

Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Staffordshire





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Improvement Plan
for Staffordshire**

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Glossary of terms

Access Land, Open Access Land Land subject to rights of access on foot under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (commonly referred to as the 'Right to Roam').	Greenway Recreational route, usually open to the public but not a public right of way. Usually available to walkers and cyclists, and sometimes horse riders. Normally owned by a local authority.
AONB Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	HA Highway Authority Local authority responsible for the upkeep highways (other than trunk roads and motorways). In Staffordshire it is the County Council.
BVPI Best Value Performance Indicator Figure returned annually to central government to measure performance. BVPI 178 relates to rights of way.	
Bridleway, Public Bridleway Highway available to pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders.	JLAF Joint Local Access Forum Established under the CROW Act 2000 to give advice to the highways authorities.
BS5709 British Standard Covers gaps, gates and stiles.	LTP Local Transport Plan Five year strategic plan covering highways and transport within Staffordshire.
BOAT Byway Open to All Traffic Highway open to all users, including motor vehicles, but which is mainly used by pedestrians and horseriders.	NFU National Farmers' Union
CPI Community Paths Initiative Scheme run by the County Council to grant-aid local path projects	Permissive path Path made available through the goodwill of the landowner. It may be withdrawn at any time and the public have no permanent rights over it.
DM&S Definitive Map and Statement Legal document comprising maps and written information which defines the status and existence of public rights of way. It is conclusive evidence in law for the information which it includes, but without prejudice to the existence of other higher rights (which may be recorded by means of a DMMO).	PPO Public Path Order Legal order which creates, extinguishes or diverts a footpath or bridleway.
	Quiet Lanes Countryside Agency scheme aimed at maintaining the character of minor rural roads by seeking to contain rising traffic growth.
DMMO Definitive Map Modification Order Legal order which changes the Definitive Map and Statement.	RA Ramblers' Association
DEFRA Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Government department responsible for rights of way.	Restricted Byway Highway open to all traffic except mechanically propelled vehicles.
DDA Disability Discrimination Act (1995 or 2005)	SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest Site designated by Natural England which enjoys special protection under the law and which has great ecological or geological significance.
DLW Discovering Lost Ways Project Project set up by the Countryside Agency to research historic rights of way before the Definitive Map closes to historic claims in 2026	SUSTRANS A charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport. Also promotes a national network of cycle routes.
Footpath, Public Footpath Highway available for pedestrians.	UCR Unclassified Road or Unclassified County Road These are minor highways, sometimes surfaced, including country lanes, residential roads and some green lanes. They are generally maintainable at public expense. In this plan we have used the term to refer to the unsurfaced UCRs which the Countryside Access Team is responsible for maintaining.
GIS Geographic Information System Computerised geographic information processing and mapping.	

Preface

Welcome to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) for Staffordshire.

Staffordshire has a large network of public rights of way allowing people to enjoy the countryside. These paths also provide local routes that link communities and give access to shops, schools and work places.

There has been a growth in the popularity of outdoor recreation over the last 20 years. However, the challenge is to encourage even more people to walk, ride and cycle. To achieve this, we need a rights of way network that people want and which meets their needs.

There have been few changes to the existing public path network since the early 1950s when the first surveys were carried out as a basis for the Definitive Map and Statement. At that time, the public path network was, and to a large extent still remains, essentially functional.

As well as the public path network, there is also a developed network of other linear routes. Our vision is to integrate the path network with these routes to provide better access to the countryside and the green open spaces around local communities.

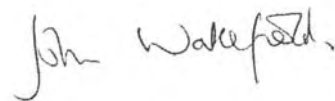
This ROWIP establishes a framework for managing the rights of way network over the next 10 years and sets out our priorities for improving it to meet the needs of today's users. The ROWIP proposes a series of actions to help achieve our priorities and will guide the targeting of our resources in future.

Improving the management of the path network and creating relevant routes could make a significant difference to people who use or may wish to use it. We will still continue to maintain the quality of the network as a whole. However, the improvements identified in this ROWIP will be focused in the geographical areas where most people live or where benefit will be maximised. The geographical areas where demand is likely to be higher have been identified through a spatial assessment of the network. We have used the proximity of population to the network and the scenic amenity of an area as the primary

influences for the demand for the rights of way network.

Over the Plan period, we will concentrate our resources in these areas to address the shortfalls in access provision. We aim to provide better quality public access by improving the condition and accessibility of the network in these areas for all users as well as creating new routes, wherever possible. Proposals to improve the path network will need to be assessed for their impact on the ecology, landscape and historical environment. More information about the network and engaging public support are also vital if our aims are to be realised.

The County Council does not have the capacity to deliver all of the improvements alone. Partnership working with other agencies and actively involving local communities and users is vital to the successful delivery of the ROWIP. The task ahead is large and demanding. Some actions will be easily achieved in the short-term, whilst others will require substantial funding and co-operation between partners over a much longer period of time. Progress will be monitored and the results reported to the Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF) with annual reviews.



John Wakefield
(Cabinet Member (Development Services))

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Public Path Network in Staffordshire

The administrative County of Staffordshire occupies a total land area of 3,300 sq. km. and is located in the West Midlands region encircling the City of Stoke on Trent and bordering the counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands conurbation. (See Appendix A for Map.)

Staffordshire County Council, as highway authority, has the responsibility for recording, maintaining and protecting the 4,400 kilometres of public rights of way within the County. The County Council's statutory functions and duties relating to public rights of way are defined in:

- The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949;
- The Countryside Act 1968;
- The Highways Act 1980;
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and
- The Rights of Way Act 1990

More recently, the County Council also became the access authority for protecting the new rights of access to land designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.

Within Staffordshire, there are 8 District or Borough Councils and 195 Parish Councils. All of these Councils also have powers, albeit in some cases limited, that allow them to become involved in public access work. The County Council also has working arrangements with the Peak District National Park Authority for practical improvement works, investigation of complaints and the promotion of paths.

Staffordshire's public path network, with other linear routes, provides an important means of access to the countryside for people to enjoy outdoor recreation. However, this local rights of way network is more than a recreational asset. It links communities with local services such as schools, employment sites and shops and enables people to access such facilities by a sustainable mode of travel. Its use also provides important social, health and economic benefits for people and communities. There is

substantial evidence that links the natural environment with good physical health as the countryside offers many opportunities for physical activity such as walking, horse riding and cycling. Also, accessing the countryside makes a direct, positive contribution towards mental health and emotional well-being. Research also suggests that use of local rights of way helps to boost tourism and contributes to rural economies. The link between the use of local rights of way and rural economies was clearly demonstrated during the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic when it was considered necessary to close the public path network. Many businesses reported losses of income as a result of the closure⁽¹⁾.

(See Appendix B for more information on the social, health and economic benefits of outdoor recreation).

1.2 What is a Rights of Way Improvement Plan?

Statutory Criteria

Under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the county council as highway authority had a duty to publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) by November 2007. Thereafter, ROWIPs have to be reviewed and amended, if necessary, within 10 years of publication. The purpose of the ROWIP is to give authorities an opportunity to reassess their existing local rights of way network and its relevance to the people who use it now and those who may wish to do so in the future. For the purposes of the ROWIP, local rights of way included not only those routes recorded by statute, but also all other routes such as cycle tracks, permissive routes and unrecorded paths. ROWIPs are the prime means for local highway authorities to identify any changes required to the network to improve provision for all users and will provide a long-term management strategy for the local rights of way network.

ROWIPs will build on the day to day work already carried out by highway authorities in discharging their statutory functions of maintaining and protecting the public path network.

This ROWIP has assessed:

- The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.
- The opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of outdoor recreation and the enjoyment of the area.
- The accessibility of local rights of way to the blind or partially sighted people and people with mobility problems.

Statutory Guidance was issued in November 2002 to highway authorities by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on how to prepare ROWIPs⁽²⁾.

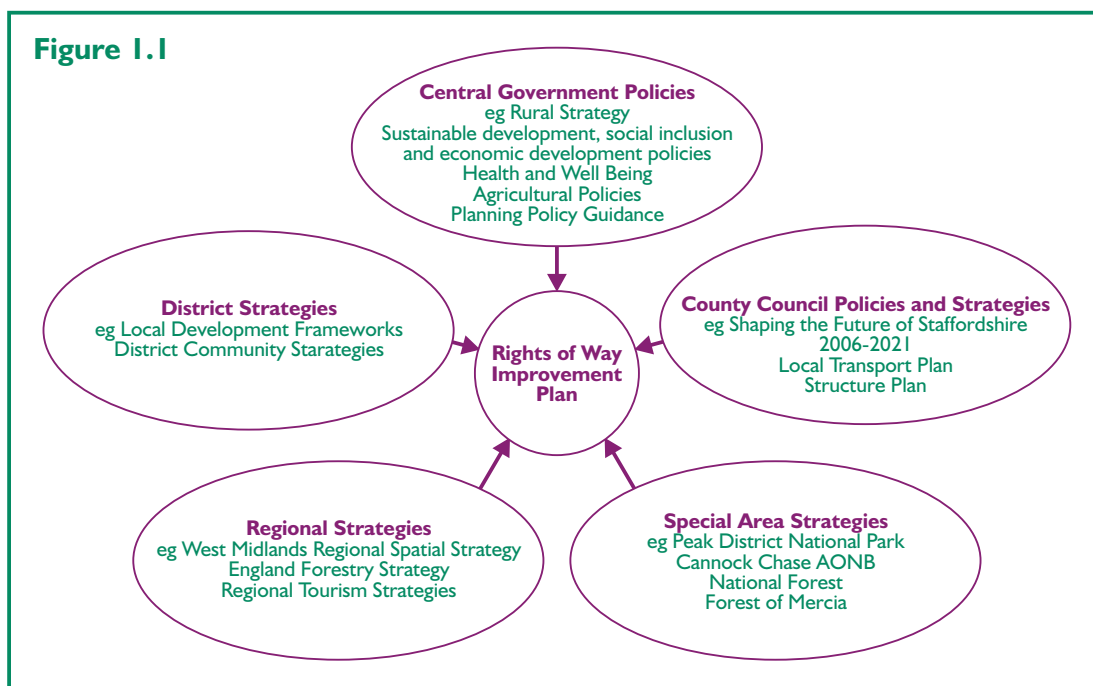
Staffordshire County Council's ROWIP was produced in accordance with both the requirements of Section 60 of the CROW Act 2000 and the Statutory Guidance issued by DEFRA. (See Appendix C - Preparation of ROWIPs, Statutory Guidance Checklist.)

1.3 Policy Context

Other relevant legislation, plans and strategies (Appendix D), have been taken into account in producing this ROWIP. The ROWIP will become an integral part of local government service delivery by linking with and complementing these plans and strategies. In turn, the ROWIP will support and help to deliver some of the corporate aims and objectives of these related plans and strategies. The inter-relationship between the ROWIP and these documents is shown in Figure 1.1 below.

(See Appendix D for further information about these related national, regional and local policies and strategies.)

The Statutory Guidance stresses the importance of integrating the ROWIP into the Local Transport Planning (LTP) process. The ROWIP will be fully integrated into the LTP by 2010. Some integration has already taken place, for example, work has already commenced on identifying prioritised rights of way improvements and many of these improvements have been carried out with funding secured through the LTP process. Similarly, the Assessment of the ROWIP, as required by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, was undertaken as part of the LTP process.



I.4 The Process of Creating Staffordshire's ROWIP

Preparation

A programme for preparing and publishing the ROWIP was established in consultation with the Staffordshire, Stoke and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum (JLAF) in February 2005. The Forum have been closely involved at all stages of the ROWIP process. (See Appendix E - Staffordshire, Stoke and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum).

A draft ROWIP was published at the beginning of June, 2007 and circulated to adjoining authorities, Parish Councils, user groups and members of the public. Overall the comments received were very favourable and are summarised at Appendix O, with officers' comments where appropriate. Where a response resulted in an amendment to the draft ROWIP, this is indicated in bold print on the table at Appendix O.

Assessing the Local Rights of Way Network

Our assessment of the network and its relevance to existing and likely future users is discussed fully in Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2 considers the existing local rights of way network in Staffordshire, including both statutory and all other routes.

Scrutiny of the Definitive Map and Statement, together with information about unrecorded rights of way, applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders, and past requests for improvements to the network enabled us to assess:

- The extent to which the network is available to different groups of users;
- Areas which are deficient in rights of way for all user types;
- Inconsistencies and anomalies in relation to public rights of way; and
- Other opportunities for improvements to the network.

Consideration was also given to the condition of the network. This included an analysis of the nature of path complaints received by the County Council and the results of the annual condition surveys undertaken to produce the Best Value Performance Indicator 178, i.e. the percentage of paths that are 'easy to use'. This analysis enabled us to identify possible improvements to the management of the network so as to increase greater use.

Chapter 3 considers the adequacy of the existing network by assessing:

- The primary influences on demand
- Areas most likely to be used
- Users' expectations
- Non-users and barriers to access.

Considerable research was undertaken on the needs of differing user types, the primary drivers for access and the reasons for non-use, both nationally and at more local levels⁽³⁾. As well as desktop research of various studies, extensive consultation was carried out with members of the public and outside agencies to find out what they think of the existing network and what they want from an improved network. Groups consulted include District and Borough Councils, Parish and Town Councils, user groups and other interested parties. The general public was consulted via a user survey distributed in the County Council's country parks and on the internet, together with street surveys undertaken by members of the County Council's Ranger Service. The information gathered also gave us an understanding of the barriers to access faced by users in Staffordshire. (See Appendix M - Consultations Undertaken in Staffordshire.)

The assessment identified a number of shortcomings in the existing rights of way network and highlighted areas where our resources need to be focused in the future. The main issues that were identified in Chapters 2 and 3 are shown in green type.

Statement of Action and its Implementation

Chapter 4 outlines the five key themes that emerged from our assessment and consultations. These themes provide a framework for the future management of the local rights of way network.

The Statement of Action at Appendix N is a rolling plan and sets out the main actions for managing the public path network over the next 5 years. It identifies current priorities and key goals, indicating the actions that will enable their delivery and target timescales for implementation.

Partnership working with other agencies is fundamental to the success of the ROWIP. A number of key organisations have been identified in the Statement of Action. We propose to work closely with these partners to deliver the proposed improvements and develop the path network.

Annual reviews of our progress will be reported to the Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum at the end of each financial year.

Environmental Considerations

Some of the actions in the Statement of Action will need to be assessed for their impact on the ecology, landscape and historic environment. Also, from time to time, we may need to reassess our priorities if we are to continue to meet the needs of the public during extremes of weather which now appear inevitable as a result of a changing climate.

Biodiversity

Local authorities have a duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to consider biodiversity in the work they do, including their policies, plans and projects. Staffordshire is rich in biodiversity, particularly in designated sites. Many of the most popular locations for outdoor recreation are also Sites of Special Scientific Interest or in the case of Cannock Chase, a Special Area of Conservation, where disturbance to wildlife and erosion can result. These areas require careful management of access and path improvement projects may be constrained by factors relating to the natural environment.

Built Environment

Heritage features, which can often be within designated sites, can be vulnerable to erosion. There is also potential for path maintenance and improvement works to cause damage to these features. Knowledge of the features will preserve them and enable practical measures to be taken to avoid damaging them. Similarly canal corridors and their towpaths are designated Conservation Areas and any works in these areas which are likely to directly impact on or affect their setting would require Conservation Area Consent.

Climate Change

Climate change is now accepted as a reality by the majority of the world's climate scientists and Governments. It is largely caused by the growing amount of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere.

Climatic changes are already happening and the current levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere mean that they will continue to do so for at least the next 30 years, even if we stop our carbon dioxide emissions today.

Five trends are confidently predicted:

- Higher summer temperatures
- Higher winter temperatures
- Lower summer rainfall
- Higher, more intense winter rainfall
- Earlier springs and later autumns

Compounded by unseasonal extremes of temperature, more violent storms and flash flooding, these climatic trends are likely to have an impact on people's use and enjoyment of the countryside, as well as service delivery. For example, warmer weather is likely to encourage more visits to the countryside and generally increase the use of the public path network. There is a danger that this increased all-year use will lead to path erosion and possibly, to more accidents through greater interaction between activities such as mountain biking and horse riding, and to a reduction of the quality of visitor experience. A longer growing season because of earlier springs and later autumns will also have implications for path maintenance work. Similarly extremes of weather condition and increased winter rainfall could also delay maintenance work at certain times of the year.

Chapter Two

Making the Assessment: Demand for Access and Needs of Users

2.0 Introduction

The size and profile of the local population, the type of landscape of an area and its areas of attractive countryside will influence the demand for the local rights of way network. The people who use the network have a range of differing expectations, interests and levels of ability and the extent to which they use it will depend on whether their needs and expectations are met.

People are unlikely to use the rights of way network, even if improvements are carried out, unless the improved network meets their needs and expectations. Extensive consultations have, therefore, been carried out with users and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of people's needs and expectations, and to find out what currently deters their use and what they want from an improved network. The findings of these consultations are discussed below.

2. Population Pressures

According to the last Census in 2001, 807,000 people live in the administrative County of Staffordshire⁽⁴⁾. *Staffordshire's overall population has increased by 2.6% since 1991 and is forecast to continue to grow.* Although the County is predominantly rural in nature, *most of the population is concentrated in the urban areas of Stafford, Tamworth, Cannock, Burton upon Trent, Lichfield, Rugeley, and Newcastle under Lyme. Although these urban areas occupy only 15% of the land area of the County, 76% of the total population live in them.* Across the County, there has been a variation in the distribution of the population with migration from the districts in the north and increase in the districts in the south. *This pattern of population growth and migration is expected to continue and will result in a likely increase in demand for access in the south of the County.*

Professor George Kay in his book 'Access for Countryside Walking, Politics, Provision and Need'⁽⁵⁾ suggests that the recreational value of land is inversely proportional to its distance from centres of population. Local research undertaken by the County Council⁽⁶⁾ together with national research in the Rights of Way Use and Demand Survey⁽⁷⁾ also supports this suggestion with over half of all visits to access

the countryside occurring within 5 miles of the home. *Hence, the substantial population in the urban areas will place a greater demand on the access network within these areas and on the countryside closest to them.*

The likely demand for the local rights of way network has been assessed based on its proximity to population. Research suggests that whilst walkers and cyclists use the network close to where they live, horse riders tend to travel further afield depending on horse stabling and facilities for horse box parking. Research undertaken by the County Council⁽⁶⁾ suggests that over 58% of horse riders travel between 0 and 3 miles to their stabling with 75% travelling between 0 and 10 miles. For the purposes of this Assessment, the demand for horse riding routes has also been assumed to be inversely proportional to the distance from centres of population.

The County has been mapped into 1 km² land parcels. Each land parcel has been rated according to its proximity to population, both within and outside the County. A score of 10 has been given to the 1 km² land parcels within 1 km of the urban fringe, to reflect the likely greater demand for access in that area. The remaining land parcels have been scored as follows:

Proximity to Urban fringe	Score
1 km - 3 km	8
3 km - 8 km	6
8 km+	4

Figure 2.1 over page shows the likely demand for the local rights of way network based on its proximity to population. (See Appendix F for more details).

From our research and consultations, most of the routes close to urban areas are used for walking or cycling to school, places of work, visiting local facilities and walking the dog.

Generally, walkers expect a higher level of maintenance on the routes close to urban areas. They expect paths to be surfaced, lit where appropriate and free from vegetation and physical barriers⁽⁹⁾. Users who are less agile also expect urban routes to be level and have

minimum gradients. Where steps are necessary, even-sized treads and risers are desired, together with handrails⁽¹⁰⁾.

For dog owners, the routes close to urban areas are important for exercising their pet. In addition to the above, such users also expect the provision of dog bins that are emptied regularly.

For cyclists direct routes free of traffic are preferred for commuting journeys⁽⁹⁾.

Whilst horse riding is predominantly a rural activity, consultations have revealed that there are urban areas where access for horse riders is desired, particularly in the Kidsgrove area⁽⁶⁾.

2.2 The Age of the Population

The proportion of older people within Staffordshire's population has risen, with a greater proportion of older people living in the north. The age structure of Staffordshire is forecast to continue to become more elderly, with large rises in middle age and post retirement groups, and decreases in the size of the under 40 groups. *The number of people participating in outdoor recreation is likely to increase due to an increasing number of retired people with leisure time on their hands.*

Again, there is more likelihood of impaired accessibility amongst this age group and they are also more likely to be at risk from the problems of social exclusion. Keirle⁽¹¹⁾ states the barriers to access faced by older people include; physical access problems (stiles); rough, uneven path surfaces; access to information; and confidence. *The growth in the number of older people will, therefore, have implications for the management, maintenance and improvement of the local rights of way network as the demand for more easily accessible routes increases.*

One of the main aims of this ROWIP is to ensure that the local rights of way network is accessible and available for all people to enjoy regardless of their ability.

Furthermore, new legislation introduced by Section 69 of the CROW Act 2000⁽¹²⁾ now requires highway authorities to consider the needs of people with mobility impairments when authorising the erection of stiles and gates or

other works on public rights of way. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 also requires public bodies to positively promote disability equality⁽¹³⁾. The DDA 2005 covers all functions of public bodies and includes the provision of public rights of way.

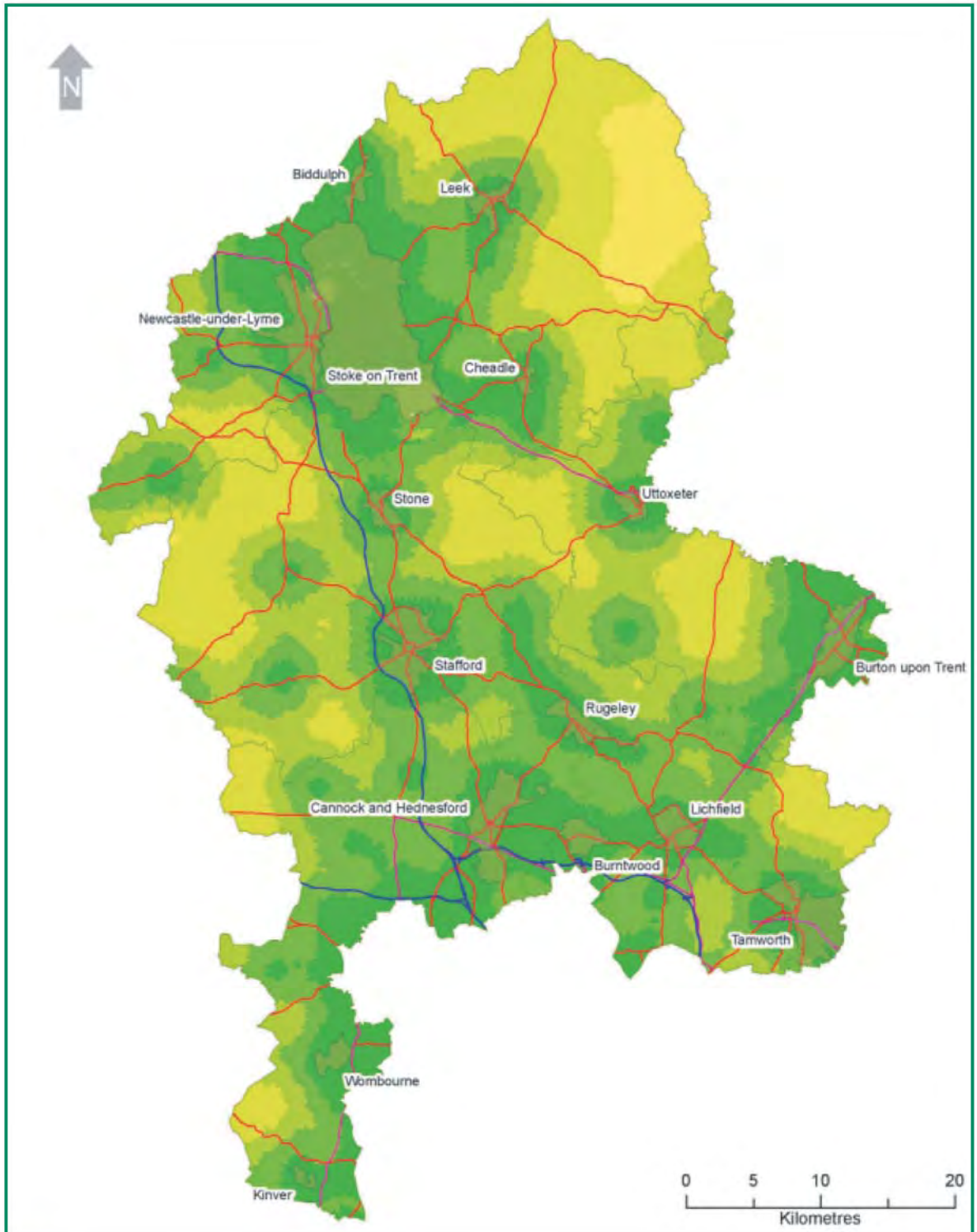
Removing stiles and replacing them with gates would enable paths to be accessed by many more people, including parents with pushchairs as well as the less physically able. However, a path is only as accessible as its least accessible point. There is little merit in replacing stiles with gates and improving the surface of a route unless the routes which it links to are also suitable for use by the less agile. It is not possible for the County Council to make all routes available to everyone. A significant part of the network crosses agricultural land and, as such, is not always suitable for use by the less physically able. However, the reduction in the number of stiles on rights of way on suitable routes will increase access for many users. Over the last few years, the County Council has been working in partnership with Parish Councils through the Community Paths Initiative to develop routes for the less agile and stiles have been replaced with kissing gates at over 100 locations across the County.

