronger users can cope with 1:20 (5%) or steeper;
- both traditional and powered wheelchairs users have problems on off-road paths. All terrain buggies and scooters designed for use on more rugged routes can help but their use remains limited; and
- people with limited mobility may require regular rest stops, accessible toilets, suitable car parking spaces and paths that have space for users to pass.

4.4 Why people use the network?

The rights of way network is a valuable recreational resource. In addition there are other benefits, e.g. opportunities to improve health through exercise; increase road safety and opportunities for sustainable transport by providing a network for non motorised users; and economic benefits through tourism.

Hertfordshire's Primary research found:
General Public Survey revealed that 35% of people who visited the countryside did so on a daily basis, 23% visited 2/3 times a week and 17% once per week. Furthermore, that:

i. walking and dog walking accounted for 31% of visits to the countryside;
ii. other reasons included carrying out parish council work, camping, mountain biking, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme etc;
iii. some people never visited the countryside or didn't go as often as they would have liked (the primary reason for this was that they were *'too busy'* which is consistent with national figures);
iv. the weather was an issue; and
v. people did not like visiting the countryside on their own.

Reasons for not visiting the countryside may be beyond the Council's control but it can influence issues such as people not wanting to go out on their own through the promotion of guided walks etc.

vi. The dog walkers' questionnaire revealed that most owners walked their dogs twice a day (75%) although many owners take their dogs to a park (43%).

vii. The runners' survey revealed that many tend to go running every other day (48%), ran for up to two hours (48%) and most (73%) drove to their chosen running route.

4.4.1 Health.

'Most regular participants in open-air recreation are motivated by the desire to exercise and enjoy fresh air and the need to walk dogs. Factors preventing or discouraging regular participants in countryside activities more often included poor health, lack of time and inclement weather conditions.'[7]

Generally, physical activity aids a healthy lifestyle. However, 6 out of 10 men and 7 out of 10 women in England are not active enough to benefit their health. The Department of Health recommendation for adults is:

"At least 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days of the week. This physical activity should be of at least a moderate intensity – similar to brisk walking. Activity can be taken in bouts of 10 to 15 minutes, allowing for accumulation of activity throughout the day."

The expert recommendation for young people supported by the Department of Health is that:

"All young people should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour per day. This hour can be made up from a variety of activities across the day, including organised sport, play, walking or cycling to school, physical education or planned exercise."

The health benefits of regular exercise such as cycling and walking are well documented and this encourages more people to use rights of way for exercise and health improvements. This is supported by initiatives such as *'Walking the Way to Health'* sponsored by the British Heart Foundation and the Countryside Agency:

In the 25 years between National Travel surveys in 1975-76 & 1999-2001 the total miles travelled per year on foot and miles travelled by bicycle fell by 26%.

This trend is supported by a 4% decline (down to 81%) in the number of people making any type of leisure day trip in England. The total number of countryside day trips is a down, by 10% to 1,126 million but the visits still generate nearly £10 billion a year to local economies[8].

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[7] Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department and Scottish National Heritage (2001). 'Public Attitudes to access to the countryside'.
[8] The State of the Countryside 2004 – The Countryside Agency

4.4.2 <u>Leisure and tourism.</u>

The 2002 – 2003 Great Britain Day Visits survey findings reveal that for Leisure Day Visits:

i.   80% of adults in Great Britain had made a leisure day visit[9] within the previous two weeks.
ii. For Great Britain, 21% of the adult population had visited the countryside on such a trip.
iii. 63% of adults had visited the countryside.

The characteristics of people making leisure day visits, based on the visit having been made in the previous two weeks, revealed similar findings to the adult population as a whole, namely:

i.   in the twelve-month period of the survey in 2002-3, there were an estimated 5.2 billion leisure day visits from home (24% being to the countryside);
ii.   from 1998 to 2002-3, the volume of day visits to the countryside has decreased by 12% (from 1.43 billion to 1.26 billion trips);
iii. The average expenditure of these trips was £8.60.
iv.   The main activities on day visits were; going out for a meal or drink (18%), walking (15%) and visiting friends & relatives (14%).
v.   In 2002-3, day visits to the countryside involved an average journey distance of around 19 miles.
vi.   Over a third of countryside trips were less than an hour in length. The average length of stay at a destination was 2.3 hours.
vii. 32% of countryside trips had the main purpose of walking (including walking with dogs).
viii. Countryside trips tended to display the greatest seasonal variations – peaking in July.

Hertfordshire's rights of way network is used by residents, but also visitors and tourists from the surrounding counties and even overseas visitors who use the nearby airports.

4.5 **Knowing where to go?**

General research shows that specific groups of people requested more information on where to go, for example parents with children may need information illustrating what the network has to offer families, e.g. the promotion of bed and breakfasts close to rights of way that can accommodate children, dogs etc. Equally,

'Disabled people need to get accurate, honest and accessible information. They need to know whether there are parking facilities available. They need to be able to find the path when they arrive and not get lost. They must be able to physically travel on a path and negotiate the gates or barriers and be able to use adjacent facilities.'[10]

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[9] Source: 'A leisure day visit is defined as round trips made from home for leisure purposes to locations anywhere in Great Britain'. Report of the 2002-03 Great Britain Day Visits Survey. The Countryside Agency
[10] Source: The Paths for all Partnership (2003), 'Access for all – outdoor access for people with disabilities

Additionally, clearer information on the ground could be helpful:
'*Clear waymarking is needed to detail the destinations, distance and general terrain or ground conditions*'.[11]

Hertfordshire's Primary research showed:

i.   The General Public Focus group identified the need for information about where to go in the countryside and how to get there. They also identified the need for it to be more organised, more co-ordinated and easier to obtain.

ii. Respondents from the Satisfaction and Significance survey thought information about using countryside routes e.g. leaflets and guides, was important (45%). The majority were satisfied with the current information (82%) whilst pointing out that it is not available from a single source.

It was suggested that there should be one promoted website where all access information can be found. However, information from the internet was of limited importance (44%). Leaflets and information could be targeted e.g. those aimed at children could contain eye spy activities etc. Leaflets promoting walks from train stations could be promoted along the line as well as at the stations.

iii. Dog walkers were asked; '*if they did not walk their dogs on Rights of Way, what was the reason?*' The findings revealed that 59% did not know where to go. Many users would like leaflets specifically designed for dog walkers. The same question was asked of runners and revealed that many would like to have information about routes on the internet (37%).

Overall, it was felt that a lot of the current information was generic whilst many want specific information, together with basic details of where to go and how to get there. Users wanted the information to be more accessible and some thought parishes could be encouraged to prepare parish maps to promote tourism and raise local awareness.

4.6   How to get to the network?

Generally the majority of people accessing the network do so by car. Evidence from the 2002/03 Great Britain Day Visits survey showed that the car accounted for 58% of leisure trips to the countryside; walking was the second most common form of access (36%).

There is still a need to plan for those who don't have access to a car or prefer to use public transport. However, the passenger transport infrastructure is currently limited to key routes between towns with irregular services to rural areas. It is likely that there will continue to be strong demand for safe and adequate parking in the countryside. However, the provision of car parks raises a number of issues for those managing them and rural parking can be a real problem in terms of cost and impact.

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[11] Source: The Countryside agency (2000), 'Assessing the Demand Information in Relation to Countryside Access – a case study in the county of Lancashire'

Hertfordshire's Primary Research showed:

i.   From the General Interest Groups and Public survey (B.2.a above), 50% of respondents visited the countryside on foot. Car was the second most popular means (37%).

ii. The parent's specific user group findings revealed that 67% take a pushchair with them when they take their children out.

iii. Walkers and cyclists wanted short circular routes starting and finishing from settlements, as well as longer routes in more remote areas. Routes need to be the same status from start to end.

4.7 How easy is the network to use?

National research suggests the majority of paths used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders are considered 'usable'. Usability is measured through a national Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 178). The indicator assesses the ease of use of paths, based on criteria including waymarking, surface condition and obstructions.

In Hertfordshire Primary Research found:
Results of the Satisfaction and Significance survey found that ease of use for walking, riding or cycling and standards of maintenance were important (69% and 64% respectively). The key factor influencing use was considered to be 'paths free from obstruction' (13%).

Many said that *physical factors'* were the key issues stopping them from having a good experience when using PRoW. Others highlighted dog mess (although many were against having more dog bins), vandalism, litter and fly tipping or horses and bikes damaging surfaces in wet weather.

The parents group revealed that the main reasons they did not take their children to the countryside was that they didn't know where to go or how to get there. This group also indicated that there was a need for new paths for walking and cycling (13%) as a priority along with making routes more suitable for pushchairs.