These routes are not currently publicised and the provision of information about them needs to be improved. The County Council is currently producing a draft Disability Equality Scheme and reference to the routes could be included in that document, as well as the County Council's website.

2.3 Deprived Areas and Ethnic Minority Communities

Central Government provides maps showing areas of deprivation, based on a number of factors, and approximately 8.3% of the population of Staffordshire live within the 20% most deprived areas. There is evidence that many groups, particularly those likely to reside in these areas such as young people, low income groups, black and other ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities and older people do not participate in the countryside and related activities proportionate to their numbers in society⁽¹¹⁾.

Figure 2.1



Demand anticipated from proximity to population

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The majority of the deprived areas of Staffordshire are found in the urban areas of Newcastle under Lyme, Burton upon Trent, Tamworth and Cannock. There are, however, further pockets to be found in Biddulph, Kidsgrove, Stafford and Rugeley⁽⁴⁾.

Furthermore, approximately 2% of Staffordshire's population are now from ethnic minority communities. However, some areas of the County have a much higher proportion of ethnic population. For example, in areas of Burton upon Trent, the percentage population from the ethnic communities is as high as 28%. *There are several reasons why people from ethnic minorities do not use the countryside for recreation, such as cultural barriers and lack of knowledge and understanding.* Studies have revealed that “ethnic minorities expect to feel excluded and conspicuous in what is perceived as an exclusively English environment”⁽¹¹⁾.

It is likely, therefore, that a proportion of the people living in the urban areas of Staffordshire may not be using the local rights of way network and may be under-represented as countryside users due to physical, perceptual or cultural barriers.

2.4 Landscape of Staffordshire

Staffordshire is a county of scenic contrast and diverse landscapes of local character, natural and cultural heritage. At a national level, the former Countryside Agency (now Natural England) has identified nine Regional Character Areas within the administrative county of Staffordshire; the Potteries and Churnet Valley, the Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau, Cannock Chase and Cankwood, the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, the Trent Valley Washlands, the Meece/Sence Lowlands, the South West Peak and the White Peak.

The County has some particularly attractive areas of countryside such as Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Peak District National Park. Elsewhere, the National Forest, part of which falls within East Staffordshire, is being developed as a tourist attraction with the opening of a new visitor centre. The Forest of Mercia Community Forest includes areas of South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase District, Lichfield District and Walsall Borough. This partnership aims to increase wooded cover and enhance the

environment within the project area. Public access is intrinsic to the aspirations of these two projects.

Many people living in the urban areas travel to these areas to walk and cycle because of their scenic amenity⁽⁶⁾. These areas of outstanding scenery also attract visitors from outside of the County.

Staffordshire attracts a significant number of visitors every year: in excess of 18 million day visitors and around 2 million overnight visitors. This tourism generates a visitor spend in the County in excess of £600 million per year, representing a significant contribution to the economy of the County⁽⁴⁾.

Research suggests that 62% of adults in Great Britain had made leisure day visits to the countryside in 2002/3. Leisure day visits are defined as round trips made from home for leisure purposes within a day. Of the total estimated 5.2 billion leisure day trips per year, 24% were to the countryside, equating to 1.3 billion trips. The main activities on each day visit to the countryside were: a meal or a drink 18%; walking, hill walking, rambling 15%; and visiting friends and relatives 14%⁽¹⁾. *Access to the countryside, therefore, benefits the local economy.*

The Peak District National Park is within one hours travelling distance for 16 million people (a third of the UK population) and is one of the most visited National Parks in the country. The Cannock Chase AONB Visitor Survey undertaken in 2000 suggests that 1.5 million visits are made to the AONB a year. Clearly there is a relationship between the scenic amenity of an area and the number of visitors to that area. Indeed, Professor Kay⁽⁵⁾ suggests that the recreational value of land is directly proportional to the character or natural beauty of its landscape.

In 2000, Staffordshire County Council published Supplementary Planning Guidance: Planning for Landscape Change⁽¹⁴⁾. This Guidance is aimed at both planning officers and developers within the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan area, to assist in the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of rural landscapes. The Guidance furthers the work undertaken by the former Countryside Agency and the identification of the Regional Landscape

Character Areas mentioned above, with the mapping and description of 22 Landscape Character Types within the Structure Plan area. The approach taken in this work allowed for an assessment to be made of the quality of the landscape in relation to its landscape character type and for this quality to be mapped.

The likely demand for access in areas of the County based on their scenic amenity has been assessed by mapping the County into 1 km² land parcels. Each land parcel has been rated from 1 to 10 according to its scenic amenity using the landscape quality assessment within the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Planning for Landscape Change as a proxy. Areas containing a viewpoint have been attributed a rating of 10 regardless, on the basis that these areas may not be intrinsically attractive but are worth visiting because they give a good view of attractive countryside.

Figure 2.2 over page shows the likely demand for access in an area relative to its scenic amenity. (For more details see Appendix F)

The main areas where demand is likely to be high because of an area's scenic amenity are detailed below:

- Peak District National Park
- Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Churnet Valley
- Weaver Hills
- Needwood Forest
- Hanchurch Hills
- Kinver

These areas are not solely those traditionally considered as the 'honey pot' sites.

Demand for access is likely to be high across approximately 13% of the County's area based on its scenic amenity.

From our research and consultations users' needs and expectations of rural routes are substantially different to those of urban routes. Casual walkers expect routes in rural areas to be informally surfaced, well waymarked and free from obstruction, with a preference for circular routes. More experienced walkers require a variety of natural surfaces, routes that are unobstructed and stiles and bridges to be in good repair. Good public transport links or safe and sufficient car parking are

required for all users⁽⁹⁾.

Generally in rural areas, cyclists want to ride in a pleasant, stress free environment more than they require a direct route. They expect information on routes in order to assess their suitability, and routes that avoid heavy traffic. They also prefer circular to linear routes. Serious cycling enthusiasts require terrain suitable to their interest⁽¹⁵⁾.

As with other users, horse riders expect routes that are free from obstructions and vegetation. There is a preference for circular routes of approximately 1 to 3 hours' duration⁽⁷⁾ with road traffic and road crossings being the biggest deterrent to use⁽¹⁵⁾.

2.5 Areas of Highest Demand

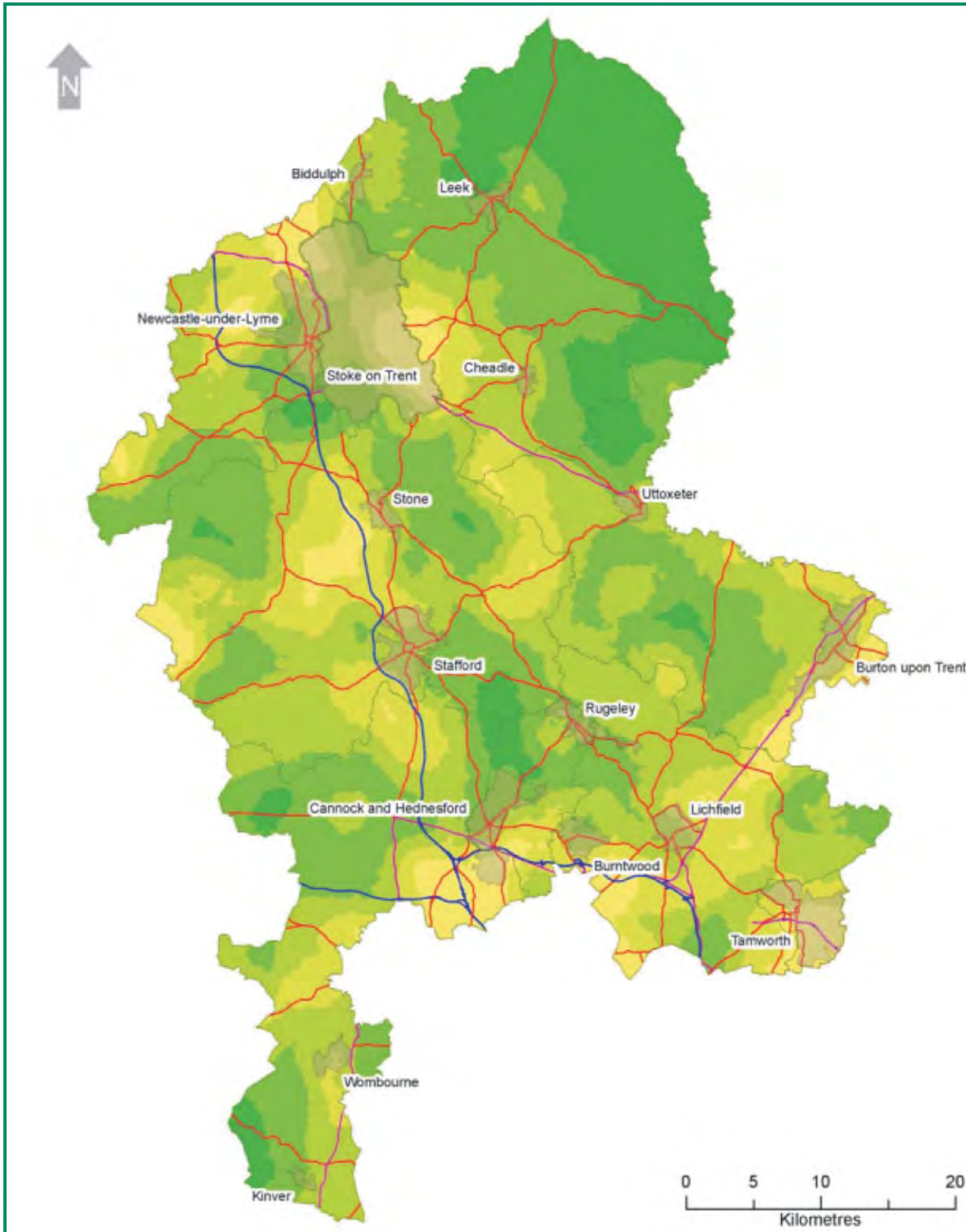
The size and location of the population and an area's scenic amenity are the primary influences which will affect demand for outdoor recreation in a particular area. By combining the information detailed in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, the areas of the County where demand is likely to be highest based on these factors can be determined. (for more details of this process see Appendix F). Figure 2.3 shows the areas where demand is likely to be high, based on their proximity to population and their scenic amenity.

Demand is likely to be high in over 24% of the County's area.

The resources available for public path maintenance are limited and, with the exception of health and safety issues, tend to be prioritised in favour of those paths where the maximum benefit will accrue to users. It would seem appropriate, therefore, for the level of maintenance to be applied on a sliding scale so that the routes which lie within the areas of highest demand are maintained to a higher standard than those in areas of lower demand. The areas of high demand are also more likely to attract not only a greater number, but also a more diverse range, of users. Wherever possible, therefore, the routes in areas of high demand will also need to be accessible to as wide a range of users as possible. The information in Figure 2.3 is useful for prioritising path maintenance work.

The adequacy of the network in these areas is discussed in Chapter 3.

Figure 2.2

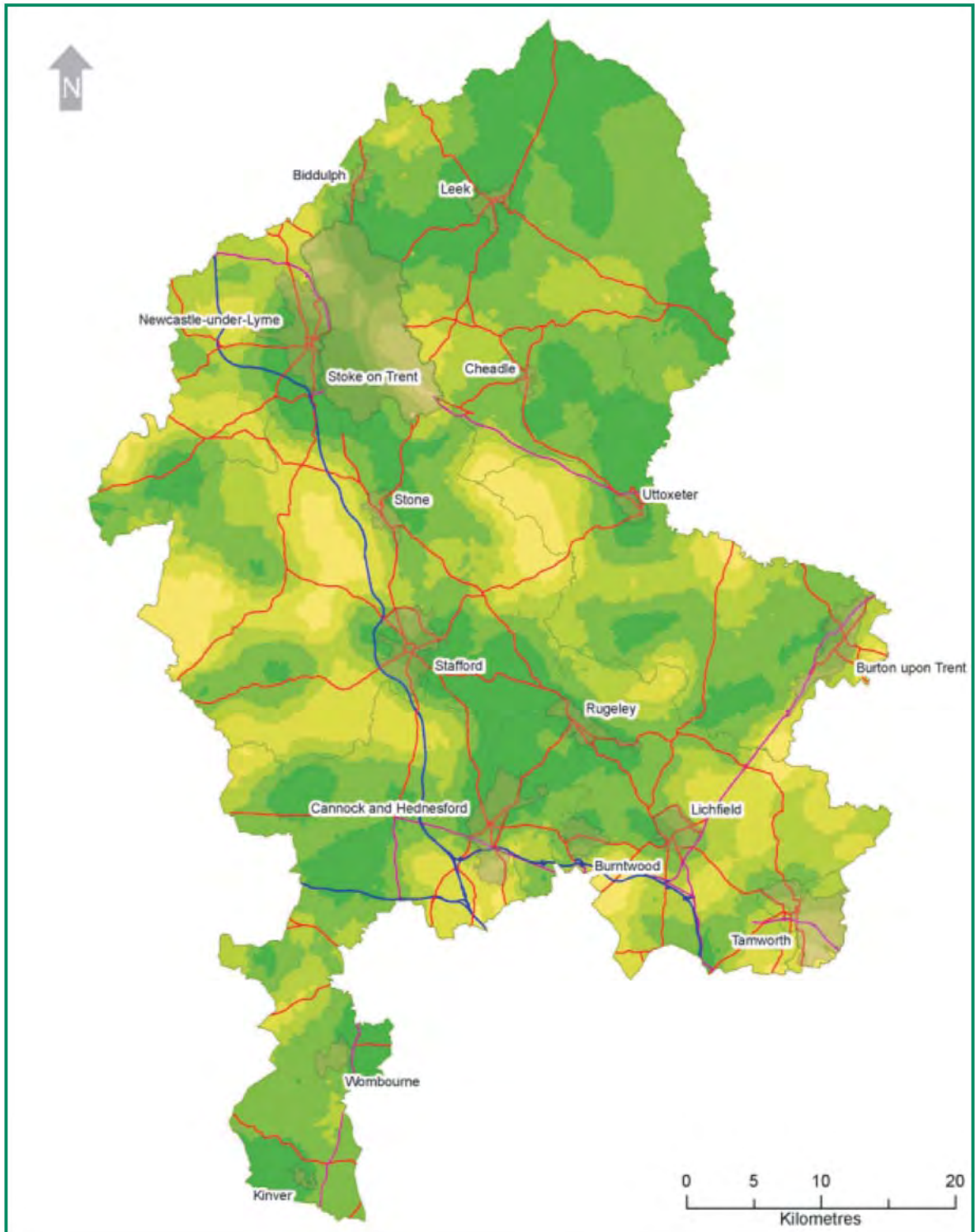


- Low
- Average
- High

Demand anticipated from scenic amenity

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Figure 2.3



- Low
- Average
- High

Anticipated aggregate demand

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2.6 Non Users and Barriers to Access

The Statutory Guidance on Rights of Way Improvement Plans⁽²⁾ states that future use should be taken into account as well as current demands. Non-users could potentially become future users if the barriers that prevent them from using the countryside can be overcome.

Keirle, in his book on countryside recreation site management,⁽¹¹⁾ sets out the barriers faced by groups who are under-represented in countryside recreation. See Figure 2.4 opposite.

In their Greenways Handbook⁽¹⁷⁾, the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) summarise the factors why people do not walk or cycle as:

- Personal safety fears from crime and road traffic.
- Unattractive environment/pollution.
- Absence of/poor quality facilities (e.g. crossings, routes, lighting, surfaces, cycle parking, changing facilities).
- Practical barriers such as distances involved, the need to use a vehicle or in the case of people with disabilities, physical barriers such as steps.
- Natural factors such as bad weather, hills etc.
- Personal factors and attitudes such as fitness, age, image etc.
- Availability and perceived convenience and image factors associated with vehicles such as quicker, comfortable, safer, status symbol etc.

Research, which was commissioned in 2005 by the Outdoor Recreation Strategy Board (made up of members of the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Service), reinforces these findings⁽¹⁸⁾. The research identified time pressure as a key issue in modern society. The combination of the increase in the 'convenience culture' with the changing lifestyles of children and their perceived image of outdoor access means that outdoor recreation is often overlooked as a choice of recreation in favour of other less time-consuming pursuits. The research also identifies the increasing risk aversion of society as a driver for change. There is a perception that outdoor

recreation presents a number of risks to participants, ranging from speeding traffic to the threat of intimidation.

We asked local people what deterred them from accessing the countryside as part of the User Surveys⁽⁶⁾. *The main deterrents to access in Staffordshire have been identified as; the lack of signposting and waymarking; overgrowing vegetation; a general lack of information; and problems experienced with stiles and gates and other obstructions.*

Other deterrents identified include dog fouling, fast roads, inconsiderate car drivers and loose dogs.

Increased use of the local rights of way network could be encouraged by addressing these cultural, physical and perceptual barriers that currently deter use.

See Figure 2.5 for the issues identified as deterring use of the network by respondents to the user survey.

Figure 2.4. Barriers faced to countryside access by under-represented groups. Source: Keirle (2002)

Group Facing Barrier	Potential Barriers
People with physical disabilities	Physical access problems, including, stiles, gates, bridges; Steep, rough or uneven paths; Distances; Shelter and rest points; Access to information; Confidence.
People with visual impairments	Rough or uneven paths; Access to information; Obstructions; Route finding; Confidence.
People with hearing impairments	Communication; Interaction with others; Confidence.
People with learning difficulties	Access to information; Understanding; Confidence.
Elderly People	Physical access problems, including stiles, gates, bridges; Steep, rough or uneven paths; Distances; Shelter and rest points; Confidence.
Black and ethnic minority groups	Awareness; Language; Culture; Confidence.

Figure 2.5 shows a summary of the issues identified as deterring use of the network by respondents to the User Survey.

Deterrents (Issues Raised)	No. of Issues Raised	% of. of Issues Raised
Prefer Coast	2	0.3
Health/Mobility	7	1
Poor Transport Links	21	3
Bad Road Crossings	23	3.3
Lack of Confidence/Personal Safety	24	3.4
Don't Know Where To Go	27	3.9
Poor Surface	28	4
You Feel Unwelcome	29	4.2
No Parking	30	4.3
Lack of Paths Near Home	37	5.3
Lack of Time	39	5.6
Ploughing and Cropping	40	5.7
Problems with Stiles	52	7.4
Physical Obstructions	53	7.6
Problems with Gates	55	7.9
Lack of Information	59	8.5
Overgrown Vegetation	82	11.7
Lack of Signposting/Waymarking	90	12.9
Total	698	

Chapter Three

Making the Assessment: Existing Provision and Condition of the Network

3.1 Introduction

The Assessment of the existing access opportunities examined in detail the quality and extent of the statutory public rights of way network. There is also a developed network of other linear routes such as cycle tracks, greenways, permissive routes and canal towpaths which can be linked with the path network to provide better access to the countryside. The extent of these routes was also considered in the Assessment. This extended local rights of way network provides an important means of access to the green spaces in and around local communities such as Country Parks and countryside sites, new Access Land areas and areas of woodland with dedicated access, and these sites should be accessible from and integrated into the local rights of way network.

The maps at Appendix G show the access opportunities available in each District area of the County, which were taken into account in the Assessment.

Extensive consultations showed that the condition of the local rights of way network will influence its level of use. To inform the Assessment, therefore, the following information was also taken into consideration:

- the current Definitive Map and Statement and related documents;
- Definitive Map Modification order applications;
- the nature of complaints received by the County Council about the public rights of way network;
- the results of the Best Value Performance Indicator 178 annual 5% condition survey;
- consultation with users and other stakeholders to assess their expectations and use of the network.

Landowners and land managers are key players in improving the existing access provision. Whilst there are legal measures available to forcibly maintain and increase the path network if necessary, the most desirable scenario is for the key players to work in partnership to enhance the existing access opportunities.

3.2 Existing Provision

1. Linear Routes

The Public Rights of Way Network

Staffordshire has 7,835 public rights of way recorded on the Definitive Map and accompanying Statement. The total length of this network exceeds 4,400 kilometres. The Definitive Map and Statement is a legal document and records the line and legal status of all recorded public rights of way.

The requirement to produce a Definitive Map and Statement was introduced by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. In the early 1950s, each Parish carried out a survey of the paths in their area and these surveys formed the basis of the first draft maps. The draft maps went through several stages before being published as conclusive. Staffordshire's first Definitive Map was completed in 1965 and has since been reviewed on three occasions.

Following powers granted by the Countryside Act 1968, a "special review" began in 1971 to reclassify all Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs). Following a series of public inquiries, the "special review" was completed by the early 1980s and a revised Map was published in 1987/88. Two major results of the "special review" were the redrawing of the Definitive Map to increase its scale from 1:25,000 to 1:10,000 and, significantly, the reclassification of all RUPPs. The County Council has since published a second and third revision of the Definitive Map to incorporate changes caused by 'legal events', such as administrative and boundary changes and public path orders.

The existence of an accurate up to date Definitive Map is fundamental to the maintenance, protection and development of the rights of way network. It is the principal source of information on rights of way for path users, landowners and potential developers. It is particularly important that the map is kept up to date for legal event changes, if confusion and confrontation are to be avoided.

Figure 3.1 below shows the proportionate spread of currently recorded public rights of way in Staffordshire.

Staffordshire's Path Network				
Status	Number of Routes	Length (km)	% of total length	National Percentage
Public footpath (used by walkers)	6,871	3,715	84	78
Public bridleway (used by walkers, horseriders and cyclists)	901	684	15	17
Roads used as public paths (used by horse drawn and motor vehicles as well as bridleway classifications)	1	0.5	0	3
Byway open to all traffic (used by horse drawn and motor vehicles as well as bridleway classifications)	62	38	1	2
TOTAL	7,835	4,437.5	100	100

- Clearly,
- *there are not many routes available to horseriders and cyclists compared with the network available to walkers.*
 - *the footpath network is almost seven times longer than the combined length of public bridleways, roads used as public paths and byways open to all traffic.*
 - *cyclists and horse riders are restricted to using about 15% of the network.*

Furthermore, the distribution of the different types of public rights of way is not uniform across the County. *The Districts of Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle, Tamworth and East Staffordshire have considerably fewer bridleways than other areas.*

Figure 3.2 below shows the proportionate spread of recorded public rights of way within each District of the County.