4.7.1 Obstructions.

In Hertfordshire Primary Research found:

Existing users who considered obstructions to be a problem thought this was acting as a deterrent for potential users. Both man-made and natural obstructions can be found along paths but it was illegal obstructions that caused greatest difficulty for those with limited mobility as it made trips difficult to plan. Users wanted the Council to take a stronger stance when clearing illegal obstructions.

Users would like the clearance of fly tips that block paths to be given a high priority. There was also a wish for farmers to reinstate their paths more quickly after ploughing.

Overhanging vegetation was an issue for horse riders and cyclists who needed greater headroom. They would like the vegetation at entrances and exits to be better managed to improve their field of vision. Vegetation can obstruct signposts and notice boards.

4.7.2 Structures.

The poor condition of structures (gates, bridges etc) can present problems for users. In general structures that are in place for security reasons are considered an inconvenience by cyclists and horse riders. Horse riders felt they came second to cyclists and walkers when structures are planned.

In Hertfordshire Primary Research found:
Walkers and cyclists accepted that structures are required, although all agreed the fewer the better. The dog walker's survey revealed that 75% did not find the number of structures an inconvenience but conversely 75% of runners did not want any structures. People with limited mobility had the greatest concerns about structures as they often prevent access.
Users felt that structures were often in an unsatisfactory condition. It was thought that stiles were acceptable if they were designed properly but that they were still a barrier for the elderly or people with mobility problems.

Horse riders agreed with walkers and cyclists, but expressed more strongly that structures must be easy to use. Heavy or damaged gates can cause problems as they are hard or impossible to open without dismounting. A greater route width is required to manoeuvre horses near structures and somewhere to mount and dismount would be helpful.

4.7.3 Surfacing.

Poor surface conditions make some routes less accessible to people with limited mobility. In many cases, type of use determines type of surface. For example, routes leading to local amenities which are well used may have a higher standard of surface as they need to be accessible in all weather conditions. On the other hand a recreational route will typically have a natural surface and may be more difficult to use in winter. Users should be free to choose which routes they use rather than being constrained by poor surface conditions.

> '*The Rights of Way need to enable the user to make the decision whether or not a route is suitable, not the physical obstruction across the route deterring or preventing the user.*'[12]

In Hertfordshire Primary research found:
Surface type can cause problems but has to accommodate all legitimate users including those with private rights. Many users felt that poor surfacing was a problem, but recognised that surfacing can be unsuitable for some users and may be a visual intrusion.

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[12] Source: Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum (2003), 'Improving Access to the Countryside – Making a Start'

Surfacing issues were a particular concern for cyclists who considered that routes should be accessible in all weather conditions, although they did not advocate hard surfacing on all paths. Horse riders preferred natural surfaces whilst cyclists preferred a more compact, hard, sealed surface. Walkers and dog walkers preferred a natural surface (grass or earth).

Generally, users would accept a compromise on surface material on routes managed for the benefit of multiple users. Individual user groups have different views on what the surface should be, although it is recognised that not all surface types suit all users.

4.7.4 Signing

In Hertfordshire Primary research found:
Users wanted appropriate and consistent signs on the network, indicating whether the path is part of a circular route or a 'cul de sac'. Further information about the route would also be of interest. The signing of rights of way from public roads was considered to be highly important (78%) but respondents seemed satisfied with the level of current signing on the network (74%).

It was thought that lack of confidence amongst users could be helped by more information on signs at the beginning of paths. There was concern that signing was not consistently managed and that the lack of signing on byways was a particular issue.

The need for improved waymarking near farm buildings and residential areas, where maps are often insufficiently detailed, was identified. Greater clarity would benefit both landowners and users.

Users felt that misleading notices are a deterrent to people using PRoW, undermining confidence and causing intimidation.

4.7.5 Shared use paths.

The RoW network is perceived to provide safe routes for cyclists, horse riders and walkers. Some, however, argued shared use is dangerous and collisions and disagreements between users is a safety issue. But conflict does not seem to be an issue for most people. Research shows that *'conflict is very infrequent'[13]*. *'Approximately 13% claimed that other users spoiled their enjoyment.'[14]*

There are situations where conflict is more likely to occur. These are environmental e.g. poor surface, poor signing, lack of lighting on paths, blind corners, pinch-points or psychological e.g. fear of accidents or crime. Whilst the level of concern may be greater than the current risk of accidents, such anxiety undermines people's confidence and may discourage return visits. The unlawful use of motorbikes along rights of way is a factor that can significantly affect people's enjoyment of the countryside.

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[13] Source: How People interact off-road routes' – Countryside Agency. Research Notes. Issue CRN32. March 2001
[14] Source: British Waterways (2000), 'Tring Reservoirs'

In Hertfordshire Primary Research found:
Walkers understand the need and accept the shared use of paths with cyclists and horse riders but they do not want to share paths with motorised users. The User Focus Group revealed that, on paths free from motor traffic, the main concern expressed by disabled users was being passed too closely by a cyclist, combined with the fear of being hit. If people perceived conditions to be unsafe they would not use the route. Walkers who use the towpaths and old railway lines commonly cited this as a complaint.

Cyclists, carriage drivers and horse riders indicated that they accepted shared use with other non-motorised users. However, they all wish to see a reduction in the illegal use of the network by motorised users, with steps being taken to reduce potential conflict.

Safety barriers, installed to prevent or deter motorcycles, also frequently deter legitimate users who find them inconvenient or awkward to use.

4.7.6 Road safety
In Hertfordshire Primary Research found:
Some routes require users to cross or pass along busy roads. This causes particular concerns for horse riders, horse carriage drivers and cyclists. In some cases it deters people from using parts of the network.

People requested safer road crossings and safe off-road links. Roads were seen as a big problem for all non-motorised users as they are becoming increasingly busy and increasingly hazardous.

Equestrians, including horse carriage drivers, wanted more joined up routes, preferably starting at stables or livery yards. Some rights of way, used by stables, are difficult to access because of traffic, lack of safe verges and problems with major roads and low bridge parapets.

4.7.7 Parents
In Hertfordshire Primary research found:
The parents group had concerns about safety and felt that there is too much dog fouling. This group believed that reductions of dog mess, litter and vandalism should be a key priority.

4.7.8 Landowners' interests
In Hertfordshire Primary Research found:
a. communication at an early stage with the highway authority to discuss project proposals would be welcomed;
b. landowners should be recognised as users of the network and that their needs should be considered;
c. permissive agreements designed to improve access should not increase a landowner's liability; and

compulsory purchase as a means of securing additional access should not be used.

e. conservation land managers recognise that increased access, whilst welcome and a vital factor in the quality of life, can have potentially negative effects on protected landscapes and habitats.

4.8 SUMMARY OF NEEDS AND DEMANDS.

The guidance issued by the Government directs Highway Authorities to assess "the extent to which local Rights of Way meet the present and likely future needs of the public." In Hertfordshire, the needs and demands of the public were assessed through a range of surveys, focus groups and a review of relevant literature.

General issues for all users were identified as:
i.   Minimum number of obstructions and structures
ii.   More circular routes
iii. Better information both about the network and how to access it

For specific users the following needs and wants were identified:
Walkers want:
i.   Network free from obstruction
ii.   Short circular routes starting and finishing at key nodes
iii. Long routes, not necessarily circular, in more remote interesting places
iv.   Structures kept to a minimum

Parents with children want:
i.   Better information about where to go and how to get there
ii.   Dog mess, litter and vandalism to be addressed as a key priority
iii. To be able to access the countryside with a pushchair

People with limited mobility (and their carers) want:
i.   Acknowledgement that their needs are variable and depend on an individual's physical limitation
ii.   Paths with shallow gradients
iii. Information about where to go and what to expect on arrival

Dog walkers want:
i.   Walks up to an hour
ii.   Sites or Rights of Way accessible from home/kennels
iii. Natural surfaces
iv.   Better information

Runners want:
i.   Runs up to 2 hours
ii.   Routes that have a suitable natural surface
iii. Routes that can take groups
iv.   Better information about available routes

Cyclists want:
i.   Access to a greater proportion of the network to enjoy circular routes
ii.   Surfacing enabling all weather access, not necessarily tarmac
iii. Routes free from furniture i.e. barriers not seats

Horse riders want:

i.   Long circular routes, accessible from stables, avoiding roads
ii. Routes for galloping, with a natural surface separate from improved path surfaces (especially in winter when damage is more likely)
iii. Structures kept to minimum - must be manageable from horseback

Horse Carriage drivers want:

i.   More off road routes linked to byways and Quiet lanes
ii. Structures kept to a minimum, recognising the need for restrictions of motorised vehicles
iii Long circular routes, typically 10 to 15 miles, accessible from stable yards and hard standing for horse boxes

Motorised users want:

i.   Routes with some physical challenge - gradients, water features etc
iii. Clarity as to where they can or cannot go – unambiguous status
iv. More off-road provision

Landowners and Land managers want:

Any proposals should be balanced against the needs of land-owners and managers. From discussions that have taken place with landowners and their representative bodies it was identified that:

i.   communication at an early stage with the highway authority to discuss project proposals would be welcomed;
ii.   landowners should be recognised as users of the network and that their needs should be considered;
iii. permissive agreements designed to improve access should not increase a landowner's liability;
iv.   compulsory purchase as a means of securing additional access should not be used, and
v.   conservation land managers recognise that increased access, whilst welcome and a vital factor in the quality of life, can have potentially negative effects on protected landscapes and habitats.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

5.1 **Knowing where to go on the network?**
There are various types of routes available to users. Some recorded as public rights of way, others which are not. Additionally there are many different sources of information about all these routes.