	Footpath	Bridleway	BOAT	RUPP
Moorlands	95.10%	4%	0.86%	0%
Newcastle	92.90%	5.10%	2%	0%
Cannock Chase	55.40%	42.90%	1.80%	0%
Stafford	73.50%	25.60%	0.90%	0%
Tamworth	91.80%	7.10%	1.20%	0%
South Staffs	63.30%	36%	0.70%	0%
East Staffs	91.30%	8.50%	0.10	0%
Lichfield	80.50%	18.60%	0.90%	0.1%
County Percentage	83.70%	15.40%	0.85%	0.01%
National Percentage	78.00%	17.00%	2%	3%

Staffordshire has no national trails but does have several promoted walking routes and one horseriding route of strategic significance. These follow public rights of way for most of their length. The routes are shown in Appendix H and include the County Council's own Staffordshire Way, Newcastle Way and Way for the Millennium, as well as the Beacon Way, the Forest of Mercia Way, the Gritstone Trail, the Heart of England Way and the Wulfrun Way. These routes provide a major resource for more ambitious walking, with routes such as the Staffordshire Way acting as a 'spine' linking with such routes as the Gritstone Trail and the Heart of England Way. The only horseriding route is the Sabrina Way. *However, there is still potential for the development and promotion of the path network in some areas, particularly in the areas of high demand identified in Figure 2.3. Certain areas of the County such as Stone, Eccleshall and Wombourne are isolated from the strategic network. A strategic route to the north of Tamworth following the Rivers Trent and Tame and linking with the National Forest would also be desirable. The Sabrina Way is the only existing promoted horseriding route, although more recently, the County Council has agreed to support the development of the Potteries Ring Route.*

As well as the more strategically significant routes, there is also an extensive range of well-established locally promoted walks provided by local authorities. These are also shown at Appendix H. The County Council has supported and will continue to support the establishment of these routes through the Community Paths Initiative.

Unrecorded Routes

Some routes which the public have been using for long periods may not be recorded on the Definitive Map. The public can make applications under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to add routes to the Definitive Map, as well as to delete or amend the status of those currently shown, provided that they have sufficient evidence to support the modification being sought. The impact of the Section 53 application process is discussed more fully in paragraph 3.3 below.

Greenways

Greenways are off-road routes, often disused railway lines, which are for shared use by walkers, horse riders, and cyclists, although cyclists and/or horse riders may be prohibited on some routes. These routes frequently link communities around urban areas with the surrounding countryside. Examples in Staffordshire include:

- the Stafford to Newport Greenway, the Oakamoor to Denstone Trail and the Manifold Trail, all of which are managed by Staffordshire County Council;
- the Biddulph Valley Way, managed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council;
- the South Staffordshire Railway Walk managed by South Staffordshire Council;
- the Ginny Trail managed by Rolleston-on-Dove Parish Council.

Within Newcastle, the Borough Council manages some disused railways lines as cycle tracks. These routes are accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, whilst use by horse riders is restricted.

Canal Towpaths

The canal network in Staffordshire is administered by British Waterways. Towpaths are legally part of the navigation and only occasionally in Staffordshire are public rights recorded along them. There is no general right to ride a horse or bicycle along the towpath; however, British Waterways are increasingly encouraging recreational cycling use of towpaths where appropriate.

The 130 miles of canal corridors in Staffordshire provide scope for linking rural and urban communities with the wider countryside. As mentioned above, pedestrian access is permitted on the canal towpaths and informal access on bicycles is permitted where appropriate. Canal towpaths, where hard surfaced, offer an ideal resource for the less agile, being flat and generally free from stiles and gates.

Canals within the County include:

- The Trent and Mersey Canal
- Shropshire Union Canal
- Macclesfield Canal
- Birmingham & Fazeley canal
- Cannock Extension Canal
- Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal
- Coventry Canal
- Caldon Canal

There are also a number of currently disused canals, the restoration of which is being actively pursued by volunteer groups or Trusts.

Canal towpaths have been linked with the existing public path network to provide two long-distance routes within the County: the Way for the Millennium and the Staffordshire Way.

There is scope for further integration of canal towpaths with the recorded public rights of way network. An example of this is at Fradley Junction in Lichfield District where there is the potential to develop routes that are available to those with mobility impairments.

Many canal corridors and their towpaths lie within designated Conservation Areas. Any works likely to directly impact or affect their setting would require Conservation Area Consent.

Permissive Routes

Permissive access across the County is increasing, largely as a result of the Environmental Stewardship schemes funded by DEFRA. One of the objectives of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme is to improve public access to the countryside.

Cycle Tracks

Several towns in Staffordshire now have the basis of a local cycle network which aims to connect residential areas with town centres and places of work and education. Cycle lanes have been provided across the County as part of highway improvement schemes and new housing and economic developments.

The County Council is also working closely with Sustrans and much work has already been carried out on the development of the National Cycle Network. (See Appendix H).

Routes Recorded on the List of Streets

The County Council keeps a 'List of Streets', which are highways maintainable at public expense. The adopted or maintainable highway network includes urban footways as well as carriageways. Roads or footways which are not adopted are usually the responsibility of the landowner. Adopted routes are generally additional to the recorded path network shown on the Definitive Map and often provide links between rights of way particularly in urban areas.

Unclassified roads which are quieter, are particularly important to vulnerable road users, such as horse riders and cyclists, because they tend to rely on them to create circular routes.

Applications can be made to add routes to the List of Streets. Since 2002, 27 such applications have been determined and there are currently 10 applications awaiting determination. Of the 27 determined, 9 applications resulted in routes being added to the List. The total length of the routes added is 4.7 kilometres, with most of these routes being recorded as 'G' class roads.

2. Green Spaces

There are many areas within Staffordshire, where the public have the opportunity to enjoy access to the countryside. (The locations of the major sites are shown in Appendix H).

Country Parks

Staffordshire has a relatively large number of Country Parks and sites with public access. Many of these are sited on the fringe of urban development such as Apedale Community Country Park and Bathpool Park in Newcastle District, and provide a significant resource for countryside recreation. The County Council itself manages over 2,500 hectares of Country Parks and access land across the County.

Combined with similar areas managed by the District or Borough Councils, these parks provide opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and access for those with mobility impairments. Many of these areas are staffed (especially during the summer season) and the expectation of the general public tends to be higher in terms of the facilities on site, the condition of the paths and the level of access available. Visitor satisfaction results with respect to the County Council's Country Parks are excellent: 85% of visitors rated their overall enjoyment in the top category of 'very good'; 80% reported similarly on the service from Rangers and other staff, and 73% rated the sites as 'very clean'. *These country parks and areas of open space offer people 'gateways' to the countryside on their doorstep or nodes on the local rights of way network.*

Access Land

A new right of open air recreation on foot was introduced under the CROW Act 2000. This right only applies on mapped areas of open country (mountain, moor, heath and down), registered common land and land dedicated voluntarily under Section 16 CROW Act 2000.

Staffordshire now has over 6000 hectares of access land. The majority of this land outside the Peak District National Park, totalling approximately 2,000 hectares, is registered common land, to which the public have enjoyed access for many years. The remainder is either land dedicated under Section 16 of the CROW Act or open country. Section 16 enables landowners and long leaseholders to dedicate land for public access. To date, the Forestry Commission has dedicated over 2,000 hectares of land in Staffordshire. The main areas of open country fall within the Peak District National Park; however, there are pockets within East Staffordshire, on the Weaver Hills and on Cannock Chase.

Access land provides an opportunity to develop stronger links between urban areas and the countryside. Some sites are particularly small and, in isolation, serve no useful purpose in terms of countryside recreation. However, these isolated parcels of access land could be linked by promoting existing linear routes or by

creating new routes, particularly in areas where public access is fragmented or limited.

The majority of Access Land sites in Staffordshire are already accessible from the existing highway network. *Three areas of Access Land are isolated from the local rights of way network; near The Cloud in the north; Thornclyffe in the north-east; and Thorswood Nature Reserve in the east of the County.*

3. Density of the Network

There are many different types of routes, not all of which are available to all types of user. See figure 3.3 over page. For example, horse riders and cyclists have no legal right to use a public footpath.

The density of the routes available to each type of user has been mapped by calculating the length of route per 1 km². The results are shown in Figures 3.4 to 3.6 on pages 33 to 35. (For more details of this process, please see Appendix F).

From figures 3.4 to 3.6, *the density of routes available to walkers is generally good and evenly spread across the County.* The average density of pedestrian routes is 1.91 kilometres per kilometre square and over 45% of the County has above average density.

Notably in some areas such as north-west of Stafford, the density of routes is low; however, the density of routes even in these areas is still not poor when compared with the off-road routes available across the County for horseriders and cyclists. The average density of off-road routes for horseriders and cyclists is 0.3 and 0.5 kilometres per kilometre square respectively. *Over 54% of the County lacks any off-road network for horseriders and cyclists and, even in areas like Cannock Chase where the density is above average, the network is fragmented forcing users onto the roads.*

Ideally, the areas of highest demand for access would also have the highest density of routes. We have assessed whether this is the case in Staffordshire by combining the information shown in Figure 2.3 (those areas where demand is likely to be highest based on their proximity to

Figure 3.3 below shows the routes that are available to each type of user.

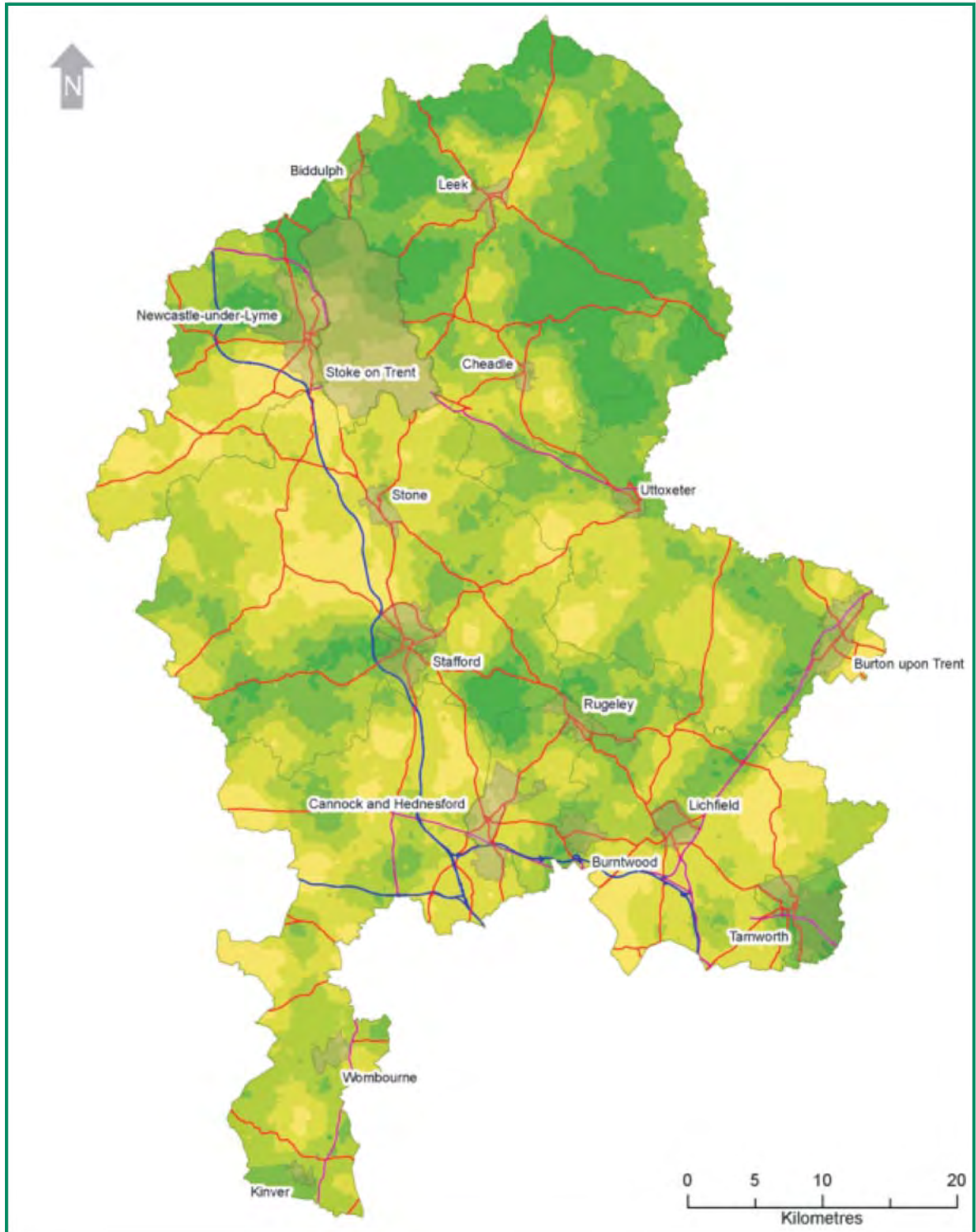
	Walkers	Cyclists	Horse Riders	Motorised Users
Definitive Footpaths	✓			
Definitive Bridlepaths	✓	✓	✓	
Definitive BOATs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greenways	✓	✓		
Canal Towpaths	✓	✓		
Cycle Tracks	✓	✓		
Permissive Footpaths	✓			
Permissive Bridlepaths	✓	✓	✓	
'G' Class Roads	✓	✓	✓	✓

population and scenic amenity), with Figures 3.4 to 3.6 above (density of routes). The results are shown in Figures 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 on pages 36 to 38. (For more details of this process, please see Appendix F).

With a few exceptions, the density of routes for walkers is generally good in those areas where demand is likely to be high. Nationally, opinion on whether there are enough paths for walkers or not is divided. In one national survey 30% of respondents said there were not enough paths with 40% saying there were enough. The survey also suggests that an 'increase' in provision could be achieved by increasing awareness of existing routes⁽⁶⁾. This reflects the situation in Staffordshire, where locally there may be a lack of access to a particular riverbank or view, for example. *The opportunities for off-road cycling in areas of high demand are more limited than for walking. The areas of poor provision are predominantly the rural areas to the east of Stone, north-east of Leek, around Uttoxeter and within the Needwood Forest area of East Staffordshire. The opportunities for off-road horse riding are even more limited with larger areas of relative under-provision. However, there are some areas around Cannock Chase, west of Eccleshall and south-east of Lichfield where provision is adequate.* This conclusion is reinforced by the SCC user survey⁽⁶⁾ where the dominant issue for horse riders was the sparse, fragmented nature of the network, requiring the excessive use of roads, often busy, to form circular routes. The situation is further exacerbated by the 87 cul-de-sac bridleways.

It may be possible to address some of these shortfalls in provision by working in partnership with landowners and other agencies to increase and enhance the network in some areas where demand is likely to be high. Also, in areas where the density of routes is low and demand is likely to be high, a higher level of maintenance of routes will be necessary and beneficial.

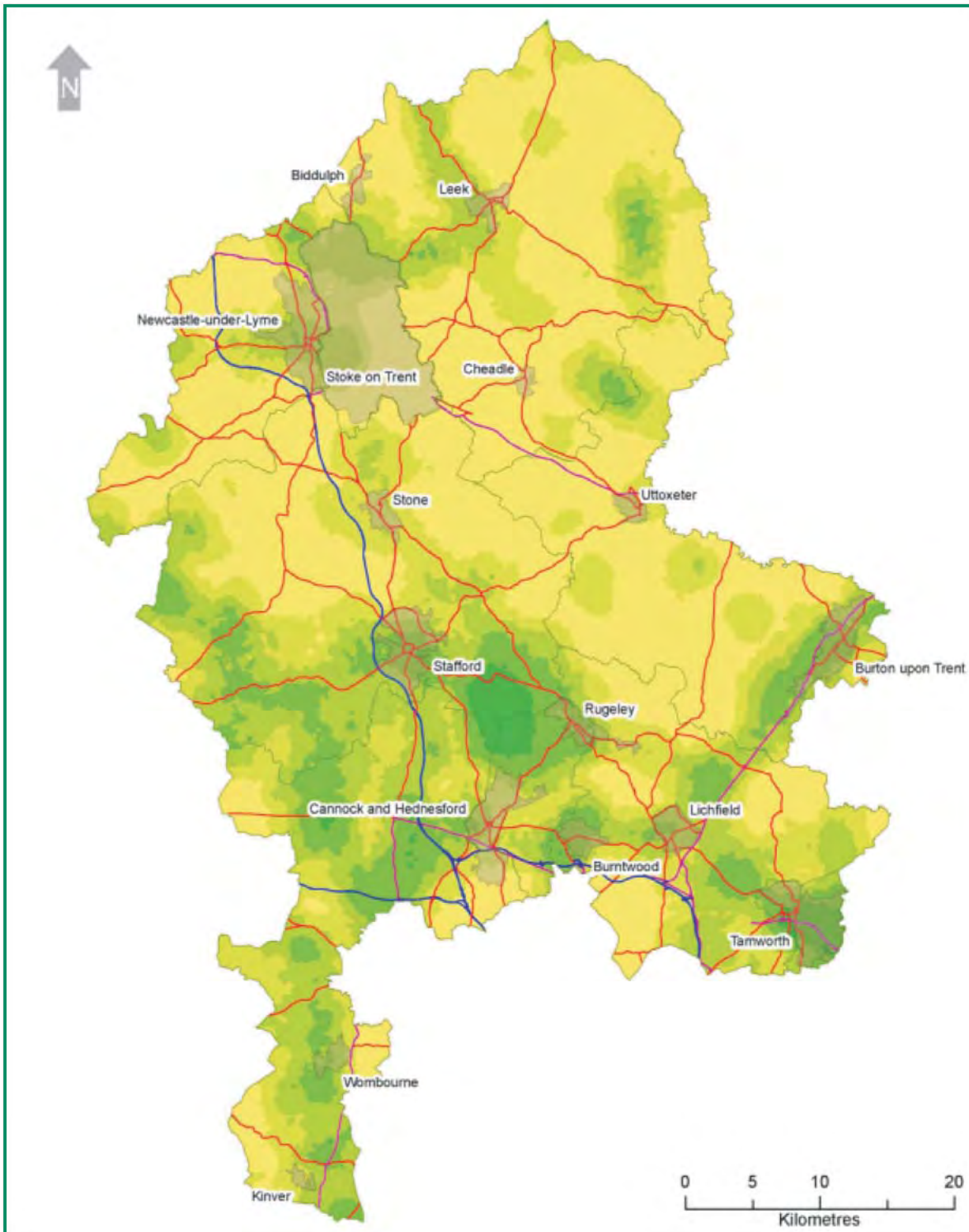
Figure 3.4



**Density of provision
for walkers**

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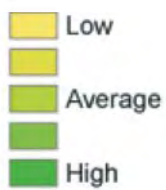
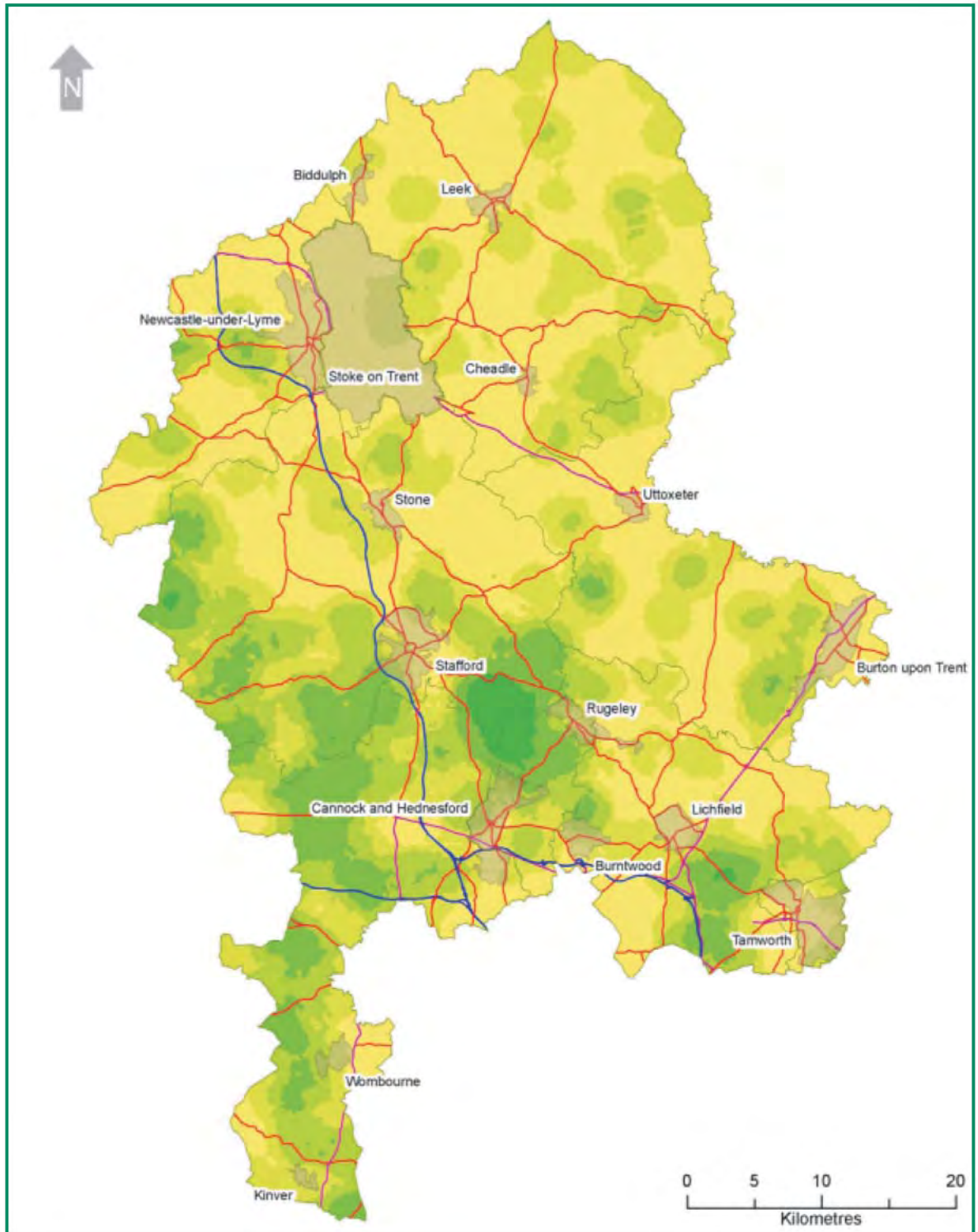
Figure 3.5



Density of provision for cyclists

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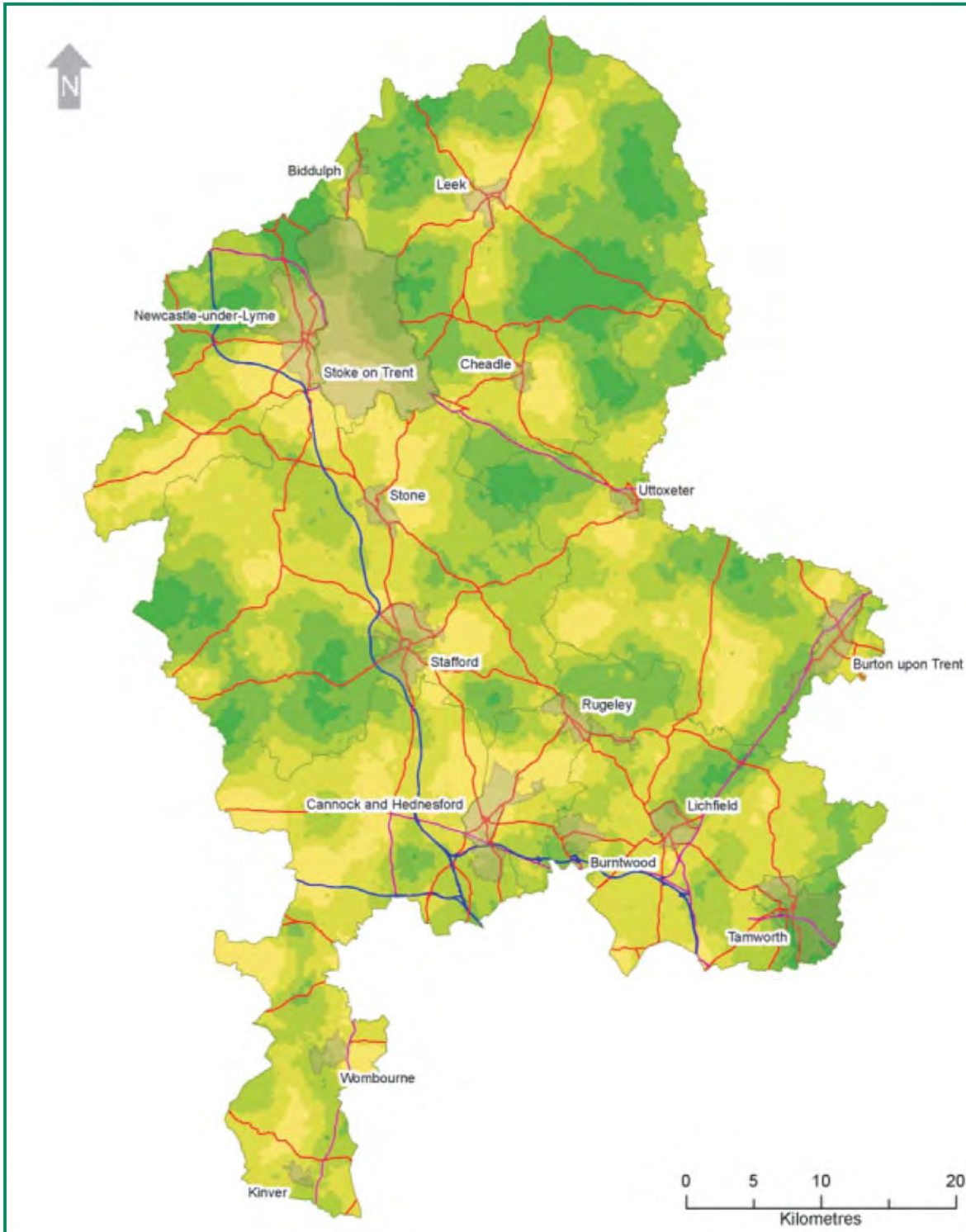
Figure 3.6



Density of provision for horse riders

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Figure 3.7

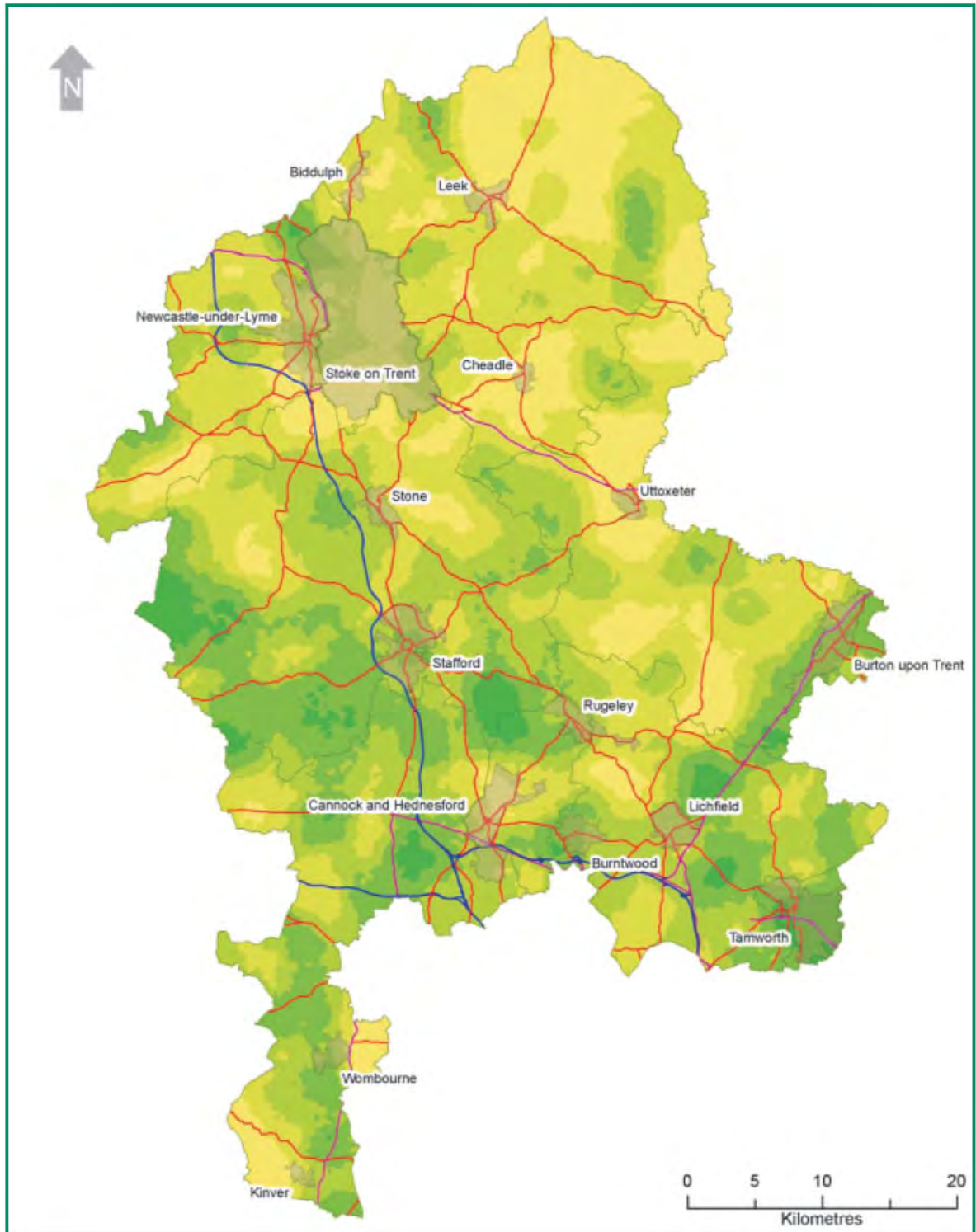


- Low
- Average
- High

Density of walking provision in relation to anticipated demand

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Figure 3.8

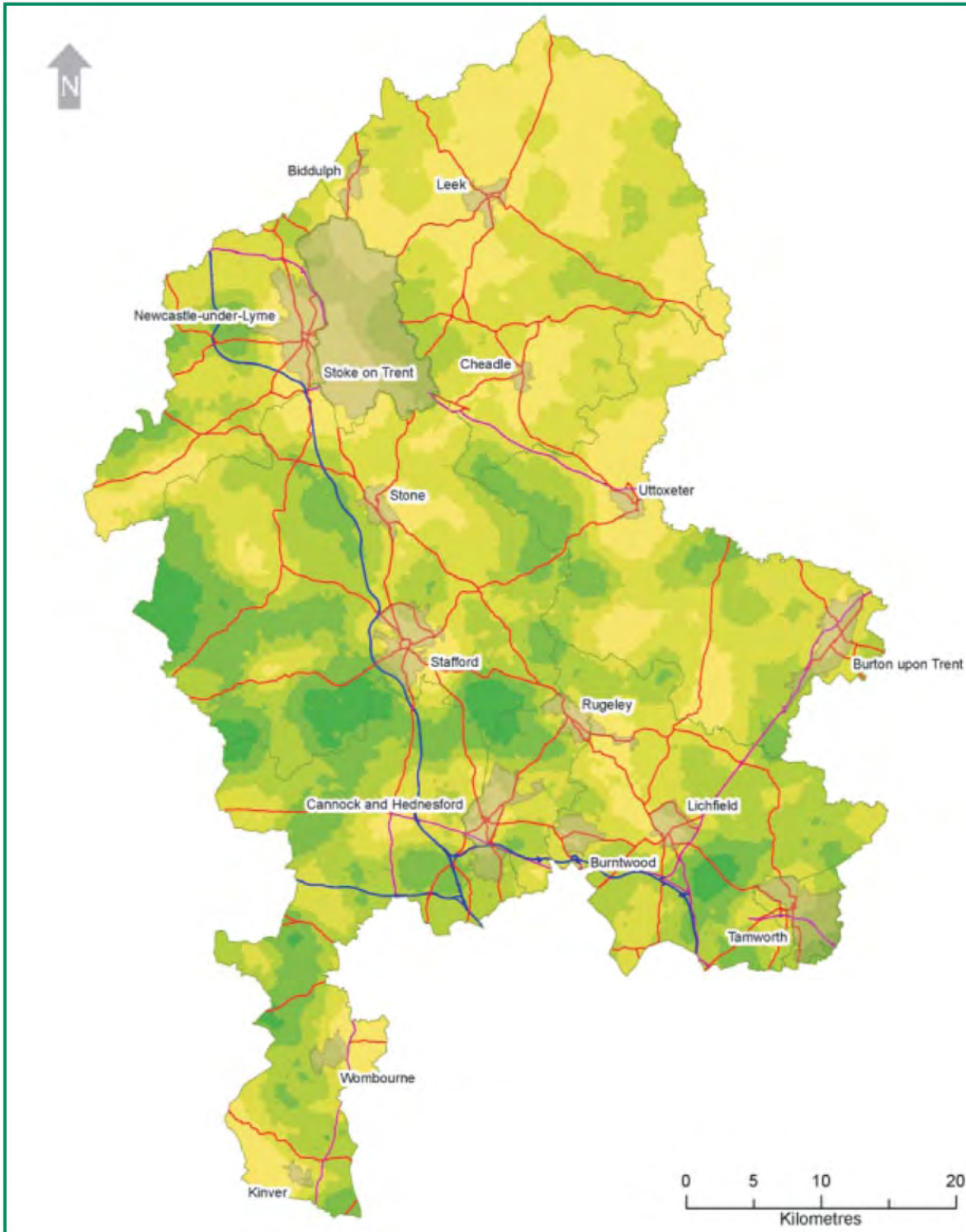


- Low
- Average
- High

**Density of cycling provision
in relation to anticipated demand**

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Figure 3.9



- Low
- Average
- High

**Density of horse riding provision
in relation to anticipated demand**

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3.3 Condition of the Network

Consultations with stakeholders revealed that the condition and connectivity of the access network is a major influence on its suitability for and level of use. Most consultees expressed a high priority for having well-maintained and well-connected paths which provided opportunities for circular routes. To assess the condition and connectivity of the access network in Staffordshire, the following were considered:

Definitive Map Anomalies

Scrutiny of the Definitive Map and Statement has revealed that:

- *approximately 360 of the public paths recorded on the Definitive Map are obstructed by buildings which equates to almost 5% of the total network.* This figure is only indicative. Most of the routes have been obstructed for more than 30 years and this situation stems from an era when the profile of rights of way was lower. Improved consultation between highway and development control authorities and developers themselves has served to reduce any new occurrences; however, the historical anomalies need to be resolved.
- *a total of 87 of the public paths shown on the Definitive Map are cul-de-sac routes.* These are generally public footpaths which terminate at a parish boundary, or public bridleways which join at a parish boundary with a public footpath, rendering the full length of the route unusable by horse riders and cyclists.

- *the path network is also crossed and truncated by many major roads, the M6, A38, A50, A5 and A449 corridors being of particular significance.* These routes effectively sever the network and present highway safety issues for users, particularly horse riders and cyclists.

These anomalies are detailed at Appendix J.

Some of these issues could be resolved through public path orders. The determination of public path orders is a discretionary function under the Highways Act 1980. Most of the 20 applications processed annually are for landowners, often in the interests of privacy and security. Applications are dealt with in order of receipt. *The current arrangements could be reviewed so that priority is given to those applications where an order would improve the path network for the benefit of the public and all other applications could be processed as and when resources allow.*

Definitive Map Modification Order Applications

As mentioned above, Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 allows anyone, with evidence, to make an application to add, delete or amend the status of a route to the Definitive Map. Section 53 applications do not create new routes, they only add routes which have been used for 20 years or more to the Definitive Map.

There are 236 Section 53 applications currently outstanding.

Figure 3.10 below details the nature of the applications currently outstanding.

Figure 3.10

Nature of Application	% of Total Applications Outstanding
Applications to delete a public path	4.6
Applications to amend the Definitive Map or Statement	3.8
Applications to add a public footpath	63.7
Applications to add a public bridleway	22.5
Applications to add a byway open to all traffic	5.3

In theory, the determination of these applications could help to address some of the issues relating to shortfall in provision and poor connectivity of the network referred to above. *However, to date, the determination of Section 53 applications has had a limited effect on the overall rights of way network.* Yet, the cost of determining an application is substantial. The effect of the applications determined between 2000 and 2005 is as follows:

Total length of new path added to Map	5.5 km
Total length of path deleted from Map	1.0 km
Total length of path reclassified	1.7 km

This equates to only a 0.01% increase in the length of the network in five years and has addressed few problems of poor connectivity and obstruction on the network.

Furthermore, a considerable number of Definitive Map Modification Order applications are not successful with 32 of the 92 applications determined between 2000 to 2005 being unsuccessful.

Staffordshire's progress, like most highway authorities, in determining Section 53 applications is slow. This is partly a reflection of the extensive research and quasi-judicial procedures for applications. Until recently, the County Council aimed to determine about 25 applications per annum. However the number of staff currently dealing with Section 53 applications has been reduced as part of the County Council's recent Service Review. It is unlikely, therefore that the number of applications determined per annum will exceed 12. The current backlog therefore equates to about 20 years' work provided that no more applications are received. However, *the CROW Act 2000 introduced a cut-off date of 2026 after which date no more claims using historical documentary evidence can be made. The extent to which this change in the legislation will lead to an influx of applications has yet to be assessed.* The Countryside Agency has set up the "Discovering Lost Ways" project to systematically search historic records for routes of previously unrecorded public paths so that Definitive Map Modification Orders can be made to add them to the Definitive Map. The research is also expected to reveal the existence of higher rights along some routes. Pilot projects are currently

underway in some local authorities, however, the findings have not yet been published.

Unless they satisfy specific criteria which justify them being treated as a priority, applications are determined in order of receipt. Applicants apply for priority consideration themselves. This means that applications with less public benefit are often determined, at great cost, in favour of applications which would have a greater impact on the rights of way network.

A review of the current working practices and priority criteria for determining applications seems therefore to be necessary whereby the County Council could "itself" give priority consideration to applications with greater public benefit.

More recently, the County Council initiated a project to ascertain whether it is possible to resolve some of the outstanding applications, which have greater public benefit, by alternative means such as public path creation orders, diversion orders or extinguishment orders. To date, a number of potential applications have been identified and work is continuing. However, there is only one officer currently employed on a part-time basis on this project. Currently, within the existing budgetary constraints, more resources could only be dedicated to this area of work at the expense of other rights of way work.

Nature of Complaints

To a large extent, practical works on the path network are carried out in a reactive way and members of the public, user groups and landowners are relied upon to inform the County Council of routes or infrastructure that are out of repair. Other than ploughing and cropping inspections, very few regular proactive inspections are carried out.

The County Council currently receives over 1,000 path complaints each year, all of which are investigated by the County Council's Ranger Service. This figure has steadily declined over recent years, reflecting the overall improvement in the condition of the network. The path problems reported in 2003, 2004 and 2005 have been analysed and are shown in Figure 3.11 over page.

Figure 3.11

Problem Summary	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %
Animals Deterring Use	2	2.3	2	2.2
Fingerpost/Waymarking Required	20.5	12.2	12	11.1
Ploughing and Cropping	16.3	13.5	11.5	11.5
Fences, Hedges, Locked Gates	16	15.4	11.8	12.1
Vegetation, Poor Surface	18.5	31	34.5	33.1
Path Furniture Out of Repair	20.8	21	23.5	25
Unlawful Diversions/Notices	2.8	1.8	2.5	1.2
Other(Buildings/machinery/litter)	3	2.7	2.2	3.8
	100	100	100	100

The number of complaints received relating to missing roadside fingerposts and the obstruction of paths by cropping has fallen substantially since 2003. However, in 2004, 2005 and 2006, nearly a third of all of the complaints received relate to obstruction by vegetation or poor surfacing compared with only one fifth in 2003. In each year, over one fifth of the complaints related to path furniture, which include stiles, gates and bridges, being out of repair.

From our consultations, 45% of the SCC User Survey respondents raised a lack of waymarking and signage as a deterrent to use; 26% cited problems with stiles; and 14% cited poor surfaces as deterrents to use. Of the Parish or Town Councils consulted, 17% raised overgrowth as a persistent, annual problem.

Staffordshire, like any highway authority, has a programme of maintenance work on its path network. With over 7,800 public rights of way in the County, routes are constantly requiring maintenance or becoming obstructed. Most of the minor works are carried out in-house on a prioritised job sheet system, although external contractors are employed for large-scale and specialised engineering works. The Peak District National Park Ranger Service and several volunteer groups also works closely with the County Council is keen to continue these existing joint working arrangement. The number of job sheets outstanding fluctuates even on a daily basis, with jobs constantly being completed and new ones being added to the list.

At any one time over recent years there have been in the region of 400 to 450 job sheets outstanding, although the figure currently stands at 350 (about 4.5% of the total path network). The work required on a job sheet can vary considerably from installing a fingerpost to replacing a bridge and, in the majority of cases, the work required does not render the path totally unusable. The County Council's Works Units complete about 700 job sheets each year, as well as clearing the vegetation on the 300 paths included on the annual maintenance programme. These tend to be the well-used routes to schools and other local amenities.

Path maintenance, as with any routine maintenance work, has to be prioritised in favour of those paths where public safety is an issue and where the most public benefit will be derived. The current system of prioritisation was developed as part of the Rights of Way Strategy in 1998 in consultation with the user groups, including the Ramblers' Association (RA).

The current system of prioritisation is as follows:

- Public Safety Issues
- Regional promoted routes
- Local promoted walks and rides
- Public Bridleways
- Other Rights of Way.

It may be that the current arrangements are not necessarily the most cost-effective way of dealing with maintenance issues and some refinement of

the existing prioritisation system and working practices may be of benefit. The current system of prioritisation establishes some objective means of allocating and prioritising resources, however, it does not necessarily take account of a route's relative importance in terms of demand. The level of maintenance on each route could be established on a sliding scale, with each route being kept passable, but a higher level of maintenance being carried out on those routes in areas where demand is likely to be high. The information in Figure 2.3 would be useful in reviewing the current system of prioritisation.

Best Value Performance Indicator 178 - Percentage of Paths that are "easy to use"

Since 1998 the Audit Commission has required all highway authorities to undertake an annual survey of 5% of their public path network. The prescribed methodology dictates that 2.5% is surveyed in May and 2.5% in November. The results from the survey make up the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 178, which indicates the percentage of the path network that is "easy to use". To meet the "easy to use" requirement, a path must be signposted or waymarked where it leaves a metalled road and free from significant unlawful obstructions or serious interference to the public's use. Its surface and lawful barriers must also be in good repair to a standard necessary to enable the

public to use the path without undue inconvenience.

The BVPI figures for Staffordshire have risen steadily over the years and the network condition compares favourably with other adjoining authorities (Appendix K). The data from each survey is also helpful in identifying major problems and trends on the path network so that remedial action can be taken to ensure that the County Council achieves its BVPI targets for future years. See Figure 3.12 below for reasons for failure in 2005/6.

The major reasons for failure reflect those identified from our analysis of the complaint data: missing fingerposts, the obstruction of paths by fencing, overgrowth and crops together with stile disrepair and poor surfaces.

Stile disrepair and vegetation clearance problems can be remedied with a greater input of resources. However, poor surfacing issues are more difficult where routes are unsurfaced and the problems are inherent in the nature of the terrain.

The obstruction issues, which are criminal offences under the Highways Act, can be resolved either by more effective enforcement action to remove the unlawful obstructions or by improving landowners' awareness of their statutory obligations.

Figure 3.12 below gives the reasons for failure from the 2005/6 survey.

Reason for Failure	Sample Length (metres)	Percentage of Failed Sample (by length)
Missing Fingerpost/waymark	11730	21.80%
Cropped	9349	17.30%
Ploughed	1324	2.46%
Bridge Disrepair	2913	5.40%
Stile Disrepair	3976	7.38%
Obstructed by Overgrowth	5357	9.94%
Obstructed by Buildings	3706	7%
Obstructed by Fence	10279	19.06%
Poor Surface	2558	4.75%
Locked Gate	2715	5.04%
Total	53907	100.00%

Network Condition Issues Raised by Consultees

Parish and District Councils, together with user groups and other interested bodies, were asked for suggestions to improve the local rights of way network⁽⁶⁾. (See Appendix M.)

The issues raised by respondents (see Figure 3.13 below) included the following:-

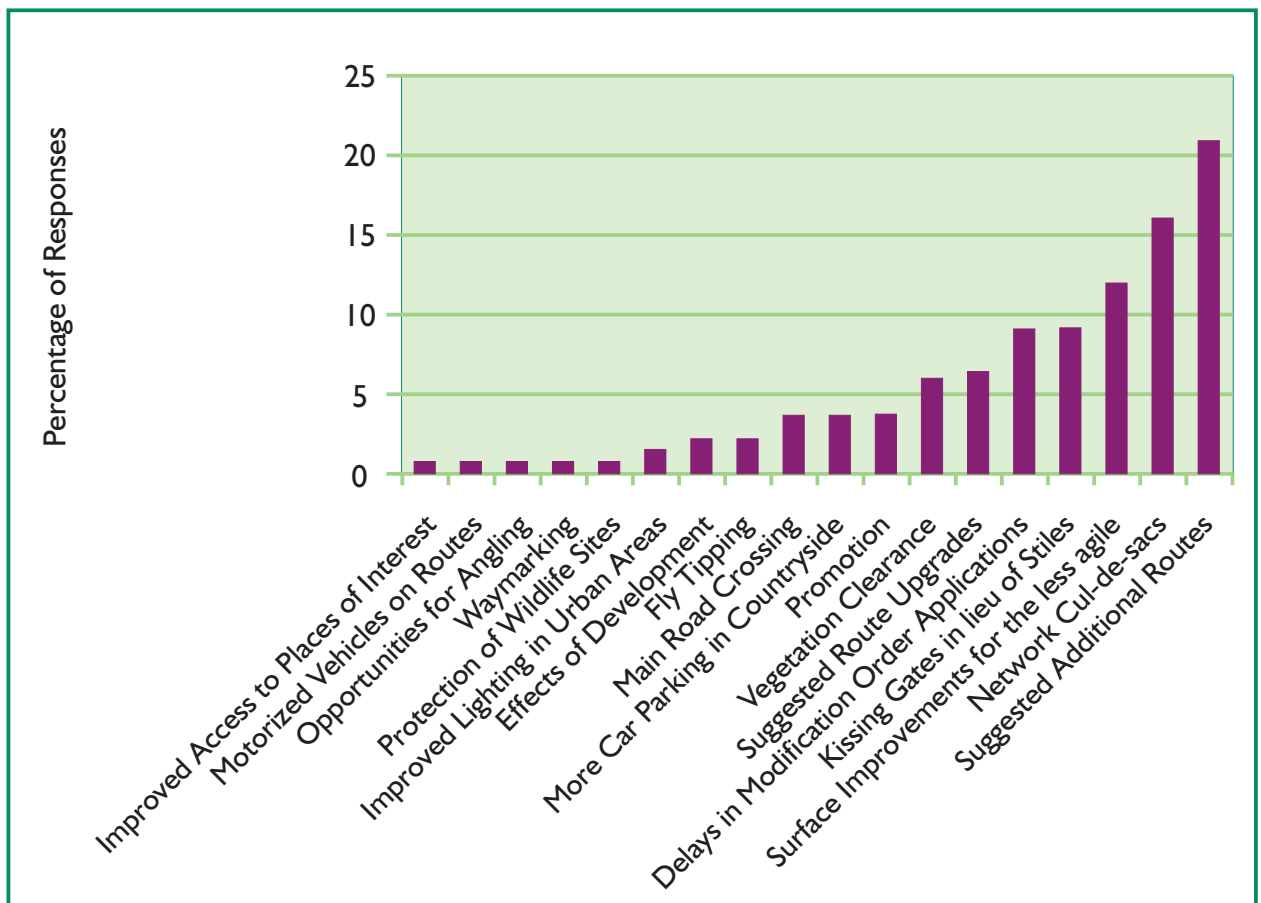
- More bridleways
- Better stiles for the less agile
- Slow down road traffic
- Improve overall path maintenance
- Better car parking
- Improved public transport links
- Improved tolerance between different users

The major improvements requested, other than to add routes and improvements to the connectivity of the network, were surface and boundary crossing improvements (gates and stiles), particularly for the less agile.

The County Council has no comprehensive data recording path furniture, surface type, etc. It is extremely difficult, therefore, to accurately evaluate the whole network in terms of its accessibility for all.

Desktop research⁽¹⁹⁾ and responses from our consultations⁽⁶⁾ suggest that the replacement of stiles with gates together with surface improvements are desirable actions in order to improve access for the less agile. More information with regard to the suitability of routes for varying abilities is also needed.