5.2 **The Definitive Map and Statement.**
The Definitive Map shows recorded rights of way and is conclusive evidence of public rights. It is without prejudice to routes that may currently be unrecorded or rights that may not be shown. The Definitive Statement is a supporting document that describes in written word the routes shown on the map.

The first Definitive Map & Statement (DMS) for Hertfordshire was published in 1953 using information collected through a series of parish based surveys. It has since been updated and re-published on a number of occasions. The current version was published in May 2010.

Copies of the Definitive Map and Statement are held at County Hall in Hertford. Copies of the relevant areas are held at District /Borough and Parish Councils, and in major public libraries. The DMS can be viewed on the county council's website at www.hertsdirect.org/row. Small paper extracts of the DMS are available on request from the Rights of Way Service at County Hall, Hertford.

The DMS can be modified where there is sufficient evidence to show it to be incorrect or though a legal order to create, divert or extinguish a Public Right of Way.

The methodology used in drafting the first DMS unfortunately resulted in a number of errors and anomalies. For example;
i.   Approximately 240 routes come to a dead end, 50 at administrative boundaries (county and parish) and 190 that simply stop with no onward connection.
ii. 94 routes change status part way along the route of which 13 change status at the county boundary.
iii. 46 paths are shown on the Ordnance Survey, but not on the DMS.
iv. There were 1343 "anomalies" recorded on the DMS at May 2010 including drafting errors, missing statements and paths that appear on the Map or the Statement but not on both.

5.3 **Other Access Routes.**
There are a number of other routes with public access that are not shown on the DMS.

5.3.1 Cycle tracks are routes specifically designated for cyclists. It is also normally permitted to walk along cycle tracks (except when they are in or by the side of a made-up carriageway).

5.3.2 Permissive routes are accessible by permission of the landowner and may be supported by a formal agreement. Where there is no written agreement

permission can be withdrawn at any time. Where there is an agreement public access is usually for a limited period of time. There are about.120 permissive routes in Hertfordshire extending for approx' 56 miles (90km). The majority of these are accessible only to walkers. Many routes are part of Countryside Stewardship Schemes run by DEFRA.

5.3.3 <u>Unclassified County Roads (UCRs)</u> or 'White Roads' usually refer to the uncoloured *'road, drive or track'* shown on Ordnance Survey maps. These are often non-tarmac routes maintainable by Hertfordshire County Council and may or may not have motor vehicle rights. UCRs in Hertfordshire are not shown on the DMS but they are listed on the County Council's "List of Streets".

5.4 Promoted routes.

There are over 200 promoted routes in Hertfordshire covering approximately 1125 miles (1,800km) of the network. These are promoted by 25 different organisations, via leaflets, guide-books, the internet etc. Their purposes include; health improvement, routes from train stations, Rural Enterprise Walks starting from pubs and routes for cyclists and horse riders.

Analysis of promoted information reveals an uneven distribution across the county. Generally urban boroughs / districts have fewer promoted routes, e.g. there are more promoted walking routes in Hertsmere and St Albans, compared with Stevenage and Broxbourne.

For cycle routes the districts with the most information are Dacorum and St Albans. Elsewhere, the provision of cycling leaflets is spasmodic. For riders, runners, off-road motor users and dog walkers and those with limited mobility there is very little promoted information currently available.

5.5 Organisations Promoting Rights of Way.

i.   Natural England, provides National Trails for example The Ridgeway which passes through Hertfordshire. The British Horse Society and the Ramblers Association promote historic routes that cross county routes such as the Icknield Way and strategic and promoted routes within the county such as the Hertfordshire Way.

ii. Much promotion of Rights of Way is carried out by local authorities (parish, districts, boroughs and county); the regional park authorities (Lee Valley and Colne Valley); and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Much of this promotion is jointly funded projects often co-ordinated by for example the Countryside Management Service.

iii. Other groups promoting the use of the network include local footpath groups, cycling groups and bridleway associations.

5.6 **Guided Walks1**

The Countryside Management Service, partner of the County Council produces a leaflet, twice-yearly, called "Walks & More" which details a range of guided walks and events. On average, there are 40-50 items per leaflet. Soon the leaflet will solely be electronic and available on the CMS website www.hertslink.org/cms

Other guided walks are promoted independently by several organisations. It is recognised that the lack of co-ordinated information causes some confusion for those who wish to access the countryside.

5.7 **Ordnance Survey.**

The county is covered by the Landranger 1:50,000 and Explorer 1:25,000 maps which show recorded rights of way open to the public. Ordnance Survey maps for Hertfordshire also show a number of other routes with public access including approximately 46 bridleways and footpaths that are not recorded on the Definitive Map. 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps are now printed showing Open Access Land.

5.8 **Rights of Way Service's publicity.**

The Rights of Way Service has moved away from printed copies of leaflets and holds most of its information on the county council website at www.hertsdirect.org/row. Here can be found; the Definitive Map and Statement and forms and information for download, the RoW Good Practice Guide, with detailed standards and operational procedures for the management of public rights of way, the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the Rights and Responsibilities of users and landowners. The Rights of Way Service produce displays and attend such events as the County Show and the County Ploughing Match and they support talks to a range of organisations from Parish Councils to the British Horse Society and from Councillors to Women's Institute groups.

5.9 **Getting to the network.**

Access to and from settlements. Major settlements were analysed to assess whether residents had direct off-road access to the surrounding countryside. The 3 settlements with most links were St Albans, Welwyn Garden City and Hemel Hempstead. Stevenage has the greatest number of bridleways leading to the countryside. Welwyn Garden City and St Albans also have good bridleway links. 23 settlements do not have links to the countryside via footpaths or bridleways.

Access to and from stables or livery yards. 62 stables and livery yards were assessed to see what access they had to bridleways. On average the distance to the nearest bridleway was 0.6 mile (1km).

5.10 **How easy is the network to use?**

The information supporting the analysis is based on:
- An annual 5% random survey of the network undertaken, in May and November, to generate the Performance Indicator (ex BVPI 178).
- A 100% condition survey was first undertaken between 1999 -2001 and 2 more complete surveys have been undertaken since. The most recent being 2008-2010. Currently the survey is updated by 33% each year.

- Information collated nationally but based on small random samples.
- Analysis of the DMS to identify shortfalls in network provision.

5.11 Providing circular routes.

i. Approximately 13 footpaths change status as they cross the county boundary, i.e. routes may change from footpaths into bridleways.

ii. 94 paths within the county change status along the route, and of these, some 39 require users to turn back on themselves.

iii. There are over 220 routes that stop abruptly forcing users to back track. 30 of these terminate at a parish boundary.

v. Some parishes don't have bridleways - Barley, Cottered, Elstree & Borehamwood, Markyate, Nash Mills, North Mymms, Northaw, Radwell, Stanstead St Margaret's, Stocking Pelham, Tring Rural and Watford Rural.

vi. A number of areas have a limited coverage of routes e.g. the area north of Ashwell, area around Westmill, south of Potters Bar etc.

5.12 Physical condition of the network

5.12.1 <u>Signing and waymarking.</u>
The 2009/10 BVPI survey for PRoW showed that 96% of paths met roadside signing requirements and 91% met the waymarking requirement. For signs to pass they must be; in place where a path leaves a road, indicate the correct status, point the correct way and be visible. Hertfordshire's Condition survey of 2004-2007 shows that there are over 11,500 signs and way-marks on the network.

The Rights of Way Service has signed with waymark disc several 'Easy Access Routes' (EARs) to make specific provision for less able people. This project continues and promotion of these routes on the web is the next phase of work.

5.12.2 <u>Obstructions on the network.</u>
An obstruction is classified as anything that impedes the existing legal access and/or is an offence that could lead to prosecution. Hertfordshire's own Condition survey 2004-2007 suggested the average number of obstructions was 1.2 /10 km, and the ex BVPI 178 survey 2009/10 indicated that 91% of all paths did not have any obstruction.

5.12.3 <u>Ploughing and cropping.</u>
According to Hertfordshire's Condition survey 2004-2007, 26% of the network runs across arable land. Landowners have a right to disturb land over which a footpath or bridleway passes but legislation requires re-instatement within 14 days. The Condition survey 2004-2007 revealed that failure to reinstate paths affected about 4% of the network. According to our ex BVPI 178 survey 2009/10, 7% of paths failed due to ploughing and cropping. The percentage in more arable areas is higher than in the county as a whole.

5.12.4 <u>Overgrown vegetation.</u>
The Condition survey 2004-2007 showed that vegetation and tree up-growth and over-growth affected 1% of the natural network.

5.12.5 Litter / fly tipping.

Over the last 5 years 2005-2010, there have been 315 reported incidents of fly-tipping which amounts to 1.2 per week on average. Fly-tipping is mostly in the form of building materials, abandoned vehicles and household waste and is dealt with by the local district or borough council.

5.12.6 Conflicts of use.

Conflicts have been identified between walkers and cyclists especially on towpaths and old railway lines. National research has revealed that 28% of footpaths showed evidence of illegal use by cyclists or motorised users and 20% of all bridleways showed illegal use by motorised users. There was also evidence to show that of 31% of footpaths were being accessed by cyclists, 10% by horse riders and 14% by motorised users.

5.12.7 Road safety.

Busy roads isolate many sections of the rights of way network. Research has shown that a number of rights of way stop where they meet a primary road forcing users either onto busy roads or to turn back. There were approximately 98 routes that ended at a primary route.

5.12.8 Structures on the network.

The network has a number of structures along it which exist to provide stock proofing and to enhance public safety. They include kissing gates, stiles, defined gaps, and barriers. All new structures require authorisation from the Highway Authority. Some structures exist on routes as they have been there since the paths were first recorded.

According to the Condition survey 2004-2007 there are over 7,500 structures on the network in Hertfordshire. The 2009/10 BVPI survey indicated that about 86% of paths with stiles, gates and barriers were in good condition.

The Discrimination and Disability Act 2005 led Hertfordshire in 2007 to adopt a policy of not authorising new stiles on the network. Hertfordshire is proactive in removing stiles where they are no longer needed for livestock control, or are out of repair and replacing them with gaps or structures which are easier to use.

According to the Condition surveys of 1999/01 and 2004/07 the number of stiles reduced by 39% over time, to be either replaced by gates or removed to leave a gap.

5.12.9 Surface condition.

In Hertfordshire, the majority of the network is to be found in the countryside, with 20% of rights of way in settlement areas.

The Rights of Way network comprises of the following type of surface, according to the Condition survey 2004-07:
44%   Natural (e.g. Grass)
15%   Arable headland/ field-edge
11%   Arable cross-field

16%   Improved, (with rustic surfacing)
12%   Sealed (with tarmac or concrete)

With the majority of the network being un-surfaced it is likely to be affected by seasonal weather conditions, vegetation growth, or by agriculture e.g. ploughing, cropping, all of which can greatly influence the user experience.

5.13 SUMMARY OF THE NETWORK ASSESSMENT

Condition of the network. Evidence shows that the network is generally accessible. However, when assessed against the needs and demands of users it is possible to identify a range of shortcomings that are likely to affect access to the network, perhaps on a permanent basis or due to seasonal circumstances.

The network can be disjointed.
i.   There is not consistent network coverage across the county especially from settlements and in certain cases there is a lack of bridleway provision.
ii. Paths have been severed by development or are unusable due to inconsistent status e.g. bridleways becoming footpaths.
iii. There are opportunities for short circular routes for walkers and cyclists but scope for longer circular routes are more limited due to paths coming to an end e.g. at administrative boundaries and major roads.
iv. Few bridleways can be accessed directly from stables and livery yards.
v.   There are fewer opportunities for cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and motorised users to complete circular routes. This is due to the number of paths changing status.
vi. There are many routes that end at or cross over busy roads where road crossings are not always provided.

The network has barriers.
i.   1% of the length of the network and 3% of the number of RoW are affected by illegal obstructions such as, fences buildings and encroachments.
ii. Walkers making journeys of 8km (according to the condition survey of 2004-2007) are likely to encounter 2.4 structures per kilometre.
ii. Cyclists and horse riders are likely come across 1 structure on average every kilometre when on a bridleway. Similarly, users of BOATs and RUPPs would encounter 1 structure every kilometre.
iv. 12% of the structures on the network were found to be in an unsatisfactory condition.

The network has different and changeable surface types.
i.   26% of paths run over arable farmland and therefore, are likely to be affected by wet weather, ploughing and crop growth, (according to the Condition survey 2004-2007) .
ii. 59% of all bridleways have a natural surface(natural, arable or cross-field according to the condition survey 2004-2007) which is not always suitable for cyclists. Similarly 12.5% of bridleways have a sealed surface which is not considered appropriate for horse riders. The current bridleway network seems to be more suitable for horse riders rather than cyclists.
iii. Even though only a small percentage of the network is affected by overgrown vegetation it is still a factor that can disrupt a walk or ride.

The provision of information is a key component of access.

i. Evidence shows that the network is being consistently signed and waymarked. According to the results of the BVPI survey 2009/10 only 3% of paths do not meet signing requirements where they leave a metalled road and nearly 9% fail way-marking requirements.

ii. However it is recognised that there is a need to improve waymarking near farm buildings and in residential areas.

iii. There is not a consistent approach to the promotion of the network with a number of different information sources and providers that are independent of each other.

6. STATEMENT OF ACTION

The Statement of Action sits at the heart of the RoWIP and provides the opportunity to develop a long term plan for the PRoW network. This section outlines a Statement of Action based on:

i. the assessment of needs and demands;
ii. the opportunities provided by the network; and
iii. links to wider public benefits.

The Statement of Action and Action Plan (Section 9) will be used to develop Area Rights of Way Improvement Plans together with 5 year work programmes from which detailed annual work programmes will be developed.

The concept of the RoWIP is of a document that guides change, sets out a vision and is subject to review.

6.1 The key issues

The assessment of users' needs and demands identified the following as key issues:

1) Difficulties in getting to the countryside without the use of a car.
2) Insufficient off road routes linking communities & services.
3) People have to use or cross-busy roads to link up sections of network.
4) The network does not adequately provide for cycling, horse riding and horse carriage drivers.
5) Uncontrolled dogs and fouling are a deterrent to users.
6) Insufficient circular routes starting from settlements or other suitable locations.
7) Information provided about the off road network is neither adequate nor well enough co-ordinated or targeted.
8) There are too many barriers and structures.
9) The off road network does not meet the needs of many potential users.
10) Seasonal obstructions created by ploughing, cropping etc need to be addressed.

6.2 The Core actions

These are proposed to meet needs and demands; address short-comings in the network; and to make links for a range of public benefits:

1) Develop routes that cater for the needs of people with limited mobility.
2) Develop the network from significant public transport connections.
3) Reduce the number of unnecessary physical barriers on the network.
4) Promote Hertfordshire's countryside to residents and visitors.
5) Develop appropriate, well maintained links into the countryside.
6) Create and develop off road routes linking communities with places of work, schools and other local facilities.
7) Extend the network currently available to cyclists, horse-riders and horse carriage drivers.
8) Help people wishing to improve or maintain their health by developing a range of circular off road routes.
9) Ensure that opportunities to protect, extend and enhance the off road network are included in proposals for new developments.
10) Where the off road network is affected by busy transport routes work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to improve the safety and attractiveness of the routes for users.
11) Address problems of fly tipping, litter and dog-fouling in partnership with appropriate local and regional agencies.
12) Identify and address potential demand for access to the countryside amongst those who currently do not use the network.

6.3 **Implementing the Statement of Action.** The core actions on the RoW network will conform to the Council's agreed policies:

i. **County Council policy**: The County Council's Executive Committee agreed in January 2001 that the authority's approach to the management of rights of way would be that:

"The County Council as Highway Authority seeks through its future investment to assert and protect the rights of the Public by providing a fully open, legally defined and easy to use public RoW network".