Figure 3.13: Issues Identified from Consultations with Parish and District Councils, User and Interest Groups



The County Council has been supporting the replacement of stiles with kissing gates under the Community Paths Initiative for a number of years (See Appendix L). *Each year the Community Paths Initiative is over-subscribed, illustrating both the demand for such projects and the willingness of Parish and Town Councils and other community groups to be involved in work on the path network. There is further scope to increase the level of community involvement in the care, improvement and promotion of the path network.*

Landowners' Expectations

Landowners, managers and occupiers have a major role in providing access. Whilst there are legal measures available to assist the County Council in its duty to protect and assert the use and enjoyment of the network if necessary, the most desirable solution is for landowners to abide by their statutory obligations and to welcome or provide any increased access on a voluntary basis.

A paper (published by Craig Mulder, Simon Shibli & Jo Hale)⁽²⁰⁾ analyses the supply of public rights of way from the perspective of farmers and landowners.

Key findings include:

- Respondents were just as likely to prefer to exclude the public from their land as they were to allow access on the proviso of responsible behaviour.
- The idea that landowners would be happy to provide increased access on their land given sufficient financial incentive was found to be unproven.
- A minority of landowners provide informal access to their land for certain user groups.
- The fact that landowners are happier to provide permissive access than new rights of way suggests that they prefer to be able to keep a measure of control over access to their land.
- Respondents displayed a lack of confidence in current rights of way procedures and suggested that it would be better to concentrate on creating usable networks than simply recording historic rights of way.

- There was concern that increased access would result in increased costs and workloads for landowners.

It is clear from the above findings that there are a number of real concerns that need to be addressed to change landowners' perceptions and that they cannot necessarily be solved by financial means.

Research undertaken by Rural Resources, on behalf of Shropshire County Council⁽¹⁵⁾, identified four main areas where improvement could be of benefit to landowners:

- Reduced inadvertent trespass by path users, through improved signage
- Simpler processes for diversions
- Better maintenance of paths to encourage users to keep to the legal route
- Promotion of businesses that benefit from an improved access network.

Responses from consultations in Staffordshire⁽⁶⁾ included:

- Improved guidance literature in language that can be understood
- Assistance with addressing fly tipping nuisances
- Assistance with protecting areas from unauthorised access, e.g. barriers across bridleways to preclude access by motorised vehicles
- Recognition of farming needs in path reorganisation proposals
- Education for users exercising their dogs - disturbance of livestock and wildlife.

There is scope for improvement in the relationship between land managers and path users by making both more aware of their responsibilities with regard to rights of way.

Chapter Four

Statement of Action

4.1 Introduction

Local rights of way are a significant part of our heritage and provide many opportunities for recreation, as well as providing routes to walk the dog and to walk to school and local facilities. The rights of way network and green open spaces have the capacity to support and deliver a range of national and local health, economic and sustainable transport objectives to improve people's quality of life.

It is clear from our Assessment and consultation exercise that improving the network and its management could make a significant difference to people who use it. Such changes could also encourage more people to use the network.

The Statement of Action is required by statute and forms the basis of a long term management strategy for the Rights of Way network. It is based on five key themes. These emerged from the Assessment earlier consultation exercise. The integrated approach that we are promoting means that many of the proposed actions can contribute to more than one theme. The five themes are not intended to be mutually exclusive.

4.2 Key Themes

1. *A better signed, maintained and accessible path network* focuses on what needs to be done to encourage greater use of the countryside and better quality public access. It also takes into account the growth in the number of older people and includes actions for making the network more accessible so that it can be enjoyed by people with mobility problems.
2. *A more connected and safer network* addresses the safety concerns of users and the shortfall in access provision for horseriders and cyclists. The focus is on improving the connectivity of the network, establishing more off-road routes by working closely with Parish Councils and user groups and on linking public access land via the path network.
3. *Encouraging greater community involvement* in rights of way work is vital if the aspirations of the ROWIP are to be realised. The County Council is unable to deliver all of the actions in the ROWIP alone. Greater community involvement has two important advantages. It maximises the resources available for rights of way work which has become increasingly more important given the current financial climate. Secondly, it promotes a greater understanding between path users and landowners by making both more aware of their responsibilities.
4. *Protecting the path network* focuses on what should be done to protect the network from future built development. There are many existing longstanding problems due to past development not accommodating or severing the path network. The emphasis is on ensuring that such events do not recur by improving the availability of rights of way information and communication with potential developers and local planning authorities.
5. *Encouraging greater use of the network* is about engendering an understanding of the benefits associated with outdoor recreation. It embraces the role that public access can play in delivering a range of important health, economic and sustainable transport objectives. The focus is on improving information about the network and promoted routes and on encouraging more people to use it by establishing 'easy access' paths.

Statement of Action

Theme 1: A better signed, maintained and accessible path network.

Issues

Scenic amenity and the size and profile of the population are two of the major factors for influencing demand for the network. Most people live in the urban areas of Stafford, Tamworth, Cannock, Burton-on-Trent, Lichfield, Rugeley and Newcastle. This places a greater demand on the path network within these areas and on the countryside closest to them. Our research has shown that people expect a higher standard of maintenance on urban routes than on more rural ones.

Our consultation exercise identified the main deterrents to access in Staffordshire as the lack of signposting and waymarking, overgrowing vegetation, a general lack of information and problems experienced with stiles, gates and other obstructions. We aim to improve the condition of the network by using the information derived from our spatial assessments. These have identified the geographical areas where demand is likely to be high based on both proximity to population and an area's scenic amenity. We will review the current systems for dealing with complaints and maintenance work so that, with the exception of health and safety issues, resources are targeted in areas where most people will benefit. We also aim to improve the overall availability and condition of the network by taking action to address the problems of obstruction. Again, our resources will be targeted primarily in the areas of high demand identified through the spatial assessment.

The forecasted growth in the population and the number of retired and older people also have implications for the long-term management, maintenance and improvement of the path network as the demand for more easily accessible routes increases. Our aim is to improve accessibility to the path network by working in partnership with Parish Councils through the Community Paths Initiative to identify and improve routes which are suitable for people with disabilities. This may entail

removing stiles and replacing them with gates or improving surfaces of routes.

Evidence and Support

- Spatial assessment of the path network.
- 17% of Parish and Town Council responses relate to annual problems of overgrowth.
- 10% of BVPI 178 Condition Survey failures due to overgrowth.
- 41% of SCC User Survey respondents cited overgrowth as a deterrent to use.
- 26.5% of SCC User Survey respondents are deterred by physical obstructions.
- 14% of SCC User Survey respondents cited poor surfaces as a deterrent.
- 10% of BVPI 178 Condition Survey failures due to poor surfaces.
- Research on the needs of those with mobility impairments.
- Anticipated increase in the average age of the population.
- 26% of SCC User Survey respondents cited problems with stiles as a deterrent.
- 27% of SCC User Survey respondents cited problems with gates as a deterrent.
- Anticipated increase in the average age of the population.

Current Relevant Work

Maintenance: Legally the County Council has a duty to pay 25% of the landowner's costs in providing barrier crossings. Since 1990, the County Council has tended to supply free stiles and gates to landowners. This practice has been well-received by landowners and is considered to be more cost-effective than the administration of the statutory minimum contribution system. Free stiles and gates are also offered as an incentive to remove current unlawful obstructions.

Improvements: To improve access for people with mobility problems, the County Council has been working closely with Parish Councils via the Community Paths Initiative to replace stiles with kissing gates on certain routes and to carry out surface improvements. Since this work began, over 100 routes have been made available to the less agile. This work will continue subject to funds being available.

Signposting: The County Council aims to survey, and replace where necessary, about 20% of the path network signposts each year. A well-signed and waymarked network not only assists users but also helps to prevent inadvertent trespass.

Review of network prioritisation for maintenance and improvement: The County Council currently receives approximately 1,000 complaints each year, with most of the complaints over recent years relating to obstruction by vegetation or poor surfacing. The complaints are investigated by the Ranger Service with most routes being inspected within one month of the receipt of a complaint. This current rate of progress needs to be maintained and, possibly improved by a reduction in the time taken to investigate. However, whilst the initial inspection of path complaints is prompt, the County Council has a backlog of public path maintenance work. Whilst this is inevitable with the current level of resources, it has been established in Chapter 3 that some improvement could be achieved by a review of the current prioritisation system for path maintenance work. This review is currently underway. With the exception of health and safety issues, resources need to be focused more towards those routes where demand is likely to be highest and where the greatest public benefit will accrue.

Enforcement work: The County Council's current ploughing and cropping enforcement policy has been successful in reducing the number of paths obstructed by unlawful ploughing and cropping operations each year. The unlawful ploughing and cropping of paths used to be the single most frequently reported complaint. However, targeted enforcement action against persistent offenders, the publicity from successful prosecutions and the publication of an advisory leaflet have deterred other landowners from committing similar offences and substantially reduced the number of complaints received annually. Consideration needs to be given to extending the ploughing and cropping enforcement policy to include other blatant obstructions by persistent offenders.

FUTURE ACTIONS

We will:

1. IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

- review the effectiveness of the current system of prioritising complaints and in-house maintenance work by December 2008 to ensure that, with the exception of health and safety issues, priority is given to problems in geographical areas where demand is high.
- review the annual maintenance programme by December 2008 to give priority to routes in areas of high demand.
- resolve the existing permanent obstructions on the path network by developing a rolling programme of public path orders by March 2008.
- in partnership with the JLAF, review our current policy and working practices for enforcement by July 2008.
- survey 30% of fingerposts annually by engaging with Parish Councils through the CPI and replace, where necessary.
- work in partnership with other agencies establish a database of all path furniture on the path network by 2009/10.

2. IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ROUTES

- continue to work in partnership with District and with Parish Councils through the CPI to replace stiles with kissing gates on routes suitable for people with disabilities and to maintain and improve the condition of promoted routes.
- identify and improve routes suitable for people with disabilities through partnership working with Parish Councils and local communities.
- work in partnership with landowners and managers to establish a "least restrictive option" for new stiles and gates in order to reduce the number of physical barriers on the path network.
- produce a leaflet for landowners and land managers which sets out their statutory responsibilities by December 2008.

Theme 2: A more connected and safer network for all users.

Issues

Generally, although there are some areas where the density of routes is lower than others, overall the network available to walkers is good and evenly spread across the County. However, the percentage of the network which is available to horse riders and cyclists is below the national average, with areas such as Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle, Tamworth and East Staffordshire being particularly low. Furthermore, the bridleway network is fragmented making the establishment of off-road circular routes difficult. Vulnerable users, such as horse riders and cyclists are forced onto busy roads. In turn, these safety hazards deter use. Implementing measures to address the shortfall in access provision for horseriders and cyclists is a key priority for the ROWIP.

Many of the 87 cul-de-sac routes on the Definitive Map are public bridleways, which join at a parish boundary with a public footpath, rendering the full length of the route unusable by horse riders and cyclists. The path network is also crossed and truncated by many major roads, such as the M6, A38, A50 and A449. In effect, these routes sever the network and present highway safety issues for users, particularly horse riders and cyclists. We propose to address these issues as a matter of priority by developing a rolling programme of Public Path Orders and by reviewing the current system of prioritisation for Modification Order applications. Reprioritisation of the criteria for determining Modification Order applications could also assist in addressing the shortfall in access provision in areas of high demand.

The country parks and areas of green open space, including the newly designated Access Land, are of strategic importance. They could supplement the existing rights of way network, particularly in areas where network provision is poor and the demand for access is likely to be high. We will seek to address the poor density of bridleways in areas of high demand by allowing horse riding and cycling on our own land to compensate for the limitations of the network. We propose to review our current

horse riding licence scheme. Links also need to be improved in certain areas between the rights of way network and the wider countryside. We will also address this.

Highway safety and the need for more off-road circular routes are constant issues voiced by most users. Again, the provision of promoted long distance horse riding and cycling routes is poor. The only route currently available to horse riders is the Sabrina Way.

There is a large network of non-classified highways and other routes across the County, such as greenways, canal towpaths and permissive routes which have the potential to significantly augment the right of way network. Over the Plan period, we aim to increase the provision of off-road promoted routes for all users by working in partnership with others to create additional routes, particularly in the areas of high demand.

Evidence and Support

- Spatial assessment of routes available to pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.
- 11% of SCC User Survey respondents cited bad road crossings as a deterrent.
- 9% of the issues raised by horse riding user groups related to main road crossings.
- Improved signage to slow down traffic was highlighted by horse riders responding to the SCC User Survey.
- 1% of the recorded network is cul-de-sac bridleway routes.
- Many horse riders utilise public footpaths.
- All users generally tend to prefer circular routes, the length of which differs depending on the user types, interest and ability.
- The fragmented network was felt to be problematic by all users in the SCC User Survey.

Current Relevant Work

Promoted Routes: The County Council grant-aids the establishment of circular routes through the CPI. The County Council has also agreed to support a long distance horse riding route around the Stoke-on-Trent/Newcastle area, to be known as the Potteries Ring Route, and a further long distance walking route to run alongside the River Trent.

Access Land: Assessment of the newly designated Access Land has revealed that there are 3 sites which cannot be accessed via the existing rights of way network. This issue needs to be addressed. All of the sites have been signed.

Improvement and maintenance of routes: The Rights of Way Unit works closely with the Safer Routes to Schools team and parish councils to improve routes which are suitable for walking and cycling to school and other local facilities. A higher priority is given to path maintenance work on multi-user routes.

FUTURE ACTIONS

We will:

1. IMPROVE THE LINKS WITH THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

- work with landowners, to ensure that all Access Land sites are accessible by a public right of way by 2010/11.
- in partnership with landowners, Parish Councils and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and other establish a walking route which links Froghall and Oakamoor by 2011/12.
- in partnership with landowners and other agencies, establish a long-distance walking route along the River Trent linking with the River Tame by 2009/10.

2. IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF OFF-ROAD ROUTES FOR HORSES AND CYCLISTS

- give priority to resolving the anomalies on the Definitive Map by developing a rolling programme of Public Path Orders by March 2008.
- in consultation with the JLAF, give priority to reviewing the current prioritisation system for dealing with Modification Order applications by March 2008 so that priority is given to applications for

multi user routes to address some of the shortfalls in access provision for horse riders and cyclists.

- review licensed horse riding schemes on County Council owned land by December 2008.

- work in partnership with bridleway groups, to establish a circular horseriding route, around the Potteries by 2010/11.

3. IMPROVE SAFETY FOR ALL USERS

- work in partnership with Parish Councils, District Councils and others to establish and promote at least one circular off road horse riding/cycling route and one off road circular route for the less agile in each District by 2011/12.

- establish and publicise a series of 6 circular walking routes based on the Way for the Millennium by March 2008.

- give priority to resolving the routes which are severed by major road schemes by developing a rolling programme of Public Path Orders by March 2008.

Theme 3: Encourage greater community involvement in rights of way work.

Issues

Given the resources available, the County Council does not have the capacity to deliver all of the improvements outlined in the ROWIP alone. Partnership working with other agencies and particularly local communities is fundamental to the success of the ROWIP. There is already a willingness by Parish Councils and user groups to become involved in rights of way work. This is demonstrated by the high participation in the CPI scheme. A priority, therefore, will be to draw on the wealth of knowledge, enthusiasm and energy already available within local communities and user groups. We will seek to continue to achieve this through the CPI. However, the CPI has been in operation since 1992 and its scope needs to change if we are to encourage more community involvement in rights of way work.

Evidence and Support

- Continual over-subscription for financial assistance under the Community Paths Initiative.
- The Staffordshire, Stoke and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum identified the need to engage and encourage more local communities and volunteers in the promotion and maintenance of the network.
- The level and content of responses received from Parish Councils and individuals to our consultation exercise demonstrates the high level of interest and value placed on the path network.
- Over 15% of issues raised from public complaints relate to obstructions by ploughing or cropping (landowner's responsibility).
- 20% of BVPI 178 Condition Survey failures are due to obstruction by fences (landowner's responsibility).

- 15% of issues raised from public complaints relate to stile disrepair (landowner's responsibility).

Current Relevant Work

The Community Paths Initiative: The CPI is successful in assisting local communities and user interests to develop and promote their path networks and, undoubtedly, maximise the effective use of resources at both County and local level. New funding streams to expand the Scheme are continually being sought. The involvement of local communities in public path work demonstrates the major importance that the County Council attaches generally to its relationship with Parish Councils and the obvious benefits which accrue from the CPI. These benefits are becoming increasingly more important because of budgetary constraints. However, the Scheme is restricted to Parish Councils and some do not participate in the Scheme. A review of the scope of the CPI is currently underway with a view to encouraging greater participation of local communities in rights of way work.

Condition Surveys: The County Council currently engages with volunteers to survey the public rights of way network for the Audit Commission BVPI survey.

Work of Countryside and Rights of Way Volunteers: Over the years, the County Council has worked closely with volunteers both on the country parks and path network. Much of this work is focused on improving access to the path network and to the countryside generally.

FUTURE ACTION

ENCOURAGE GREATER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- review the scope of the CPI to encourage more Parish Councils and local communities to participate and become involved in rights of way work by March 2009.

Theme 4: Protecting the path network.

Issues

The County Council has a statutory duty to keep the Definitive Map under review. An up to date, readily available and accurate Definitive Map underpins the protection of and improvements to paths on the ground. A key priority for us, therefore, is to build on our existing work and to ensure that rights of way information is widely available. There is also an increasing demand for easy access to the Definitive Map by users, developers and existing or potential home owners. The Map is needed to provide an essential enabler for works on the ground and is needed to provide a reliable record for the public.

There are many longstanding problems on the existing network which have arisen as a result of past development not accommodating or severing the path network. We need to ensure that such situations do not recur. We also want to reduce the impact of future built development on the path network, securing improvements where possible. This will require partnerships and improved communication with local planning authorities and developers.

Evidence and Support

- Over 2% of consultation responses received from Parish and Town Councils raised the detrimental effect of permitted development on the path network as a concern.
- Nearly a third of the respondents to our user survey cited a lack of information as a deterrent to further use of the local rights of way network. Not knowing where to go was a deterrent to 13% of respondents to the survey.
- Almost 5% of the path network is obstructed by buildings.
- 87 bridleways on the Definitive Map are cul-de-sac routes.

- Many paths are crossed by major roads such as the M6, A38, A50, A5 and A449 corridors which is a major issue for vulnerable road users.
- The County Council deals with approximately 75 requests each year from developers for rights of way information.

Current Relevant Work

Definitive Map: Investigating claims for rights of way and processing public path order applications are an ongoing part of rights of way work. However, demands of other areas of work and the cost implications of publishing an updated Definitive Map have delayed a further revision of the Map. Given that the detailed records are available, the Definitive Map should be consolidated at the earliest opportunity.

Although not yet completely verified, Staffordshire's rights of way network is recorded on GIS and the County Council is working towards publishing it on their website.

Legal Order Strategy: Historically, modification and public path order applications have been processed in chronological order of receipt. This does not necessarily enable officers to prioritise the most contentious applications or those which could bring most benefit to users of the public rights of way network. A review of current working practices and a strategy for establishing priorities to deal with legal orders is underway. The Joint Local Access Forum and user organisations will be consulted on any changes, after which time it will be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Registers of Applications: Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, surveying authorities are required to keep and make available for public inspection, in both electronic and paper form, a register of all the applications which they have received for Definitive Map Modification Orders and changes to the network. The registers help increase knowledge among landowners, users of rights of way, and the general public about applications which could result in changes to the network. It will also help to avoid duplication of work where someone has already made an application in

respect of a particular route. These Registers are now available on the County Council's website.

FUTURE ACTIONS

We will:

1. IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF RIGHTS OF WAY INFORMATION

- make the Definitive Map and Statement available for public inspection via the County Council's website by March 2008.
- make the Registers of Modification Order applications and Public Path Order applications available on the County Council's website by March 2008.

2. PROVIDE QUALITY INFORMATION ABOUT RIGHTS OF WAY

- continue to update the Definitive Map and Statement for legal events and related boundary and descriptive changes.

- continue to provide prompt and authoritative rights of way information to potential developers and outside agencies.

- develop a 'Public Rights of Way Guide for Developers' by March 2008.

3. PROMOTE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK

- work closely with local planning authorities and site developers at an early stage of planning development to reduce the impact of future built development on the rights of way network and to secure improvements wherever possible.

Theme 5: Encourage greater use of the rights of way network by engendering an understanding of the benefits associated with outdoor recreation.

Issues

The benefits of outdoor recreation to health, sustainable transport, the rural economy and the quality of people's lives are well established. We propose to encourage more people to use the countryside by promoting a better understanding of these benefits through the County Council's website. However, research and our consultation exercise have shown that many users are deterred from accessing the countryside by a number of factors.

The main deterrents to access in Staffordshire have been identified as the lack of information about what is available, poor signposting and waymarking, overgrowing vegetation, a general lack of information and poor path furniture. Many of these physical barriers are addressed by our strategies to improve the condition and accessibility of the network. However, as well as these physical barriers, there are also a number of perceptual and cultural barriers which deter potential users. People belonging to ethnic minorities, in particular, are often unaware of their rights and do not, therefore, visit the countryside. These barriers include lack of knowledge about their and others' rights, concerns about aggressive landowners and fear of livestock. Many of these fears are unwarranted, but, nevertheless, need to be addressed. We propose to address these issues through our involvement with the Black Environment Network's Rainbow Countryside Scheme.

The lack of targeted information about where to go and what to expect on routes is a constant complaint, particularly from disabled users. A priority for us over the Plan period will be to focus not only on physical improvements to the network but also on the quality of information about the routes and facilities available, particularly for people with disabilities. Specifically, The Peak District National Park Authority has been working closely with Derbyshire County Council to promote sustainable routes for disabled motorised vehicle

users. They have expressed the desire to explore options to extend this work within Staffordshire.

Evidence and Support

- 12% of SCC User Survey respondents cited lack of confidence or personal safety as a deterrent.
- 14% of SCC User Survey respondents are deterred by 'feeling unwelcome'.
- 26.5% of SCC User Survey respondents are deterred by physical obstructions.
- 13% of SCC User Survey respondents cited not knowing where to go as a deterrent.
- 29% of SCC User Survey respondents cited lack of information as a deterrent.
- The lack of response from ethnic minorities confirms that this group is difficult to reach.

Current Relevant Work

Information: An extensive range of walks information is provided by local authorities, parish councils and voluntary groups. The County Council itself has developed numerous routes and guides (including facilities for the disabled) together with a very successful programme of guided walks throughout the County. The County Council also funds the publication of walks information through the CPI.

Website: Information and advice about rights of way is made available on the County Council's website, as well as information about promoted routes and circular walks.

Promoted Routes: Routes of regional and local significance in the County such as the Staffordshire Way and the Way for the Millennium provide a major resource for walkers, particularly tourists and visitors. There are also well-established and promoted walks within and from managed public access land throughout the County. Path maintenance work is prioritised in favour of these higher profile routes.

Wherever possible, the County Council attempts to compensate for the lack of promoted routes for horse riding and cycling by providing such routes on its own access land and on the greenways.

FUTURE ACTIONS

We will:

1. PROMOTE BETTER UNDERSTANDING

- engage with the public to promote the social and health benefits of walking, riding and cycling through the County Council's website.

2. ENCOURAGE USE

- work in partnership with District and Parish Councils and others to establish and promote circular routes which can be used as part of healthy walking schemes.
- continue to publish the Country Parks Annual Guided Walks Programme.

- promote the value of the path network to ethnic community minority groups through the Rainbow Countryside Scheme.

3. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF INFORMATION

- in partnership with others, identify and publish up to date information on 'easy access' paths on the County Council's website by March 2009.
- revise and publish 'Countryside Facilities for People with Disabilities' by March 2008.

Chapter Five

Implementing the Statement of Action

Implementation of Rights of Way Improvement Plan:

It is widely acknowledged that the major obstacle for rights of way work is the lack of funding. Furthermore, given the current financial climate, securing any additional external funding for the Rights of Way service will be challenging. The County Council does not have the capacity to deliver the improvements in the ROWIP alone. Our aspirations can, therefore, only become a reality by maximising the existing resources available. Partnership working with other agencies is, therefore, fundamental to the success of the ROWIP. We also want to encourage the active participation and involvement of local people and communities to take advantage of the resources and knowledge available at a local level.