The Statement of Action seeks to build on this policy statement.

ii. **Management principles.** To achieve this objective, working within the framework provided by statute and available finance, work on the network has been prioritised according to 3 management principles:
   a.   Routes where public safety could be substantially improved;
   b.   Routes according to the level of use; and
   c.   Routes where the County Council's actions could result in a significant positive impact on the network.

iii.   **Operational procedures and standards.** The management principles are supported by 14 policies on the management of responsibilities that the County Council has as highway authority.
In order to ensure consistency of service delivery there is a Good Practice Guide that sets out operational procedures and standards.

iv.   **Achieving improvement by:**
   a.   Improve quality + condition of routes to meet need and demand.
   b.   Improving the information available on the network and promoting access opportunities to a range of users.
   c.   Changing the status of existing routes to create new capacity to meet need and demand.
   d.   Negotiating with landowners and property interests to create new routes through legal orders or permissive agreements (not compulsory purchase at this time).

v.   **Establishing investment priorities.** The assessment process identified a range of needs and demands and a number of shortcomings on the network. It will not be possible to address all of these and priorities will be determined to ensure greatest public benefit. Suggested criteria include:

   a.   Meets policy objectives and delivers a range of public benefits.
   b.   Addresses the needs and demands of specific groups, i.e. limited mobility or vision, people from different ethnic backgrounds etc.
   c.   Increases the level of use where appropriate.
   d.   Ease of development i.e. has a status that allows for multi-use.
   e.   Ease of access, i.e. close to population centres.
   f.   Provides a missing link in the network that enables the creation of a circular route or completes a linear route etc.
   g.   Removal of barriers to access i.e. improves surfacing, removes structures such as stiles or makes them more access friendly.
   h.   Proximity to services and facilities i.e. car park, toilets etc.
   i.   Cost i.e. achievable within existing budgets or joint partnerships.

vi. **Working arrangements.** The RoW Unit manages the maintenance of the network and the management of the Definitive Map & Statement. It is evident that, for the emerging range of actions, the future improvement of the network can only be achieved through a range of partnerships and service deliverers. There will still be the need to manage the network in accordance with its legal requirements, but the RoW Unit is unlikely to be the only delivery agent.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 The consultation exercise

The draft Statement of Action was produced in autumn 2004 and was considered by a County Council Member panel and the Hertfordshire LAF. Following their endorsement a consultation exercise was held between January and April 2005.

The consultation exercise generated comment on strategic proposals but was also a practical exercise to allow people to log problems and issues about the PRoW and provided an opportunity to make suggestions for improvements. A leaflet/questionnaire was produced which was available from County Hall, libraries, consultation events and on the Council's website. Additionally, a number of consultation events were held. These were:

- staffed by County Council officers;
- located in libraries, shopping and sports centres;
- held on different days of week and at different times; and
- provided opportunities to respond to the strategic questions;
- enabled people to identify local problems and issues on routes and to make suggestions for improvements; and
- a further session was held for people that attended the User Focus Groups.

In general, there was positive support for the core actions, whilst further comments and ideas were also raised (see below).

7.2

Top 10 comments from questionnaires
- More routes for horses/cyclists requested
- Replacement and new signs requested
- Footpath and bridleways damaged by horses
- New (missing) links
- Horse/dog fouling on footpaths and bridleways
- Request to replace stiles with kissing gates
- HCC to promote walks/safety
- Safety issues
- Better links to public transport
- Fields not being reinstated after ploughing

Top 10 comments from road shows
- Circular/routes requested
- Replacement and new signs requested
- Safety issues
- Horses and cyclists on Footpaths
- Improve state of Rights of Way surfaces
- HCC to promote walks/safety
- Family friendly routes

- Improved Footpaths and bridleways
- Request to replace stiles with kissing gates
- Horse/dog fouling on footpaths and bridleways

Top 10 comments from map based exercise
- New bridleways/footpaths
- New (missing) links
- Greenways in Hertsmere
- More routes for horses/cyclists requested
- Upgrade to bridleway
- Improve state of Rights of Way surfaces
- Improved footpaths and bridleways
- Replacement and new signs requested
- More Circular/routes requested
- New routes to be created

Top 10 comments from on-line questionnaires
- More routes for horses/cyclists requested
- Improved footpaths and bridleways
- More access to off-roading
- Problems with off-road vehicles
- Replacement and new signs requested
- Horses & cyclists on footpaths
- Concerns about safety issues
- Concern over state of Rights of Way surfaces
- More Circular/routes requested
- Fields not being re-instated after ploughing

8.0 THE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

8.1 **The role of the Implementation Plans.**
The RoWIP sets the overall strategy for improvements and potential work across the county, however it is not intended as a detailed programme of work.

The tables of Core Actions in the Action Plan in section 9 highlight a framework against each of the proposed Core actions/areas of improvement. The actual delivery of these on the ground, including work programmes, is in the RoWIP Area Implementation Plans.

Following the first edition of the RoWIP, 9 Area Implementation Plans were produced between 2006 and 2008. These 9 areas are home to over 870,000 people (Census 2001) and include around 54% of the rights of way network. The boundaries of these were not drawn directly to the settlement boundaries but were set 2-3 kms from that point and then realigned to fit the parish boundaries.

Preparation of the Implementation plans followed a framework developed through a pilot project already implemented in the Hertford and Ware area (Area 3). The Implementation plans contain lists of prioritised projects which on further assessment feed into annual programmes of work. The draft plans were submitted to the relevant Highways Joint Member Panels for approval.

The specific improvement projects contained in the Area Implementation plans are updated as new requests are made by the public and opportunities arise. In this way the Implementation plans are 'living' documents.

Following this second edition update of the RoWIP, the 9 areas covered in the first edition have expanded to include all of Hertfordshire in 12 areas. The Implementation plans will be updated in due course to reflect the changes of area and thus hold projects for the whole county, both urban and rural.

8.2 First Edition RoWIP areas.

For the First edition RoWIP (2006/07 - 2010/11) action was concentrated within those 9 Project Areas shown on the map below:

Previous RoWIP areas, based on 2km buffers around key settlements

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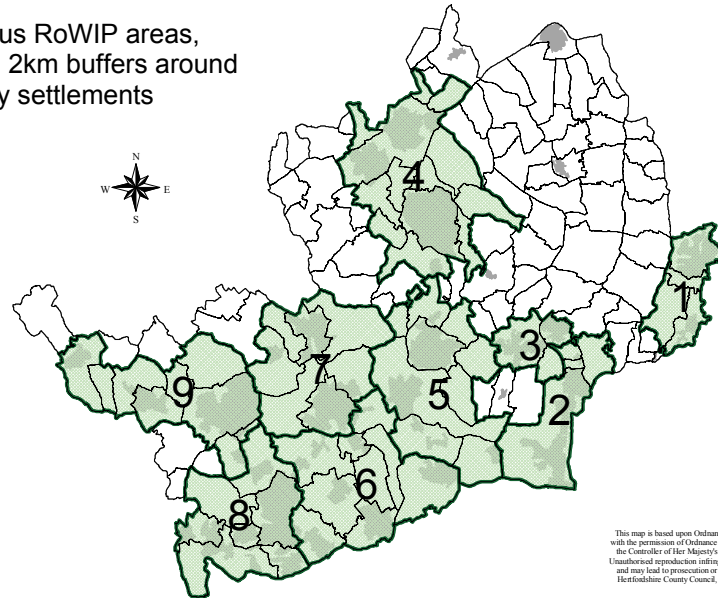
Area 1. Bishop's Stortford, including Sawbridgeworth

Area 2. The Lee Valley area from Hoddesdon to Waltham Cross

Area 3. Hertford and Ware (pilot area)

Area 4. Stevenage and North Herts (Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock)

Area 5. Welwyn and Hatfield

Area 6. Watling Chase Community Forest area

Area 7. Harpenden, Redbourn and St. Albans

Area 8. South West Herts, including Watford and Rickmansworth as well as the Colne Valley Regional Park

Area 9. West Herts, including Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead and Tring as well as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

8.3 **Second Edition RoWIP areas.**

For the Second edition RoWIP (2011/12 - 2015/16) all of Hertfordshire is covered by Area Implementation Plans. Some of the existing areas have had their boundaries extended or changed and 3 new areas have been allocated making 12 Areas in total. The existing Area Implementation Plans will require updating and 3 new Area Implementation Plans will be produced to reflect these changes.