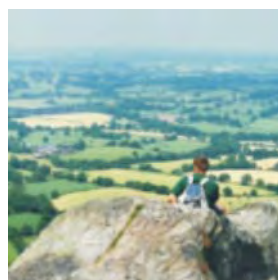
We acknowledge that, with a wide range of interest groups often with conflicting interests, it may be difficult to balance and prioritise available resources and actions. However, the Statement of Action has established the areas for improvement through its key themes. Each theme proposes a series of key actions to help achieve that theme. In time, these actions may need to be revised.

In Appendix N, we have broken down each of the actions into component tasks. Within each of these, the resources necessary, key partners and proposed timescales are identified. Some tasks are ongoing and will be easily achieved in the short-term, whilst others will require substantial funding and co-operation between other parties over a much longer period of time. Over the Plan period, our priority will be to target resources at those projects identified in Appendix N and in the geographical areas where public benefit will be maximised.

We propose to monitor the progress on the projects identified in Appendix N by annual reports at the end of each financial year to the Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton Joint local Access Forum. These reports will also be published on the County Council's website.

The ROWIP must be reviewed within ten years of publication. Depending on progress with the projects contained in the Statement of Action, it is likely that the ROWIP will be reviewed before 2017.

The ROWIP will form an important part of Staffordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and it is our intention that Staffordshire's ROWIP will be reviewed in line with the LTP review process.

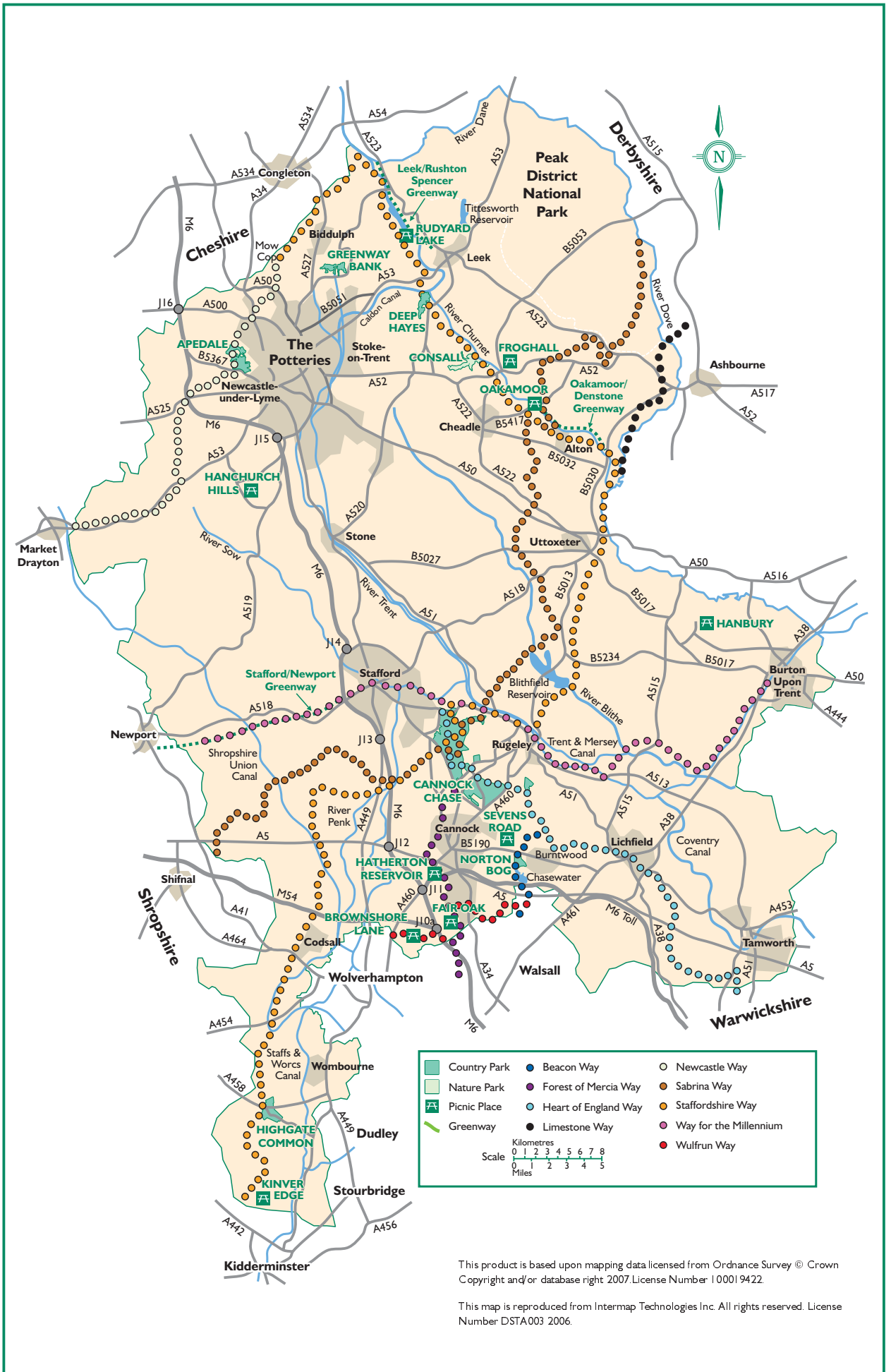


Appendices

Appendix No.	Title
A	Map of Plan Area
B	Social and Economic Benefits of Outdoor Recreation
C	Preparation of ROWIPs, Statutory Guidance Checklist
D	Policy Context
E	Staffordshire, Stoke and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum
F	Spatial Evaluation of Access in Staffordshire
G	Current Access Provision
H	Strategic and Local Promoted Routes
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K	BVPI 178 Performance Indicator Summary
L	Community Paths Initiative
M	Consultations Undertaken in Staffordshire
N	Statement of Action
O	Summary of Consultations in response to draft ROWIP

Appendix A

A Map of the Plan Area



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Appendix B

The Social and Economic Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

The Social and Economic Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

Introduction

Staffordshire's public path network and green open spaces are more than a valuable recreational asset. They have the capacity to support and deliver a range of important health, economic, and sustainable transport objectives to improve people's quality of life.

It is widely acknowledged that contact with nature and the natural environment, and physical outdoor activity, is important for people's health, well-being and quality of life. In addition, spending by people who access the countryside provides significant benefits to local economies. The significant economic benefits that countryside access makes to rural counties like Staffordshire and to tourism generally was evident during the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001 when the path network was closed and visits to the countryside had to be restricted. Many social benefits can also be attributed to countryside access from social interaction to a greater appreciation and understanding of the countryside. These benefits are discussed more fully below.

Health Benefits

There is substantial evidence that links the natural environment with good physical health and psychological well-being. Firstly, the countryside offers many opportunities for physical activity such as walking, horse riding and cycling. Secondly, accessing the countryside makes a direct, positive contribution towards mental health and emotional well-being.

Faber Maunsel⁽¹⁾ in their research stated that exercise in general can provide the following benefits:-

- Reduce the risk of heart attack and death after heart attack
- Reduce the risk of developing long term diseases
- Increase life expectancy
- Increase confidence
- Improve posture and appearance

- Provide natural pain relief
- Have a positive effect on breathing, blood supply, muscles and bones.

The Countryside Recreation Network undertook research on the effects of active participation in the countryside. They conducted a quantitative analysis of the effects of ten various countryside activities on the health of 263 people. Participants were questioned on their fitness, mood and self esteem before and after the activity. The conclusions showed that even low intensity exercise had a beneficial impact on the self esteem and emotional well being of the group. The Report states that green exercise, therefore, has important implications for public and environmental health⁽²⁾. A fitter and emotionally more content population would clearly cost the economy less. Thus increased access to the countryside for all sectors of society should produce substantial economic and public health benefits.

It is acknowledged that many people in the UK already do engage in some form of green exercise. The Walking the Way to Health Initiative has already encouraged in the region of one million people to walk more. The Initiative, a partnership of the British Heart Foundation and the former Countryside Agency (now Natural England) aims to get more people walking in their own communities. The Initiative claims that health experts describe walking as "almost perfect exercise", and that 70% of people in England are not physically active enough to benefit their health⁽³⁾.

However, on the other hand, health data indicates that a substantial proportion of the population is obese and too sedentary. The Government are becoming increasingly concerned about the declining levels of the nation's physical activity and the increasing levels of obesity in children. The reasons cited for this decline are predominantly changes in lifestyle and physical inactivity.

Research undertaken for the Government Office for the North West suggests that this physical inactivity costs England more than £2billion per year⁽⁴⁾. The report states that "a reduction in the proportion of adults ages 16 and over who are sedentary from 37% to 27% could reduce direct

and indirect costs to the economy of £445 million per annum". The report also states that measures to be introduced must not only promote exercise but also ensure it is easily accessible for everyone.

The Department of Health has published advice on making healthier choices easier⁽⁵⁾. This identifies three key principles that underpin the improvement of the nation's health:

- Informed choice for all
- Personalisation of support to make healthy choices; and
- Working in partnership to make health everyone's business.

To derive some of the health benefits outlined above, the Government has recommended that people take an average of 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week to reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, strokes and obesity. One suggestion is to walk at a reasonable pace. Walking is a particularly good form of physical activity because it can be easily incorporated into a person's daily routine, is inexpensive and requires no specialist skills or equipment. Horse riding burns as many calories as walking. Furthermore, the Department of Transport claim that regular cyclists enjoy a fitness level equivalent to that of someone ten years younger⁽⁶⁾.

The 2001 Census reveals that the health of Staffordshire's residents is in line with the national average, with 68.6% of the population being in good health, 22.4% with fairly good health and 8.9% not having good health⁽⁷⁾. The highest proportion of people whose health is not good was recorded in Newcastle under Lyme and Cannock Chase Districts, with 10.6% and 10.2% respectively. By comparison, the percentage number of people in East Staffordshire who do not have good health is only 7.9%.

Staffordshire County Council is committed to promoting healthier lives as part of its vision for Staffordshire. The vision agenda will focus on physical activity as one of the areas of health that really matter⁽⁸⁾.

However, for the public to derive the maximum health benefits from being outdoors they must have attractive, accessible places to go or routes to use that are close to their homes. Open countryside and country parks are valuable, but for people to be motivated to use them, they must be accompanied by promotion.

Economic Benefits

The contribution that countryside access makes to tourism and the rural economy is well-recognised, particularly since the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001. Secondary spending by walkers, cyclists and horse riders on food, accommodation, transport etc., provides significant benefits to local economies in terms of both income and job generation.

The Great Britain Leisure Day Visits Survey 2002/3, which was sponsored by a consortium of agencies with an interest in recreation and tourism in Great Britain, found that 62% of adults in Great Britain had made leisure day visits to the countryside in that year. Leisure day visits are defined as round trips made from home for leisure purposes within a day. Of the total estimated 5.2 billion leisure day trips per year, 24% were to the countryside, equating to 1.3 billion trips. The main activities on each leisure day visit to the countryside were: a meal or a drink 18%; walking, hill walking, rambling 15%; and visiting friends and relatives 14%.

The financial impact of these leisure day visits should not be ignored. The average expenditure per leisure day visit in 2002/3 was £13.70. The injection of this expenditure into the local economy will inevitably stimulate an increase in the level of economic activity that, in turn, will generate further income and employment in the area.

A report produced for Advantage West Midlands and the former Countryside Agency (now Natural England) in 2003 claims that informal recreation in the West Midlands Region accounts for at least £420 million of annual expenditure by leisure day trippers⁽⁹⁾. Combined with an estimated expenditure by casual horse riders of £80 million, the total expenditure is estimated at £500 million.

The Ramblers' Association estimate that walking in England generates between £1,473 million to £2,763 million income annually in rural areas. Furthermore, they estimate that between 180,558 and 245,560 full-time equivalent jobs are supported as a result of expenditure by walkers⁽¹⁰⁾.

Staffordshire attracts in excess of 18 million day visitors and 2 million overnight visitors a year⁽¹¹⁾. Such tourism generates a visitor spend estimated to exceed £600 million per year. Regionally important walking routes such as the Staffordshire Way, the Gritstone Trail and the Heart of England Way, and long-distance horse riding routes such as the Sabrina Way are of particular importance to visitors wishing to explore the Staffordshire countryside. Similarly, outstanding areas of open countryside such as Cannock Chase Country Park and the Peak District National Park are very popular and attract a significant number of visitors each year. It is important for Staffordshire to attract visitors, but also to maintain the sensitive environment that they have come to experience.

The huge growth in the popularity of walking has produced a corresponding demand for publicised routes. The County Council, in partnership with other agencies, has developed numerous routes and guides to encourage greater use of the path network and surrounding countryside.

Social Inclusion

It is widely recognised that participation in outdoor recreation in the countryside is not evenly spread amongst the population. Many surveys and studies have shown that participation in outdoor recreation activities is dominated by white, middle-aged, middle-class people⁽¹²⁾.

"Social exclusion happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, ill-health and family breakdown. When such problems combine they can create a vicious cycle⁽¹³⁾. Whilst social exclusion can happen to anyone, certain groups suffer a particularly high incidence of social exclusion:-

- Young people in low income households
- People who do not work
- People from black and minority ethnic backgrounds
- Disabled people
- Older people without carers

These groups are synonymous with the social groups that are largely absent from the countryside.

Sustainable Travel

Public rights of way are more than a recreational asset. They are also a utilitarian resource in that they provide opportunities for people to access services, in both rural and urban areas, by foot and bicycle avoiding busy roads. However, the car is the most popular mode of travel to work in the County⁽¹¹⁾ and, according to the former Countryside Agency (now Natural England), 25% of all car journeys are less than two miles in length⁽¹⁴⁾.

Car ownership per household in Staffordshire has risen in recent years and is now above the national average at 1.28 cars per household compared to 1.11 for England and Wales in 2001⁽⁷⁾. This has serious implications for the levels of congestion experienced by travellers in Staffordshire.

The County Council faces a significant challenge to encourage people to travel by sustainable modes such as cycling and walking, particularly as most households now have cars. The Traffic and Congestion Strategy in the LTP aims to reduce car travel to work and thereby reduce congestion and improve air quality⁽¹¹⁾. By engendering a culture of using the path network for more utilitarian purposes, the ROWIP can contribute to this objective.

Many schemes and initiatives have already been carried out to encourage people to walk. These include Safer Routes to Schools projects and Walking Buses. Work has also been carried out in Biddulph and Burntwood under the National Cycle Network Links to School programme to develop local links from schools to the NCN.

The County Council is also working in partnership with other agencies to reduce the impact of traffic in areas of high landscape quality such as the Peak District National Park, the National Forest and Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Peak District National Park experiences the highest level of environmental impact from transport of any National Park. Of the 22 million visitor days per year spent in the Park, the vast majority are car driving day trippers⁽¹⁵⁾.

In tandem with these initiatives, we also need to improve the path network to encourage people to walk and cycle by addressing some of the physical barriers that prevent its use such as speed of traffic, lack of crossings, poor connectivity of the network and traffic volume.

In rural areas, the scope for encouraging greater use of the path network for utilitarian journeys is more limited because of the lack of footways. However, there is scope for developing better links between public transport and the countryside access network to reduce the number of car journeys made both by rural residents and day trippers.

Education

Many social benefits can be attributed to accessing the countryside from social interaction to a greater understanding and appreciation of the countryside.

Countryside access covers a wide variety of disciplines including wildlife and ecology, the natural and built environment, farming, natural history and geology. Countryside access, therefore, is a useful tool for teachers to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The Countryside Foundation for Education believe that:- *"many teachers, those responsible for their training and those who work with them to promote links with the wider community, share the belief that more needs to be done to make young people conscious of the issues facing the countryside today and to develop a reasoned understanding of those issues"*⁽¹⁶⁾.

Education is traditionally viewed within the context of school visits. However, there are benefits to be gained from improving education across all age ranges, so called *life long learning*. Increased access to the countryside helps to promote greater awareness and understanding of the needs of both users and land managers and also helps to increase tolerance between them. Furthermore, increasing people's awareness of environmental issues could assist in the cultural changes that may be necessary in the future to address climate change issues that are currently subject to increasing national and international debate.

These wider ranging benefits are in addition to the obvious benefits accruing from furthering both users' and land managers' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. It is apparent that some users (and probably non-users) are deterred from accessing the countryside due to a lack of knowledge of their rights of access. The promotion of users' responsibility and their "code of conduct" is key to maintaining the support and co-operation of the land owning community in the provision of public access.

Conclusion

Access to the countryside provides important social and economic benefits for people and communities. These include potential contributions to sustainable transport and mobility, benefits for local business through recreation and tourism, improvements in public health and encouragement of social interaction at the community level, especially of potentially disadvantaged groups.

The benefits that countryside access can contribute to the health, wealth and well-being of urban and rural communities ensures the significance of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and its associated Statement of Action, in achieving the Staffordshire County Council's vision, identified in *Shaping the Future of Staffordshire 2006 2021, The Sustainable Strategy for the County*;

"Staffordshire will be a place where local communities are enabled to develop in places where people want to live, work, visit and invest now and in 2021".

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Appendix C

Preparation of ROWIPs, Statutory Guidance Checklist

Statutory Guidance Checklist Reference

Process/Stage	Statutory Guidance Requirements	Statutory Guidance Ref.	ROWIP Page. Ref.
Context, scope and preparation of ROWIP	A ROWIP is produced before November 2007	2.1.1 2.1.3	4
	The ROWIP covers whole HA area	2.1.1	3
	The LAF is involved at an early stage	2.3.15	5
Assessing the network and needs of different users	The extent to which ROW meet the present and likely future needs of the public is assessed.	2.1.1	9
	Opportunities provided by ROW for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and enjoyment, are detailed	2.1.1	3
	The accessibility of ROW to blind, partially sighted and people with mobility problems and their carers is detailed.	2.1.1 2.2.15	12
	Conserving and enhancing land in AONBs is considered	2.1.12	14
	The requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC (27/06/01) concerning Strategic Environmental Assessment are considered.	2.1.13	5
Making the Assessment	Any other matters relating to ROW as the Secretary of State may direct are considered.	2.1.1	4
	The Highway Authority has consulted: Adjoining Highway Authorities Each District and Parish Council in the area National Park Authority Local Access Forum(s) Natural England Such persons as the Secretary of State may prescribe.	2.3.12	6

Process/Stage	Statutory Guidance Requirements	Statutory Guidance Ref.	ROWIP Page. Ref.
The Statement of Action	A Statement of Action is produced	2.4.1	151 - 157
	Analysis of the Assessment forms the basis of the Statement of Action	2.4.1	
	Proposals for the Management of local Rights of Way are included.	2.4.1	151 - 157
	Proposals for securing an improved network are included	2.4.1	151 - 157
	Advice from the Local Access Forum has been taken into account	2.1.14	89 - 95
	The needs of people with mobility problems have been taken into account with regard to the erection of barriers on footpaths and bridleways, under Section 147 of the Highways Act 1980	2.2.19	12
Publicising and Publishing the Plan	Two or more local newspapers contain details of how and where the draft ROWIP may be inspected and how representations can be made.	2.5.1	7
	A copy of the ROWIP is available for inspection free of charge at Highways Authority Office.	2.5.1	7
	When requested, the ROWIP is supplied free of charge, or at a reasonable charge.	2.5.1	7
	Highway Authority has considered all representations received.	2.5.4	-

Appendix D

Policy Context

National, Regional and Local Policies Relevant to the ROWIP

National Policies

The Government's **Rural Strategy 2004** acknowledges that by enabling more people to enjoy the countryside at first hand their health and general enjoyment of life improves. The Strategy aims to enable more people from a wide range of backgrounds to enjoy the countryside, whilst preserving the environment for future generations.

Clearly, the Government acknowledges sustainable public access to the countryside as important. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan has a potentially significant role to play in delivering the social inclusion and sustainability related policies of the Rural Strategy.

Another important area of central government policy that is underpinned by the ROWIP is in agriculture and countryside management. From 2005, agricultural subsidies have been paid on condition that recipients adhere to a range of practices designed to ensure compliance with environmental legislation and to achieve good agricultural and environmental management. **Cross-compliance** extends to the need to ensure that the public path network remains open and free from obstruction.

Under the Higher Level of the **Environmental Stewardship Scheme**, administered by DEFRA, incentives are paid to farmers who provide permissive access. Furthermore, in order to receive payments under either the Higher Level or Entry Level Schemes of Environmental Stewardship farmers must meet their legal obligations in respect of statutory public rights of way.

The **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000** introduced measures that will extend the public's ability to enjoy the countryside whilst endeavouring to provide safeguards for landowners and occupiers. It created a new statutory right of access to open country and registered common land and introduced measures to improve the rights of way network. Greater protection was given to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), better management

arrangements were provided for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and wildlife enforcement legislation was strengthened.

Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) is concerned with 'Planning for Open Space and Recreation' and the protection and enhancement of public rights of way are mentioned. Paragraph 32 states:

“Rights of way are an important recreational facility, which local authorities should protect and enhance. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks.”

Furthermore, paragraph 33 states:

“Planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space, sports and recreational provision. Local authorities will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs. It is essential that local authorities have undertaken detailed assessments of needs and audits of existing facilities, and set appropriate local standards in order to justify planning obligations.”

There is potential for the ROWIP to benefit from PPG 17. In exercising its development control powers, a local authority can encourage the applicant to provide specified public benefits as part of a development. This is commonly referred to as a Section 106 Agreement.

Planning Policy Statement 7 also makes reference to public rights of way. Paragraph 26 states that “..... local planning authorities should ensure that planning policies LDDs (Local Development Documents) address opportunities to be found in the countryside around all urban areas.” It goes on to suggest that “This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through support for country parks and community forests)” Paragraph 32 relates to equine-related activities and is also relevant. It states that “Local planning authorities should set out policies for supporting equine enterprises.”

Regional Policies

Several government agencies operate at regional level and have policies that are relevant to the ROWIP. One policy document of particular relevance is the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS)

Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG 11) was prepared by the West Midlands Local Government Association and was published in June 2004 by ODPM. It became the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (WMRSS) and a part of the statutory Development Plan on enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in September 2004. Local authorities must take the Strategy into account when preparing Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans so as to ensure the delivery of a coherent framework for development.

In addition to influencing the development and use of land in the region, the WMRSS intends to inform the development of other strategies and programmes across the public sector such as health, education and crime reduction.

The following policies within the Quality of the Environment, Transport and Accessibility Chapters of the Strategy impact on the ROWIP:

Policy QE4B: Development Plan policies should create and enhance urban greenspace networks by:

1. Ensuring adequate protection is given to key features such as parks, footpaths and cycleways, river valleys, canals and open spaces;
2. Identifying areas where new physical linkages between these areas need to be forged; and
3. Linking new urban greenspace to the wider countryside to encourage the spread of species.

Policy T3: Development Plans and local transport plans should provide greater opportunities for walking and cycling by:

1. Developing safe, secure, direct, convenient and attractive networks which connect town centres, local facilities, educational premises, public transport interchanges, residential and employment areas;
2. Giving pedestrians and cyclists priority in residential areas and town centres;
3. Providing links between smaller settlements and centres and development of greenways and quiet roads;
4. Developing the National Cycle Network;
5. Making the most effective use of canal towpaths;
6. Expanding 'cycle and ride' and cycle carriage on public transport;
7. Ensuring that new development and infrastructure proposals improve walking and cycling access.

The WMRSS is programmed to be subject to a Partial Revision in phases. While certain aspects of development and associated infrastructure provision, including aspects of transport and accessibility, are included in phase two which formally commenced in November 2005, regionally significant environmental issues, critical rural services and recreational provision are not due for consideration until the third phase.

Local Policies

Local Transport Plan

Highway authorities are required by statute to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The first full Plans were produced in 2000 and run for five years. These Plans consider the whole of the transport network.

Statutory guidance published by DEFRA stresses the importance of integrating the ROWIP into the Local Transport Planning process. The ROWIP is to be fully integrated within the LTP by 2010.

Government guidance states that the integration of these two Plans will:

- clearly establish the shared aims and establish a definite link between ROWIPs and LTPs;
- ensure that as public highways, rights of way are embraced by the LTP process and recognised in LTPs as a key ingredient in the development of an integrated transport network that provides choice in a variety of transport modes;
- recognise the invaluable role rights of way can play in assisting LTPs to achieve the shared priority and wider quality of life objectives;
- strengthen and facilitate the long-term sustainability of rights of way in the longer term and reduce the quantity of plans produced by an authority.