The updated 12 Areas are shown on the map below:

New Project Areas
for 2nd edition of the RoWIP

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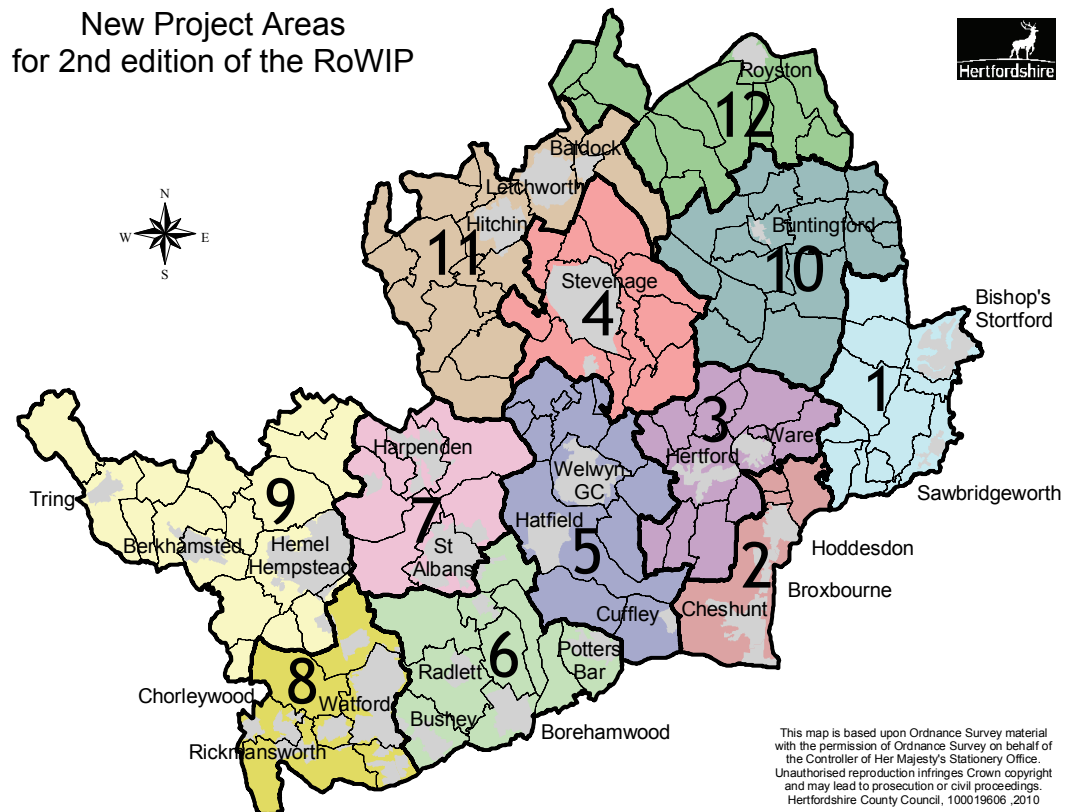
Second edition RoWIP areas and the towns and parishes within:

Area 1. Bishop's Stortford, & Sawbridgeworth , Bishop's Stortford, Thorley, Sawbridgeworth, High Wych, Eastwick & Gilston, Hunsdon, Widford, Much Hadham, Little Hadham and Aldbury.

Area 2. The Lee Valley , Cheshunt, Waltham Cross, Hoddesdon, Broxbourne, Stanstead St Margarets, Stanstead Abbotts and Great Amwell.

Area 3. Hertford and Ware , Hertford, Ware, Hertford Heath, Little Berkhamstead, Bayford, Brickendon Liberty, Wareside, Thundridge, Bengeo Rural, Sacombe, Stapleford and Bramfield.

Area 4. Stevenage Area; Stevenage, Aston, Datchworth, Knebworth, Langley, Wymondley, Graveley, Weston, Walkern, Bennington,and Watton-at-Stone.

Area 5. <u>Welwyn and Hatfield;</u> Welwyn Garden City, Welwyn, Woolmer Green, Codicote, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot St Peter, Hatfield, Tewin, Hertingfordbury, Essendon, Northaw & Cuffley and North Mymms.

Area 6. <u>Watling Chase Community Forest;</u> Potters Bar, South Mimms, Ridge, Shenley, Elstree & Borehamwood, Aldenham, Bushey, St Stephens, London Colney and Colney Heath.

Area 7. <u>Harpenden, Redbourn and St. Albans;</u> St Albans, St Michael Rural, Sandridge, Wheathampstead, Harpenden, Harpenden Rural and Redbourn.

Area 8. <u>South West Herts, including the Colne Valley Regional Park;</u> Watford, Watford Rural, Rickmansworth, Croxley Green, Chorleywood, Sarratt and Abbots Langley.

Area 9. <u>Dacorum;</u> Hemel Hempstead, Great Gaddesden, Little Gaddesden, Flamstead, Markyate, Nettleden with Potten End, Aldbury, Tring Town, Tring Rural, Wigginton, Northchurch, Berkhamstead, Bovingdon, Flaunden, Chipperfield, Kings Langley and Nash Mills.

Area 10. <u>Buntingford and Northern East Herts;</u> Buntingford, Cottered, Ardeley, Great Munden, Little Munden, Standon, Aspenden, Westmill, Braughing, Hormead, Furneux Pelham, Stocking Pelham, Brent Pelham, Meesden, Anstey, Wyddial and Buckland.

Area 11. <u>Hitchin, Letchworth and North West Herts;</u> Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Clothall, Bygrave, Radwell, Ickleford, Holwell, Pirton, Offley, Hexton, Lilley, Kings Walden, Kimpton, St Pauls Walden, Preston and Ippollitts.

Area 12. <u>Royston and North East Herts;</u> Royston, Barley, Nuthampstead, Barkway, Reed, Therfield, Kelshall, Sandon, Rushden, Wallington, Ashwell, Hinxworth, and Caldecote & Newnham.

8.4 **Implementation Processes**

An underlying principle of the RoWIP is that it should enhance and complement the existing network through improvement, extension and linkage and in this context legal processes and orders may be used.

Current legislation enables new rights of way to be added to the network using Creation Agreements (made under section 25 of the Highways Act 1980) or Creation Orders (made under section 26 of the Highways Act 1980). This gives the impression of a ready tool with which to plug breaks and gaps in the network. In reality, both processes can be lengthy and expensive, to the extent that they are a constraint.

As a minimum, the time taken to process a Creation Agreement is about 3 months with attendant staff and advertising costs but this is only after a deal has been

negotiated with the landowner, which would normally take some considerable time].

Creation Orders are usually only made where the owner of the land is not known. Again, extensive negotiation would be carried out with neighbouring landowners and local user groups prior to any order being entered into. This means that Creation Orders can also take some considerable time to complete. In addition, compensation may be payable to any landowners adversely affected by the order.

However, these processes are still the most likely means for putting new routes onto the ground and their constraining influence must simply be acknowledged and worked with. It is worth noting that several Creation Agreements have been entered into following successful negotiations between the county council, landowners and knowledgeable local groups. Where the occasion arises this approach could be repeated.

Another option is acquisition of the land needed to run a new route on, say along a field headland to avoid a dangerous section of road.

With little use being made of the above options to date, the financial implications are uncertain but levels of compensation and acquisition costs would emerge with use, enabling a better assessment of their value.

8.5 **Implementation Funding**
From the outset it has been the intention of central government that no new money would be allocated to implement RoWIPs. Rather, they would be financed through greater alignment with a range of economic, social and environmental agendas, becoming a legitimate draw on their existing funding regimes.

The LTP is identified as a key source of potential finance, if the RoWIP is aligned with sustainable transport and road safety objectives. The work programmes should contribute to the primary delivery of LTP indicators and targets for Safe Routes to School, Rural Routes, Cycling, Road Safety and where appropriate to the reduction of congestion.

Alongside this work, action in the 12 Areas will benefit from addressing strategic issues as such health, economic development and enterprise, culture, leisure and biodiversity whilst, at the local level, being mindful of opportunities that present themselves for meeting the needs of minority user groups e.g. carriage drivers etc.

9.   ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan sets out a range of strategic actions at the county level. The action plan helps to provide a framework for the development of the 12 RoWIP Area Implementation Plans.

The Action Plan indicates for each identified Core Action:

i.   Actions. A range of actions proposed in order to achieve the Core Action.
ii.   Who is it for? This column identifies the primary beneficiaries. i.e. those who will benefit most from implementing the actions. This will not include all those who will benefit, for example, where 'people using wheelchairs' are identified, it is understood that walkers, joggers etc. will also gain.
iii.   Who will do it? This column identifies potential partners and lead bodies. (The lead body is shown in bold).
iv.   Links to policy. This column makes reference to the primary public agendas and policy areas to which the action contributes.
vi   Potential funding? This column identifies potential sources of funding for implementing the action.

CORE ACTIONS

Core Action 1: Develop routes that cater for the needs of people with limited mobility and visual impairments.

Outcome

Increased number of people with limited mobility and visual impairments accessing the countryside. Addressing the key issue that the off-road network does not meet the needs of many potential users.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Identify existing routes that meet the specific needs and demands of users with limited mobility.*	Wheelchair users & carers. People with children & pushchairs. Those with limited mobility due to age. Those recovering from serious illness. Those prescribed exercise as part of their treatment.	**Rights of Way** HCC (Adult Care Services) Disability Groups Pre-school child-care groups Other access providers	Local Transport Plan Accessibility Planning Health Improvement Plan Cultural Strategy Social Inclusion / Equalities Disability Discrimination	Local Transport Plan Primary Care Trusts Adult Care Services? British Waterways Other access providers
2. Provide new routes that meet the specific needs and demands of users with limited mobility.*				
3. Promote routes (new and existing) in a format and medium that is accessible to those with limited mobility and in places where they will find it.				

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
4. When preparing Area Rights of Way Improvement Plans, identify and liaise with those carriage drivers and riding establishments that cater for the needs of disabled riders and those who provide carriage rides for them with the purpose of trying to develop safer, more continuous routes." 5. Undertake further research to establish the specific needs of people with visual impairments when accessing the countryside.	People with visual impairments.	**Rights of Way** HCC - Adult Care Services RNIB Herts Assoc. for the Blind	Local Transport Plan Health Improvement Plan Cultural Strategy Social Inclusion / Equalities Disability Discrimination	Local Transport Plan

* Routes meeting the needs and demands of those with limited mobility should ideally:

• Start and end at the same place	• Be less than 2 miles
• Have a flat, firm, well-drained surface	• Have suitable car parking at the start of route e.g. pub car park, village hall, lay-by
• Have toilets suitable for the disabled nearby	• Be free of gates and stiles. Any gates must be easily opened and the least restrictive option should always be sought. [Refer BS 5709]
• Be clearly signed at the start including information about the surface, gradients, particular points of interest, location of seating	• Have benches at regular intervals

Core Action 2: Develop the Rights of Way network from significant passenger transport connections.

Outcome

Increased proportion of people using passenger transport to access the rights of way network. Addressing the issue that there are difficulties in getting to the countryside without the use of the car.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Develop a range of circular routes directly accessible from train stations. 2. Promote routes through leaflets and information boards at railway stations in Hertfordshire and on lines serving Herts. I.e. North London, Luton, Cambridge. 3. Develop a range of circular walking routes accessible from locations with regular daily or weekend bus services. 4. Promote selected routes through timetables and bus route information maps (county bus network map and area travel guides) as well as at key bus interchanges.	Existing users of public transport (lower income groups, young people (under 16s), elderly, urban populations, visitors/tourists) People without a car or limited access to one. People seeking an alternative to the car.	**Rights of Way** Countryside Management Service Passenger Transport Unit Herts Tourism Partnership Intalink Partnership Rail companies Bus operators	Local Transport Plan Cultural Strategy Health Improvement Plans Intalink policy	Local Transport Plan Cultural Partnership Health Improvement Plans Chilterns AONB* LVRPA**

* Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty   ** Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
5. Ensure that, wherever possible, guided and promoted walks are accessible by passenger transport.	Walkers. Users of passenger transport. Those without a car.	**Rights of Way** **Country-side Manage-ment Service** Other walk leaders	Local Transport Plan Cultural Strategy Health Improve-ment Plans	Local Transport Plan Health Improve-ment Plans Chiltern's AONB* LVRPA**

* Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty   ** Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Core Action 3: Reduce the number of unnecessary physical barriers on the network.

Outcome

People using the rights of way network will encounter fewer structures when out on foot, horse, carriage or bike. Addressing the issue that there are too many barriers and structures on the network and the need for farmers and landowners to reinstate rights of way more quickly after ploughing. Wherever structure must be used, the least restrictive option should always be sought. [Refer BS 5709]

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. HCC will positively seek the least restrictive option in relation to access onto and along RoW.	All current and potential users	**Rights of Way** Land Owners and representative groups (CLA / NFU)	Rights of Way Health Improve-ment Plan Disability Discrimin-ation Culture Strategy Social Inclusion / Equalities	Herts County Council Chilterns AONB* LVRPA**
2. HCC to adopt a pro-active approach to removing structures between arable fields through negotiation with landowners in response to changes in farming practice. E.g. a reduction in livestock farming.	All current users.			
3. HCC to adopt a standard 'easy access' latch on all gates and to consider the needs of carriage drivers where appropriate.	Horse-riders. Young, old and people with a disability.			
4. HCC to adopt a proactive approach to removal of all other barriers.	All current users especially people with a disability.			

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
5. HCC to improve surfacing on routes that provide important links in the network, that are currently in poor condition and where improvement would bring significant public benefit.	All current users especially people with a disability.	**Rights of Way**		
6. Ensure, through negotiation and enforcement, that paths across arable land are reinstated promptly and kept clear of crops.	All users.	**Rights of Way**	Rights of Way	Herts County Council
7. The County Council will continue to take a robust stance on the removal obstructions.	All users	**Rights of Way**	Rights of Way	Herts County Council

* Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty   ** Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Core Action 4: Promote Hertfordshire's countryside to residents and visitors.

Outcome

Visitors and residents take time to enjoy the Hertfordshire countryside using local rights of way and spend more time and money in rural areas. Addressing the need to provide better co-ordinated and targeted information about the off-road network.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Develop a distinctive branding for Hertfordshire's countryside using Enjoy! Hertfordshire.	Residents of and visitors to Hertfordshire's countryside	HCC Cultural officer	Cultural Strategy	Local Authorities
2. Ensure that new material promoting Hertfordshire's countryside includes the Enjoy! Hertfordshire branding and that opportunities are made to re-brand or re-package existing material.		Herts Tourism Partnership Rights of Way Countryside Management Service	Economic Development Strategy Rural Innovation Strategy Regional Economic Strategy	LVRPA** Country-side Agency

**Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
3. Develop joint promotional literature describing high quality routes that enable visitors to experience Hertfordshire's countryside. Use opportunities to further promote the rights and responsibilities associated with use and management of the countryside to users and landowners.	Residents of and visitors to Hertfordshire's countryside	Rights of Way Countryside Management Service Herts Highways Access Partnership East of England Tourist Board	Cultural Strategy Economic Development Strategy Rural Innovation Strategy Regional Economic Strategy	Local Authorities LVRPA** Country-side Agency

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
4. Expand the promotion and marketing of the countryside through Enjoy! Hertfordshire. To include: • Inspected accommodation • Existing visitor attractions • Other service points including libraries, pubs, shops • Tourist information centres • Transport gateways including airports, train and bus stations • Out of county (North London and Cambridge)	Residents of and visitors to Hertfordshire's countryside	HCC Cultural officer Herts Tourism Partnership Rights of Way Countryside Management Service		Local Authorities LVRPA** Country-side Agency London Development Agency

**Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
5. Work with relevant agencies to develop a countryside access website that can advise people on: • Why to visit Hertfordshire's countryside? • Where to go? (To include public sites and routes, private places of interest and attractions and leaflets and publications) • How to get there? (including access by passenger transport.) • What to expect when you get there? • Countryside access activities and events in the county. • Links to other web sites	Residents of and visitors to Hertfordshire's countryside Service providers	Rights of Way Countryside Management Service Information Management District Councils British Waterways Thames Water National Trust Chilterns AONB Lea Valley User Groups Land Owners	Cultural Strategy Implementing Electronic Government Planning Policy Guidance 17	Local Transport Plan E-government Local Authorities

Core Action 5: Develop appropriate well-maintained links into the countryside for use by local people.

Outcome

Increased use of the countryside around towns and villages by local leisure walkers and dog walkers, joggers and runners and cyclists. Addressing the issue that there are insufficient circular routes starting from settlements of other suitable locations.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Identify a range of routes suitable for dog owners to walk for up to an hour on the urban fringe and develop solutions for resolving issues associated with dog-fouling.	Dog walkers. All other users who suffer the effects of dog mess particularly children and those using wheelchairs.	**Rights of Way** District Councils	Cultural strategies District Councils	Rights of Way District Councils
2. Promote routes through clear local signing and information boards.				
3. Identify a range of circular routes for runners of different abilities to run for up to 2 hours in association with local running clubs.	Runners and joggers.	**Rights of Way** Sport England Running clubs District councils Leisure centres British Orienteering Federation Adventure racers	Sport England Health Improve-ment Plans	Rights of Way Sport England
4. Promote selected routes through running clubs, the internet and appropriate on-site information.				