The Local Transport Plan for the period 2006-2011 sets out the strategy and programmes for transport to meet a series of shared objectives which include:

- **Tackling congestion** by more effective use of congested road space and increasing the use of buses, walking and cycling
- **Improving air quality**
- **Safer roads** through local safety schemes and speed management activities as well as continuing road safety education, training and publicity campaigns
- Improving the **quality of life**
- **Accessibility** which includes enabling people to access employment, education, health care and facilities by foot or cycle.

The ROWIP has the potential to contribute to all of these shared objectives and in particular by:

- identifying those routes and facilities, which require improvement
- ensuring that they are maintained in a more usable condition
- improving public rights of way in both urban and rural areas
- making routes safer, more secure and more attractive. (Many users identify safety as one of the primary reasons for not walking or cycling).

The LTP presents an important opportunity for developing the Rights of Way network, not least because of the funding opportunities that it offers. Public rights of way tend to be viewed as a recreational resource. However, the LTP formally recognises and acknowledges the important role that public paths can play within the overall transport network, by providing safe routes to schools, off-road routes for more vulnerable users and by providing more sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling.

Shaping the Future of Staffordshire 2006 - 2021 The Sustainable Strategy for the County

The County Council, through the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership, has developed *Shaping the Future of Staffordshire 2006 - 2021 The Sustainable Strategy for the County*.

The Strategy's overall vision that "Staffordshire will be a place where local communities are enabled to develop in places where people want to live, work, visit and invest now and in 2021". The Strategy sets the direction for the County for the next 15 years and provides a framework for all Plans in Staffordshire which reflects the blocks of the Local Area Agreement.

Local Area Agreement

The emergent Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement between central government and local authorities and other partners in an area. It provides a framework for addressing national policies while focussing on local needs. The Staffordshire LAA must be agreed and completed by March 2007 and is currently based on five priority areas or blocks;

- Children and Young People
- Healthier Communities and Old People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Economic Development and Enterprise
- Sustainable Development

Within each block, high level outcomes are detailed, to which the ROWIP can contribute either directly or indirectly. It is the Sustainable Development Block that is directly relevant to the ROWIP, the two relevant outcomes being:

- Enhance and ensure access for all to environments that are valued, protected and enjoyed
- A sustainable transport system which improves access to essential services for all, reducing the reliance on the car.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan

The current Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan, 1996-2011, includes a number of policies on transportation, recreation and improving the environment and public access generally. Under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the contents of the Structure Plan are saved for three years until September 2007 and are part of the statutory Development Plan unless they conflict with the provisions of WMRSS, the more recently published strategic planning policy statement. The Regional Assembly as the Regional Planning Body will have to make the case for the continuation in force of any Structure Plan policies beyond September 2007.

Minerals Local Plan 1994 - 2006

The Staffordshire Minerals Local Plan covers the period 1994 to 2006. It sets out a detailed land use policy framework for the extraction of all types of minerals in the relevant area. The impact that mineral operations and restoration proposals have upon public access is recognised in the Plan. Policies 9 and 19 stress the importance of protecting and encouraging the enhancement of public access:

MLP Policy 9:

Seeks provision in restoration and aftercare proposals that:

- (2) take account of the pre working character of the site, its surroundings, the landscape setting and, where possible, provide for enhancement of the general quality of the landscape and local environment.
- (3) make provision for recreation or amenity after uses, where appropriate.

MLP Policy 19:

Seeks the consideration of the effects of proposed developments on:

- (1) Country Parks or other areas set aside for public recreation.

Policy 54, which relates to the crushed rock quarries in the Cauldon area of the Moorlands also aspires to improve public access:

MLP Policy 54:

The Mineral Planning Authority will encourage the submission of planning applications which provide for co-ordinated working and restoration of adjoining limestone quarries and improvements to the environment and community as listed below. The Mineral Planning Authority will favourably consider a planning application provided that the proposal would not cause an unacceptable adverse impact, that it is compatible with the Development Plan and that its effect is:

- (1) to reduce environmental and landscape impacts and to produce a satisfactory landform on completion by implementation of appropriate working and restoration proposals;
- (2) to secure the maximisation of transportation of materials by rail, where practicable;
- (3) to reduce the environmental and highways impacts of road transportation;

- (4) to protect and secure the beneficial long term future management of SSSIs and other sites of nature conservation value;
- (5) to reduce the environmental and community impacts of site operations; and
- (6) to provide, where appropriate, increased public access, interpretative trails and environmental improvements directly related to the particular development proposal.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Waste Local Plan 1998-2011

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Waste Local Plan 1998-2011 sets out a clear statement of waste planning policies that provide a framework for the consideration of planning applications for the development of waste management facilities. Policy 3 highlights the need to consider the impact of waste development proposals on Public Rights of Way.

Policy 3: General Protection

Planning permission for the development of waste management facilities will not be granted where the proposed development would cause materially harmful impacts, except where the material planning benefits outweigh the material planning objections.

In determining the impact of the proposed development, consideration will be given to the effect of the proposals on the following:

- (i) People and local communities;
- (ii) Natural or cultural assets;
- (iii) Protected wildlife;
- (iv) The countryside;
- (v) The landscape;
- (vi) The Green Belt;
- (vii) The highway network and other public rights of way;
- (viii) Public open space (including recreational and sporting facilities);
- (ix) Air, soil and water resources;
- (x) Agricultural land;
- (xi) Protected trees and hedgerows; and,
- (xii) Any other interests of acknowledged importance.

District-wide Policies and Strategies

Local Development Frameworks

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, introduced a new development plans system. Each local planning authority now has to produce a Local Development Framework comprising various documents including statutory Local Development Documents. The Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the district wide Local Plans that all authorities in Staffordshire have adopted. Some districts are completing the reviews of old style Local Plans but all are commencing work on the preparation of their LDF.

In Staffordshire this includes Stoke-on-Trent, as a unitary authority, and the eight District Councils. The documents provide a policy framework against which planning applications can be assessed. Proposals for development should respect these policies and seek to accommodate important features of the site, including public rights of way.

The documents also set out the circumstances under which the authority may seek "planning gain" - that is the opportunity to use the development to make improvements to the local area - and the types of improvements that may be sought from developers. The types of improvements may be improvements to the highway network, including rights of way, and amenity value.

However, planning gain is opportunistic and relies on developer contribution. It is, therefore, limited and cannot be relied upon to provide improvements to the network where and when required.

District and Borough Local Plans

As mentioned above, current Local Plans are being reviewed and replaced by Local Development Framework (LDF) documents. However, all eight local planning authorities have key themes and objectives in their existing Local Plans to which the ROWIP can apply. They all have key aims and objectives within their central strategies regarding the protection of open space and green belt land, the encouragement of

sustainable travel and the enhancement of leisure resources, areas of conservation value and countryside access.

Community Strategies

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on all local authorities to prepare "community strategies" for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. In general, the Community Strategies seek to promote:

- healthier lifestyles
- more sustainable transport
- economic development through tourism

All eight District Councils within Staffordshire have, or are developing, long term Community Strategies through local strategic partnerships. The role of public access and the use of public rights of way is highlighted in some of these strategies:

- *"Ensure access to cultural and tourism activities for all"* (**Cannock Chase District Council**)
- *"Improve health promotion and facilities"* (**East Staffordshire Borough Council**)
- *"Identify opportunities to encourage greater physical activity amongst those groups who need it"* (**Lichfield District Council**)
- *"Focus on Key Priority Areas reducing anti social behaviour maintaining wildlife sites"* (**South Staffordshire District Council**)
- *"Provide a rich environment for local people to enjoy with the creation of a number of access and information improvements"* (**Stafford Borough Council**)
- *"Ensure that the environment is protected and improved and is an attractive place to be"* (**Stafford Borough Council**)

- *"Ensure that everyone who wishes has access to services, learning opportunities, health provision and leisure activities in a way that is sustainable"* (**Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**)
- *"Develop a project to create local nature reserves, improve access to open space and encourage walking and cycling by improving routes, signage and information"* (**Tamworth Borough Council**)

Other Plans

Some land may benefit from statutory designation. For example, this may be as a result of its nature conservation value or its archaeological importance. Such sites may be subject to special protection and management regimes and may be covered by strategic plans.

Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004-2009

The Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies in the southern part of Staffordshire, straddling the boundaries of Cannock Chase District, South Staffordshire District, Lichfield District and Stafford Borough. Section 89 of the CROW Act made it a duty of local authorities to produce a management plan for AONBs within their area.

The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan was published in 2004 and aims to ensure that Cannock Chase AONB is conserved and enhanced for the future. The plan identifies seven *Vision Principles*, all of which have varying relevance to public access. One such principle, with specific relevance to the ROWIP, aspires to:

- "Create a place of enjoyment for everyone, providing opportunities for quiet recreation that contributes positively to physical and mental well being through:-
- Fostering a welcoming customer oriented culture and reciprocal customer responsibilities;
 - Encouraging recreation activities towards areas capable of absorbing impacts through positive management;

- Ensuring access networks are well maintained and waymarked; and
- Improving quality of access through measures such as ROWIPs.”

Five policies within the Management Plan are in clear alignment with the ROWIP:

Policy 19: Improve awareness, understanding and appreciation of the AONB through the co-ordinated provision of information, interpretation and art in identified visitor locations.

Policy 24: A co-ordinated approach to visitor and recreation management will be used to ensure that conflicts between users and the environment are minimised.

Policy 26: Visitor use of the AONB will be managed through the improvement of access networks to minimise degradation of sensitive areas, such as heathlands.

Policy 40: To further the aims of the AONB designation, initiatives to increase the use of public and non motorised transport will be proposed.

Policy 41: Maintain and develop effective partnerships to co-ordinate the management of the AONB.

The Peak District National Park Local Plan

The Peak District National Park Local Plan contains the following specific references to public rights of way and their development and protection:

Policy LT20: Seeks to protect and enhance public rights of way affected by development. Where retention of the definitive line is not possible, the developer will be required to provide an alternative route that:

- is of equal or better quality than the original
- has a similar or improved surface appropriate to its setting

- wherever appropriate, is of benefit to users with special needs, including those with disabilities
- is available before the definitive route is affected
- is as convenient and attractive as the original

Policy LT21: Seeks the development of three specific routes for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians, together with other improvements to the footpath, cycleway and bridlepath network to address and deficiencies identified.

Peak District National Park Management Plan 2000-2005

The Peak District National Park Management Plan 2000-2005 seeks to guide the management of the National Park in a way that will assist in the fulfilment of the Park's purpose, that is:

- To conserve and enhance the National Park's special qualities;
- To provide opportunities for their enjoyment and understanding.

The Plan consists of a strategy which is aimed at providing a framework for other plans and initiatives, for all partners. The elements of the Plan relevant to the ROWIP are enlarged upon in the Peak District Recreation Strategy.

Peak District Recreation Strategy

The recreational themes, objectives and actions arising from the National Park Management Plan were subsequently developed in the Peak District Recreation Strategy.

This Strategy is underpinned by six key themes:

- Sustainability
- Opportunity
- Accessibility
- Enjoyment
- Understanding
- Partnership

The Strategy states a vision for the Park, "to provide all local people and visitors with access to *high quality* leisure and recreation opportunities" through a Framework of Action intended to achieve their objectives.

The Framework of Action is all directly relevant to the ROWIP, however, action points of particular relevance include:

- 2.3 ensure the public rights of way network and other recreational routes are well managed and maintained.
- 2.6 contribute to the preparation of Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

Forest of Mercia

The Forest of Mercia is one of 12 community forests within England. The community forest programme was established in 1990 by the then Countryside Commission as a pilot project to demonstrate the potential contribution of environmental improvement to economic and social regeneration. The Forest of Mercia is a partnership project between Staffordshire County Council, the Forestry Commission, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, Cannock Chase Council, and South Staffordshire Council. One of the key tasks of the FOM is to provide new opportunities for leisure, recreation and other cultural activities in line with its government approved Forest Plan, a 30 year vision of landscape-scale improvements.

National Forest Strategy 2004-2014

The National Forest encompasses an area of approximately 200 square miles in the heart of England spanning parts of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and parts of East Staffordshire District and Lichfield District in Staffordshire. The Forest was conceived by the then Countryside Commission in 1987 with an intention to demonstrate the many benefits that trees and woodland can bestow.

The National Forest Strategy 2004-2014 was published in 2004, by the National Forest Company (NFC), following the review of the Forest's previous strategy. The 2004-2014

Strategy identifies the aim of creating a major new resource for sport and recreation that will appeal to local residents, day visitors and long stay visitors alike. Within this aspiration is the intention to develop an extensive network of Forest sites with access that enables visitors to walk and cycle in a safe environment. The Strategy contains a number of policies which are complementary to those of the ROWIP.

Central Rivers Initiative

The term "Central Rivers" refers to a 13 mile stretch of the river Trent and the river Tame in Staffordshire, between Burton on Trent and Tamworth. As a result of its central location and the presence of substantial natural reserves of sand and gravel, the area has experienced considerable development pressures through industrial development and quarrying.

The area has the potential for significant landscape and ecological improvement, and, significant to the ROWIP, recreation value.

In 1997, a partnership of local authorities, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and others was forged, with partners contributing financial and staff resources to set up the Central Rivers Initiative.

The Central Rivers Initiative attempts to find the right balance between landscape improvements, industrial and economic development, the creation of new habitats, the protection of the livelihood of farmers and other people working in the area, and the provision of new recreational opportunities, access being intrinsic to the latter. It has a long-term aim to establish a footpath from the County boundary in the Tame Valley in the south, to the boundary in the Trent Valley, north of Burton-on-Trent. This will contribute to the Environment Agency's proposed long-distance footpath from the centre of Birmingham to the Humber Estuary, beside the rivers Tame and Trent.

Appendix E

Staffordshire, Stoke & Wolverhampton Local Access Forum

Local Access Forum

Background to Local Access Forums

Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required Local Highway Authorities and National Park Authorities to establish advisory bodies to be known as Local Access Forums.

The Forums are required to advise about improvements in public access to land in their area for open-air recreational purposes.

Local Access Forums have a wide role in advising access authorities (local highway authorities and National Park authorities) and other bodies (such as Central Government, Countryside Agency, Forestry Commission, English Nature, English Heritage and District Councils) on managing the public's right of access to open country and registered common land, and the management and improvement of public rights of way, as well as open air recreation issues more generally within the local area.

In his speech to Local Access Forums in the North West on 14 November 2005, the Rt. Hon Jim Knight MP, Minister for Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity, set out his vision, and said that he wanted:

“to see all Forums regarded by decision makers as a valued source of independent, incisive, informed and influential advice on access and open air recreation issues.”

Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum

The first meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Local Access Forum took place on 11 September 2003. The Joint Local Access Forum covers the area of Staffordshire outside of the Peak District National Park, together with that of Stoke on Trent City. Wolverhampton City Council joined the arrangement in July 2005, making it one of the largest joint Local Access Forums in the country. The varied interests of the maximum of 22 Forum members give a broad, balanced scope of expertise and knowledge available to the three appointing authorities when seeking advice on access issues.

Since the first meeting, the Forum has considered many consultations from DEFRA relating to issues associated with access to the countryside, as well as considering provisional maps of Open Country and Common Land. Training has been provided by Staffordshire County Council on Public Rights of Way and advice sought on various matters, including policies relating to priorities in dealing with both Rights of Way obstructions in the context of Section 63 of CROW 2000 and applications under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for modification of the Definitive Map.

The Forum has been continually informed of progress with regard to the development of the ROWIP. At their meeting on 18 February 2005, advice was sought from the Forum on a proposed timetable for the plan development. Having been subsequently adopted, this timetable has assisted both Staffordshire County Council and the forum to monitor progress of the plan development.

The views of the Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum, (the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Local Access Forum at the time) were sought to assist in the production of an interim statement for inclusion in the Local Transport Plan submission in March 2005.

Members of the Forum were asked to prioritise a top 20 from a raft of diverse proposed actions, thus identifying priorities from the varying interests, knowledge and experience of JLAF members.

The main themes emerging from this exercise can be summarised as follows:-

- Increase the opportunities for community involvement in the care, improvement and promotion of the access network.
- Work to improve the connectivity of the network for all types of users.
- Increase promotion of the access network.
- Adopt a zero tolerance of unlawful obstructions and seek the least restrictive option in any licensed obstructions.

- Increase the frequency of planned maintenance on paths in close proximity of urban areas.

The full 'Top 20' is included below.

The exercise above assisted in the identification of a number of interim policies and an overall objective, detailed below, for improving public access. These policies link with the Transport Shared Priority Objectives and wider Quality of Life objectives associated with the LTP (shown in bold).

Key Objective

'To ensure greater use of and accessibility to the public path network by people of all ages and abilities in order to increase enjoyment of open-air recreation and exercise and as a means of promoting sustainable transport.'

The Key Policies proposed are:-

Improve the condition of the public path network so as to increase its attractiveness to as wide a range of people as possible by replacing existing licensed stiles with kissing gates, where applicable. People will be more easily able to walk between homes and services, thereby **increasing accessibility**.

Improve unsuitable path surfaces on the public path network, particularly those areas in close proximity to population so as to maximise opportunities for people to make short journeys to facilities and services on foot or cycle thereby **increasing accessibility**.

Improve links between existing multi-user routes by creating paths or upgrading existing paths to establish more multi-user routes that link with homes and facilities such as local shops, schools, workplaces and service and recreational facilities, thereby **reducing congestion** and giving a better **quality of life**.

Engage and encourage more local communities and volunteers to become involved in the improvement and promotion of their local path network by expanding the existing Community Paths Initiative to give local communities a **better quality of life**.

Ensure that the path network is improved and not detrimentally affected by major development proposals and opportunities to encourage people to walk, cycle or gain access to bus or rail services are optimised, thereby **reducing congestion**.

Encourage greater use of the path network and public access land by promoting a range of well-signposted and waymarked routes for use by walkers, cyclists and horseriders to encourage shifts in chosen modes of transport away from car usage and thus **reduce congestion** and **improve air quality**. The provision of such routes, predominantly off road, will also assist in the achievement of **road safety** targets.

Access to the Countryside

Proposed Actions for Prioritisation

Priorities Identified by Members of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Local Access Forum, January 2005.

- We will increase by 75% the funding available for the Community Paths Initiative.
- We will introduce a Parish-based Path Warden Scheme using persons appointed by the Parish or Volunteers who will monitor and promote the local network.
- We will adopt a zero tolerance approach relating to the unlawful obstruction of Public Rights of Way.
- We will ensure all open countryside and common land is adequately accessed and signed where appropriate.
- We will examine the applications to modify the Definitive Map and give priority to those applications which if determined would contribute significantly to the recreational value or safety of the highway network.
- Permissive Routes - We will consider payment to land owners and occupiers for the provision of permissive routes, where need is demonstrated, subject to guaranteed minimum periods of availability and subject to such areas being identified as areas of search.
- We will sign the Cannock Chase Country Park Heathlands with low level route signage from standard signage at car parks so that users can be confident of distance and route finding. The AONB will not be promoted by the Highway Authority as a tourist destination.
- We will seek to keep the number of licensed obstructions (stiles and gates) to a minimum, the preference being for a gap except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that a gap or kissing gate or hunting gate could not be utilised.
- We will review and publish the Staffordshire County Council Countryside Guide for Facilities for the Disabled and invite all tiers of Local Government to contribute to it.
- We will seek to improve the coherence of cycling and multi user networks by establishing and promoting routes away from carriageways.
- We will seek to identify and implement circular multi user routes of approx. 16 km. length within each district.
- We will seek to identify gaps in the access network and explore opportunities to eliminate such gaps.
- We will upgrade the former railways, in our ownership, to provide off-road cycling and access for people with wheelchairs or electric scooters.
- We will seek to maximise opportunities for voluntary works which complement the access network.
- We will identify routes based on parking or lay-by facilities and endeavour to provide parking, for disabled persons, with access to walking or access land.
- In conjunction with other parties, we will support and promote a minimum of 52 guided walks or countryside events each year.
- We will increase the frequency of planned maintenance on paths in proximity to urban and suburban centres where users are less likely to be equipped for typical countryside walking.
- We will prioritise the development and promotion of routes from urban centres to countryside, regardless of whether circuits can be made.
- Within 3 years we will conduct a complete audit of all public paths to establish potential access improvements for people with mobility impairments.

- In assessing the relative value of land when making planning decisions, we will encourage the Planning Authority to take account, inter alia, of its value as an access resource, and ease of access to it along rights of way.
- We will seek to ensure that responsible use of access to the countryside is encouraged and landowners' rights are respected.
- We will liaise with South Staffordshire Waterworks Company to create a circular walk with car parking, based on Blithfield Reservoir.
- We will extend the Stafford-Newport Greenway traffic-free route to Newport.
- We will replace oak post signage with long-life metal signs with pennant arms to ensure prominence and durability.
- We will develop circular trails for pedestrians and cyclists based upon the main centres of population and areas of social deprivation, which are accessible by foot, cycle or public transport.
- We will work with the Forestry Commission to improve provision for carriage drivers on Forestry Commission land in return for reasonable payment by such users.
- We will identify the following areas of need within the Joint Local Access Forum, being areas in proximity to populace but sparse in rights of way provision and in areas where biological sensitivity and agricultural interests can be maintained. In such areas, Rangers will be charged with identifying potential improvements to access. (The areas of search will be highlighted from mapping).
- We will use local projects for local management and delivery, based on agreed service levels with the Forest of Mercia, Newcastle Countryside Project and the Green Arc Project.

Appendix F

Spatial Evaluation of Access in Staffordshire

Spatial Evaluation of Access in Staffordshire

We have undertaken a spatial evaluation to assist in the assessment of the adequacy of access provision to meet current and likely future demand.

We have identified the primary drivers for access as proximity of population together with types of landscape and other significant physical and geographical characteristics which we have termed 'scenic amenity'. The resultant data has facilitated the production of maps detailing the anticipated relative demand for access in any given area.

The model that we have developed is based on the work of Professor George Kay⁽⁴⁾ and a Priority Areas Mapping Project undertaken by Staffordshire County Council in 2004⁽²³⁾.

Proximity of Population

We have mapped the demand for countryside access anticipated from the proximity of population. For the purposes of this assessment, the County has been mapped into 1 km² land parcels. Each land parcel has been rated according to its proximity to population, both within and outside the County. A score of 10 has been given to 1 km² land parcels within 1 km of the urban fringe, reflecting the higher anticipated demand. The remaining land parcels have been scored as follows:

Proximity	Score
1 km - 3 km	8
3 km - 8 km	6
8 km+	4

For display purposes, the results from this exercise have been interpolated into a raster dataset (see footnote).

The resultant map is shown as:

'Demand Anticipated from Proximity to Population'

However, whilst walkers and cyclists use the network close to where they live, horse riders tend to travel further afield. It is the proximity of the horse stabling or facilities for horse box

parking which influence their demand. Ideally any geographic model illustrating demand by horse riders would be based on this information; however, it has proved extremely difficult to develop any definitive dataset detailing the location of all stabling facilities. National and local research suggests that the demand for horse riding routes is also directly proportional to the proximity of population.

Scenic Amenity

In 2000, Staffordshire County Council published Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Planning for Landscape Change*⁽¹⁴⁾. This Guidance is aimed at both planning officers and developers within the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan area, to assist in the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of rural landscapes. The Guidance furthers the work undertaken by the former Countryside Agency and the identification of Regional Character Areas, with the mapping and description of 22 Landscape Character Types within the Structure Plan area. The approach taken in this work allowed for an assessment to be made of the quality of the landscape in relation to its landscape character type and for this quality to be mapped.

The likely demand for access in areas of the County based on their scenic amenity has been assessed by mapping the County into 1 km² land parcels. Each land parcel has been rated from 1 to 10 according to its scenic amenity using the landscape quality assessment within the Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Planning for Landscape Change* as a proxy. Areas containing a recognised viewpoint have been attributed a rating of 10 regardless, on the basis that these areas may not be intrinsically attractive but are worth visiting because they give a good view of attractive countryside.