Core Action 6: Create and develop off-road routes linking communities with places of work, schools and other local facilities.

Outcome

Increased number of people using parts of the off-road network for walking and cycling to work, the shops and other local facilities. Addressing the issue that there are insufficient routes linking communities and services.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Identify realistic cycle catchment areas by mapping: • major settlements • key employment sites • secondary schools • shopping centres • hospitals • leisure centres and • transport interchanges. Identify opportunities to improve connections for cycle journeys using an integrated on and off road network by improvements to: • signing • safety especially at road crossings • surfacing [making it suitable for all types of bikes] • cycle parking	Current and potential cycle commuters	**Herts Highways** **Rights of Way** Transportation Planning & Policy TravelWise Schools Businesses Health Surgeries / Hospitals Leisure centres	Local Transport Plan Economic Develop-ment Strategy Rural Innovation Strategy Health Improvement Plan TravelWise	Local Transport Plan Rights of Way

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
2. Identify realistic walking catchment areas by mapping: • major settlements • key employment sites • schools • local shopping centres • hospitals and surgeries • leisure centres and • transport interchanges. Identify opportunities to improve walking routes linking homes with key services by improvements to signing and safety especially at road crossings.	School children Shoppers Employees	**Herts Highways** Rights of Way Transportation Planning & Policy TravelWise Schools Businesses	Local Transport Plan Economic Development Strategy Rural Innovation Strategy	Local Transport Plan Rights of Way

Core Action 7: Extend the network currently available to cyclists and horse riders.

Outcome
Increased opportunity and continuity for horse riders and cyclists. Addressing the issue that the off-road network does not adequately provide for cycling and horse riding.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Undertake more research into the needs and demands of mountain bikers.	Mountain bikers	**Rights of Way** British Mountain Bike Federation Cyclists Touring Club Mountain bike clubs and shops		Local Transport Plan Sport England
2. Develop off-road cycling routes with suitable dry surfacing that compliment the unclassified highway network especially where traffic volumes are relatively low and there is evidence of demand.	Touring and recreational cyclists	**Rights of Way** Herts Highways Cyclists Touring Club Cycling groups	Local Transport Plan	Local Transport Plan Sustrans

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
3. In partnership with livery yards and stables, investigate the development of suitable routes for riders that avoid busy roads and provide safe traffic free routes.	Horse riders	**Rights of Way** British Horse Society Riding groups Stables and livery yards Landowners	Local Transport Plan	Local Transport Plan British Horse Society Equine businesses
4. Identify where horse-riders are using busy roads and investigate the development of solutions such as verge reallocation, permissive routes or dedications/creations.	Horse riders	**Rights of Way** **Herts Highways** Landowners	Local Transport Plan	Local Transport Plan British Horse Society
5. Research means of addressing demands for riding routes suitable for cantering / galloping – seek permissive access, toll rides etc.	Horse riders	**Rights of Way** **Horse riding associations** Landowners	Local Transport Plan	British Horse Society

Core Action 8: Help people wishing to improve or maintain their health by developing a range of circular off road routes.

Outcome

Increased use of the network by people who are recuperating following illness, surgery or poor health; people wishing to maintain their health, people wishing to improve their health.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Identify, through mapping, areas or groups that have the greatest potential to improve their health from increased exercise using the off-road network.	Those suffering from chronic illness. Those recuperating from ill-health Those who have been advised by their doctor to lose weight through diet and exercise. Those wishing to increase their levels of exercise but lack the confidence and/or facilities.	Primary Care Trusts Rights of Way District Councils Doctors surgeries and health clinics Countryside Management Service	Health Improve-ment Plans Walking Way to health Initiative Sport England	Primary Care Trusts British Heart Foundation Walking Way to Health Country-side Agency District Councils Sport England
2. Working with the health sector, increase opportunities for people belonging to groups or areas of identified need, to participate in programmes of regular short and progressive health walks guided by trained leaders.				

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
3. Publish self-guided walk leaflets aimed at people who are new to walking or less confident in areas of identified need and ensure targeted distribution.	Those wishing to increase their levels of exercise but lack the confidence and/or facilities.	**Primary Care Trusts** Countryside Management Service Rights of Way District Councils Community Development Agency for Herts	Health Improvement Plans Walking Way to health Initiative Sport England	District Councils Sport England

Core Action 9: Ensure that opportunities to protect, extend and enhance the off road network are included in proposals for new developments.

Outcome

Planning process makes a greater contribution to an integrated non-motorised network. Addressing the issue that the potential to improve and enhance the network through the planning system has not been fully realised.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Support the development of Supplementary Planning Guidance for new Local Development Frameworks in order to ensure that improvements to the non-motorised network are identified and incorporated in all new developments.	All users	Rights of Way Planning authorities Transport Planning Policy	Local Develop-ment Documents Local Transport Plan	Developer contributions S106 agreements

Core Action 10: Where the off road network is affected by busy transport routes work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to improve the safety and attractiveness of the routes for users.

Outcome
Greater use of the off-road network resulting from the provision of safe crossings and verges for non-motorised users. Addressing the issue that people have to use or cross sections of busy roads in order to link up sections of the off road network.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Identify where well used sections of the off-road network are crossed by the primary road network and develop solutions suitable for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and disabled users as appropriate. 2. Identify where well used sections of the non-motorised network run along busy roads and develop solutions including verge improvements, permissive routes, dedications or creations, or the promotion of 'Rural routes' and 'Quiet lanes'.	All relevant categories of network users.	**Herts Highways** **Rights of Way**	Local Transport Plan	Local Transport Plan

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
3. Identify locations where well used sections of the off-road network crosses the rail network and with appropriate authorities develop solutions to improve safety.	All relevant categories of network users.	**Rights of Way** Rail Authorities	Local Transport Plan	Local Transport Plan

Core action 11: Address problems of fly-tipping, litter and dog-fouling in partnership with appropriate local and regional agencies.

Outcome

A Rights of Way management system that deals with fly tipping, litter and dog mess quickly and efficiently. A cleaner network where incidence of fly-tipping, littering, dog-fouling is reduced, particularly in areas where it is currently identified as a problem. Increased confidence of users that reporting a problem will result in it being resolved.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that the public: • Can easily report fly tipping etc. on rights of way, and • Can be confident that the report will be acted upon promptly.	All users and landowners.	**Rights of Way** HCC Waste Aware District Councils Environment Agency Landowners	Environ-mental Protection District Councils Right of Way Obstruction	District Councils Environment Agency Herts Waste Partnership
2. Work with district authorities to identify well used routes that are affected by litter, dog-fouling or fly-tipping and • implement preventative measures or • take enforcement action when necessary.	All users and landowners Parents and their children.	Rights of Way District Councils		District Councils

Core Action 12: Identify and address potential demand for access to the countryside amongst those who currently do not use the network.

Outcome

Increased use of the countryside that better reflects the diverse population of Hertfordshire. Addressing the issue that the off-road network does not meet the needs of many potential users.

What will be done?	Who is it for?	Who will do it?	Links to Policy	Potential Funding?
1. Undertake research in areas of highest ethnic and cultural diversity to identify the potential demand for access to the countryside by ethnic minority groups.	Black & minority ethnic groups**.**	**Rights of Way** HCC (Equalities) BME groups E-Rainbow Network	Local Transport Plan Cultural Strategy Social Inclusion / Equalities	Local Transport Plan Local Authorities
2. Where potential demand exists work to remove social or cultural barriers that currently prevent people from ethnic minority groups accessing the countryside.				
3. Identify further target groups of potential users and look to identify what currently prevents them accessing the countryside.	Potential Users E.g. Young people, women, single parents, 20-30s age group	**Rights of Way** University of Hertfordshire		

Related documents

- Local Transport Plan Volume 1 - The Strategy Document
- Local Transport Plan Volume 2 - The Policy Document
- Local Transport Plan Volume 3 - The Implementation Plan
- Local Transport Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment - Environmental Report

Herfordshire County Council - making Hertfordshire an even better place to live by providing:

Care for older people

Support for schools, pupils and parents

Support for carers

Fire and rescue

Fostering and adoption

Support for people with disabilities

Libraries

Admission to schools

Road maintenance and safety

Protection for adults and children at risk

Trading standards and consumer protection

Household waste recycling centres

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