Again for display purposes, the results from this exercise have been interpolated into a raster dataset (see footnote).

The resultant map is shown as:

'Demand Anticipated from Scenic Amenity'

Aggregate Demand

Having rated 1 km² areas with regard to the relative demand for access that we would anticipate from both the proximity of population and the scenic amenity, we have then rated the relative, aggregate demand that we would anticipate by combining these two ratings.

The resultant map is shown as:

'Anticipated Aggregate Demand'

Provision

To facilitate a whole Network Analysis for the differing user types we have included the following linear access provision for each type of user in this model.

	Walkers	Cyclists	Horse Riders	Motorised Users
Definitive Footpaths	✓			
Definitive Bridlepaths	✓	✓	✓	
Definitive BOATs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greenways	✓	✓		
Canal Towpaths	✓	✓		
Cycle Tracks	✓	✓		
Permissive Footpaths	✓			
Permissive Bridlepaths	✓	✓	✓	
'G' Class Roads	✓	✓	✓	✓

We have mapped the relevant density for each user type by calculating the length of provision per 1 km². Utilising Jenk's Natural Breaks method, the results have been split into five bands, with each band being given a relative rating out of 20, where 4 equals lowest density and 20 equals the highest density.

The results of this rating, having undergone a process of interpolation to produce a raster dataset (see footnote), are shown as:

- 'Density of Provision for Walkers'
- 'Density of Provision for Cyclists'
- 'Density of Provision for Horse Riders'
- 'Density of Provision for Off Road Motorised Users'

Relating Demand to Provision

Ideally, the areas of highest demand for access would also have the highest density of access provision. To assess the situation in Staffordshire, we have subtracted the rating attributed from the anticipated aggregate

demand from the rating attributed from the density for each class of user. Motorised users have not been included in this element of the analysis due to the uncertainty of the demand element of the model reflecting actual demand for motorised access, as mentioned above.

The resultant scores for each 1 km² have been divided into 5 classes using Jenk's Natural Breaks method.

The results of this rating, having undergone a process of interpolation to produce a raster dataset (see footnote), are shown as:

- 'Density of Pedestrian Provision in Relation to Demand'
- 'Density of Cycling Provision in Relation to Demand'
- 'Density of Horse Riding Provision in Relation to Demand'

Limitations of the Model

The model provides a sound basis to assist in the evaluation of access provision. Clearly, the proximity of population is a major factor influencing demand, however, the model takes no account of the density of that population. For the purposes of this plan, the proximity of population is used to model the anticipated demand for horse riding, where this would be best achieved by utilising data recording where horse are actually stabled, if available.

By relating anticipated demand to current access provision, the model identifies areas where access provision is low in relation to anticipated demand and makes no assessment of actual adequacy.

The model takes no consideration of environmental sensitivity. Often areas that are environmentally sensitive are, by their very nature, attractive to users. Whilst the model facilitates the identification of areas of demand anticipated from landscape and other scenic amenities, such areas need careful management of access. Such management must be dictated by local environmental factors with the conservation and enhancement of the environment being the dominant consideration.

Footnote

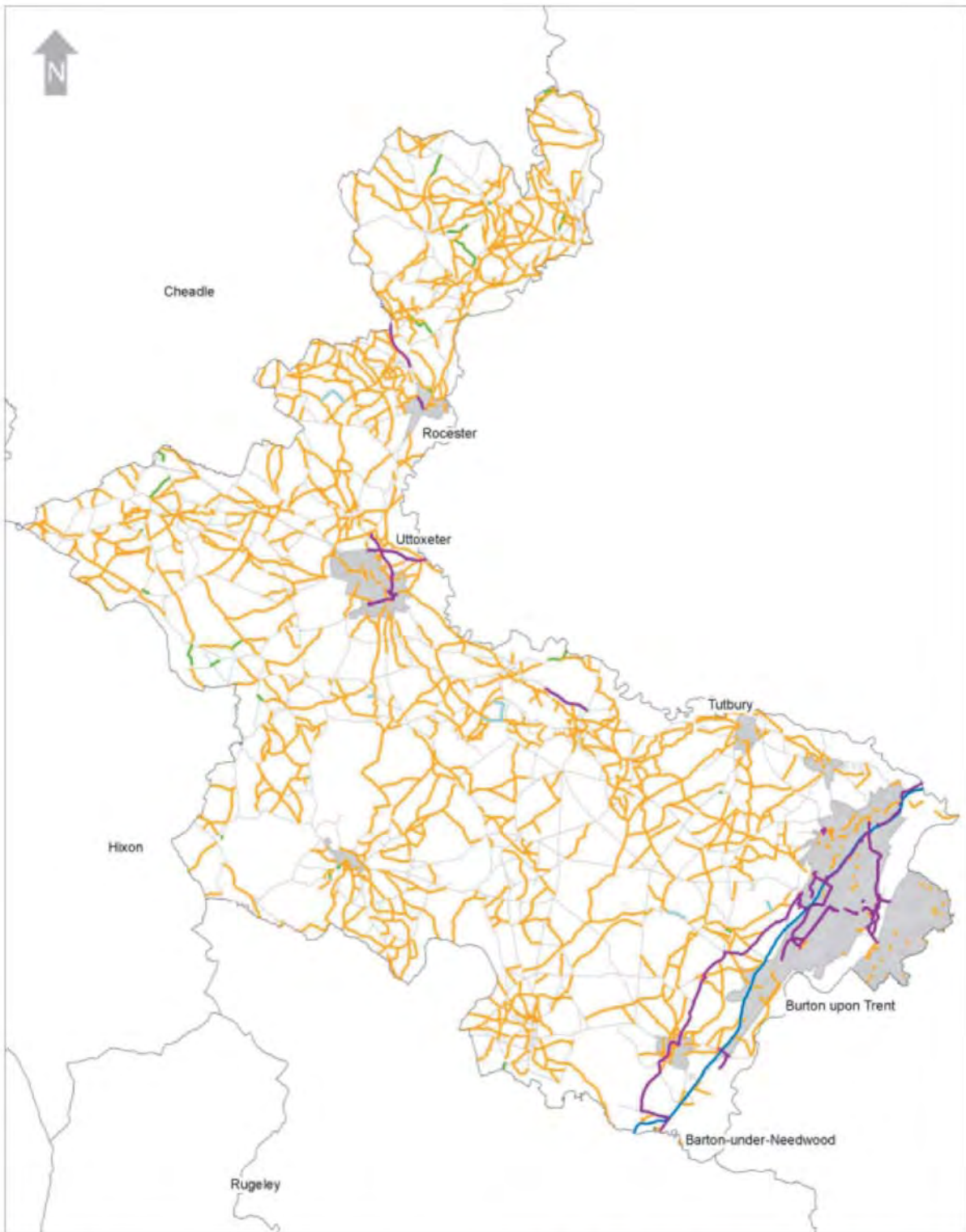
A raster is a spatial data model that defines space as an array of equally sized cells arranged in rows and columns. Each cell contains an attribute value and location coordinates. Unlike a vector structure, which stores coordinates explicitly, raster coordinates are contained in the ordering of the matrix. Groups of cells that share the same value represent geographic features.

Interpolation. Visiting every location in a study area to measure the height, magnitude, or concentration of a phenomenon is usually difficult or expensive. Instead, you can measure the phenomenon at strategically dispersed sample locations, and predicted values can be assigned to all other locations. Input points can be either randomly or regularly spaced, or based on some sampling scheme.

Surface interpolation functions create a continuous (or prediction) surface from sampled point values. The continuous surface representation of a raster dataset represents height, concentration, or magnitude (for example, elevation, pollution, or noise). Surface interpolation functions make predictions from sample measurements for all locations in a raster dataset whether a measurement has been taken at the location or not. There are a variety of ways to derive a prediction for each location; each method is referred to as a model. With each model, there are different assumptions made of the data, and certain models are more applicable for specific data (for example, one model may account for local variation better than another). Each model produces predictions using different calculations. The model used in this instance was Kriging which is based on statistical models that include autocorrelation (the statistical relationship among the measured points). Because of this, not only do geostatistical techniques have the capability of producing a prediction surface, but they can also provide some measure of the certainty or accuracy of the predictions.

Appendix G

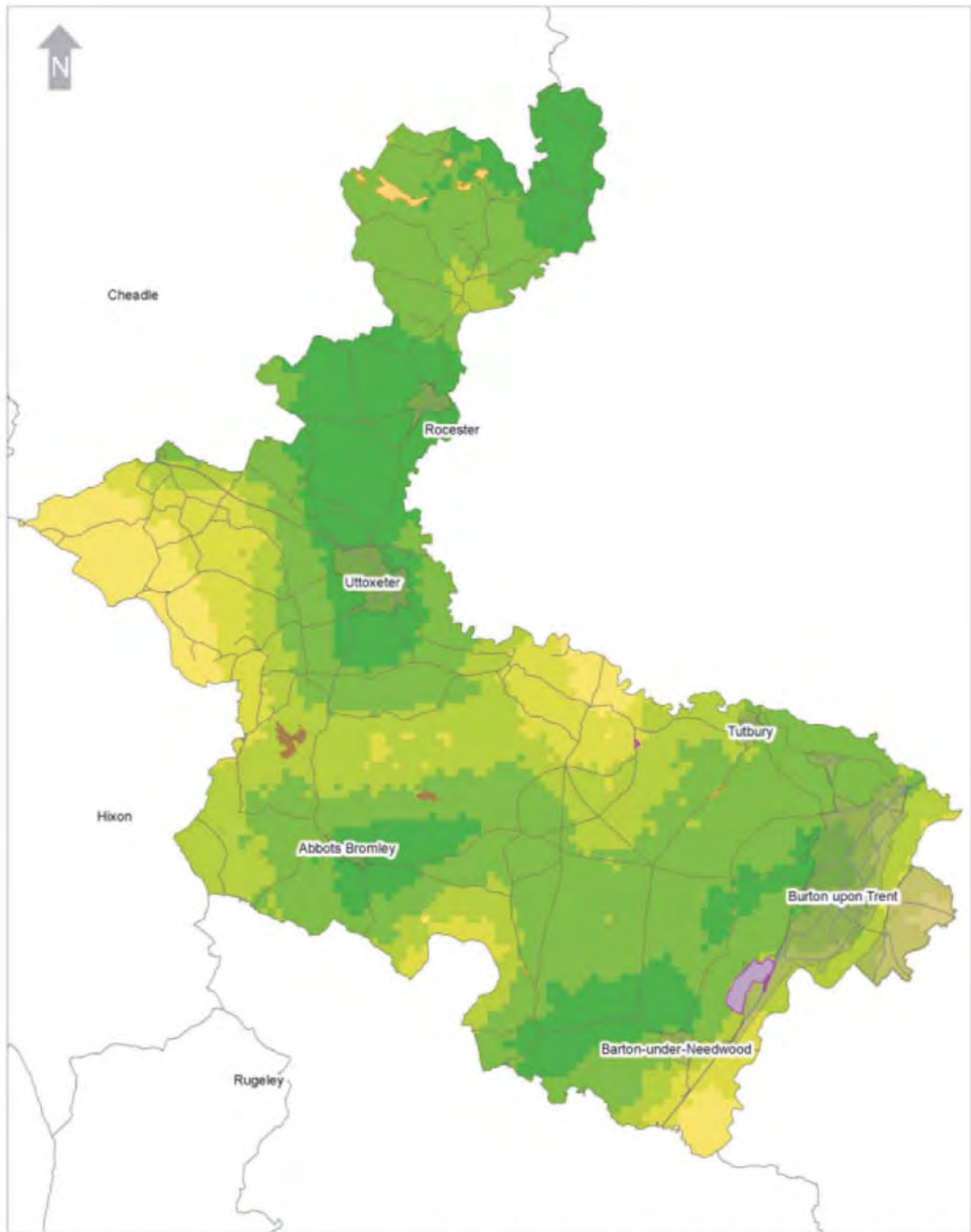
Current Provision



Current provision (linear) within the East Staffordshire Borough

- Public rights of way
- Cycle tracks
- Towpaths
- Unmetalled roads and greenways
- Permissive access
- Other roads

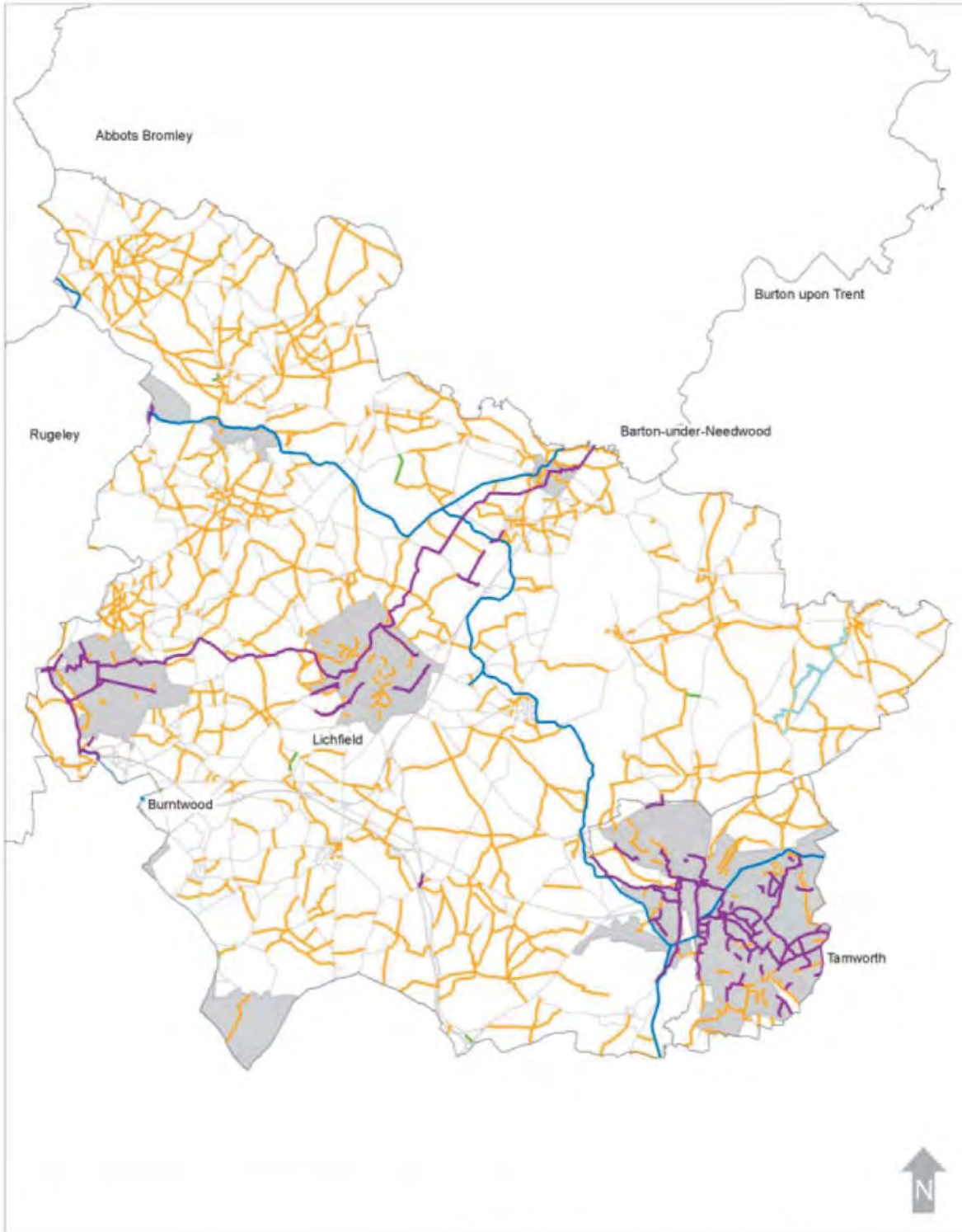
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- Country parks
- Access land
- Section 16 CROW
- Low
- Average
- High

Current provision (greenspace) within the East Staffordshire Borough with anticipated aggregate demand

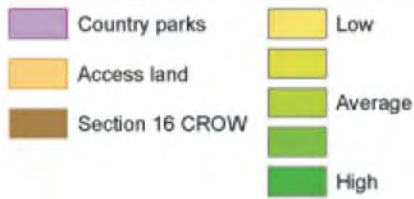
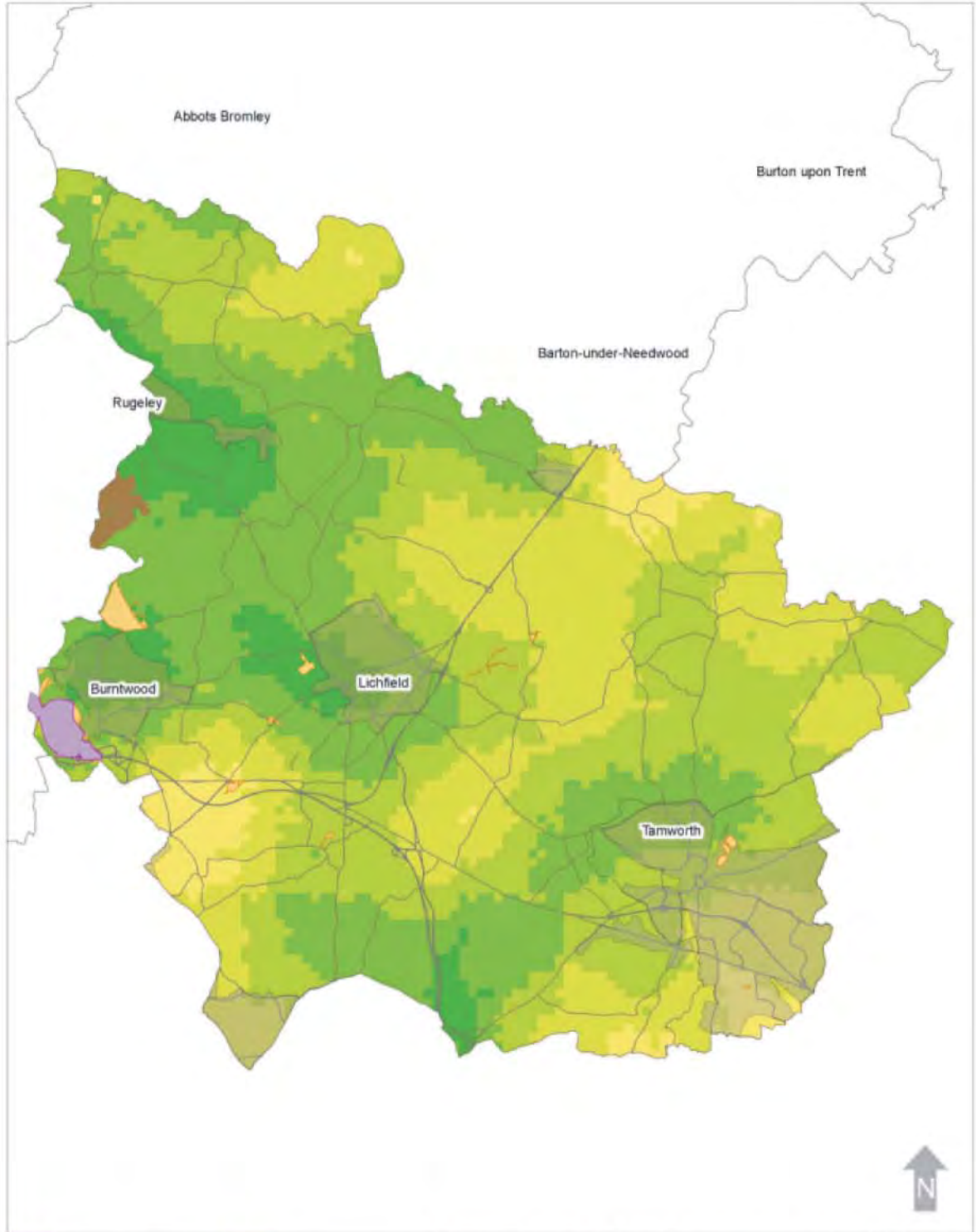
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Current provision (linear) within the Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough

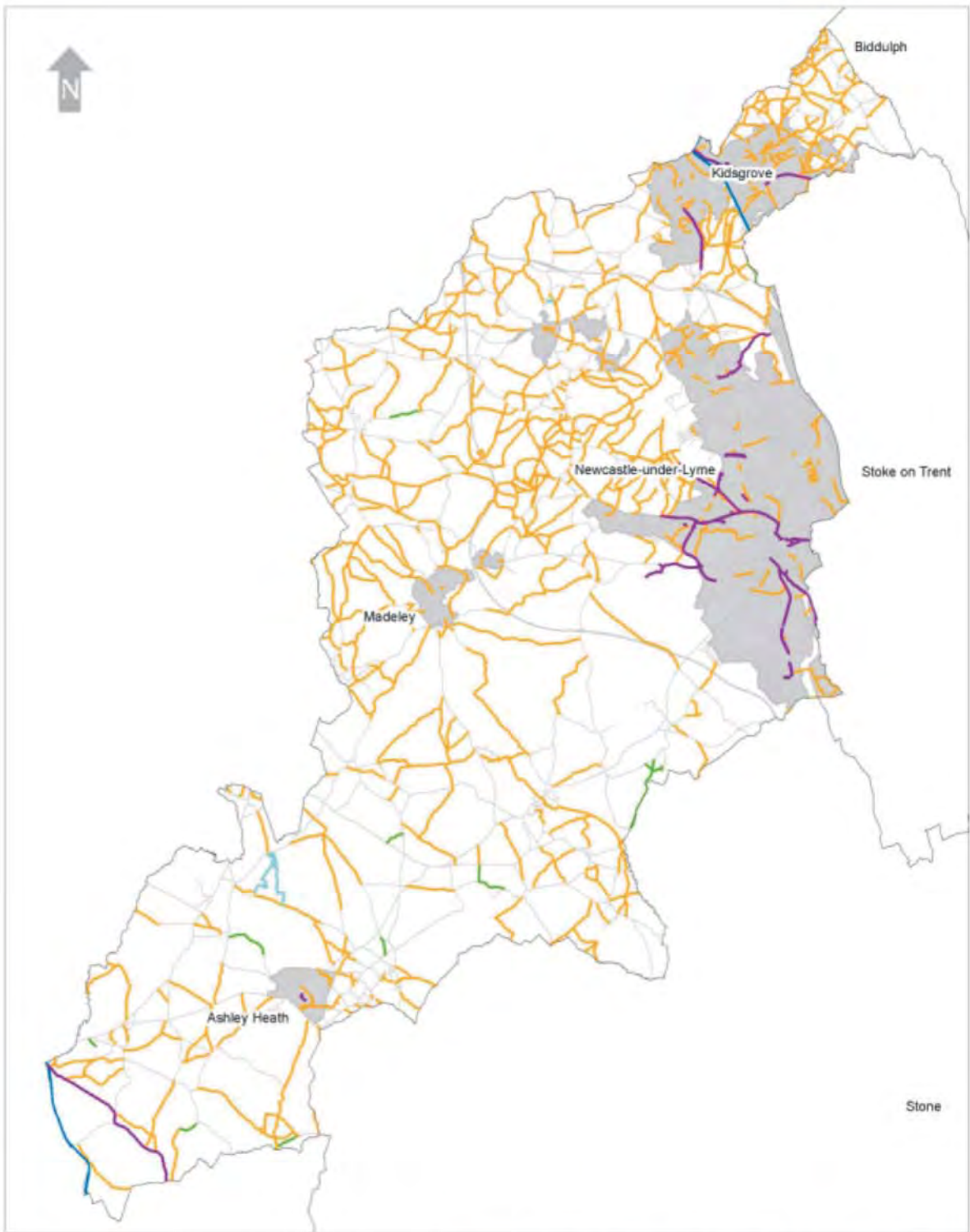
- Public rights of way
- Cycle tracks
- Towpaths
- Unmetalled roads and greenways
- Permissive access
- Other roads

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Current provision (greenspace) within the Lichfield District and Tamworth Borough with anticipated aggregate demand

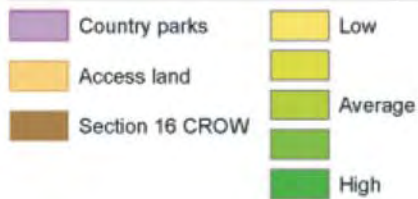
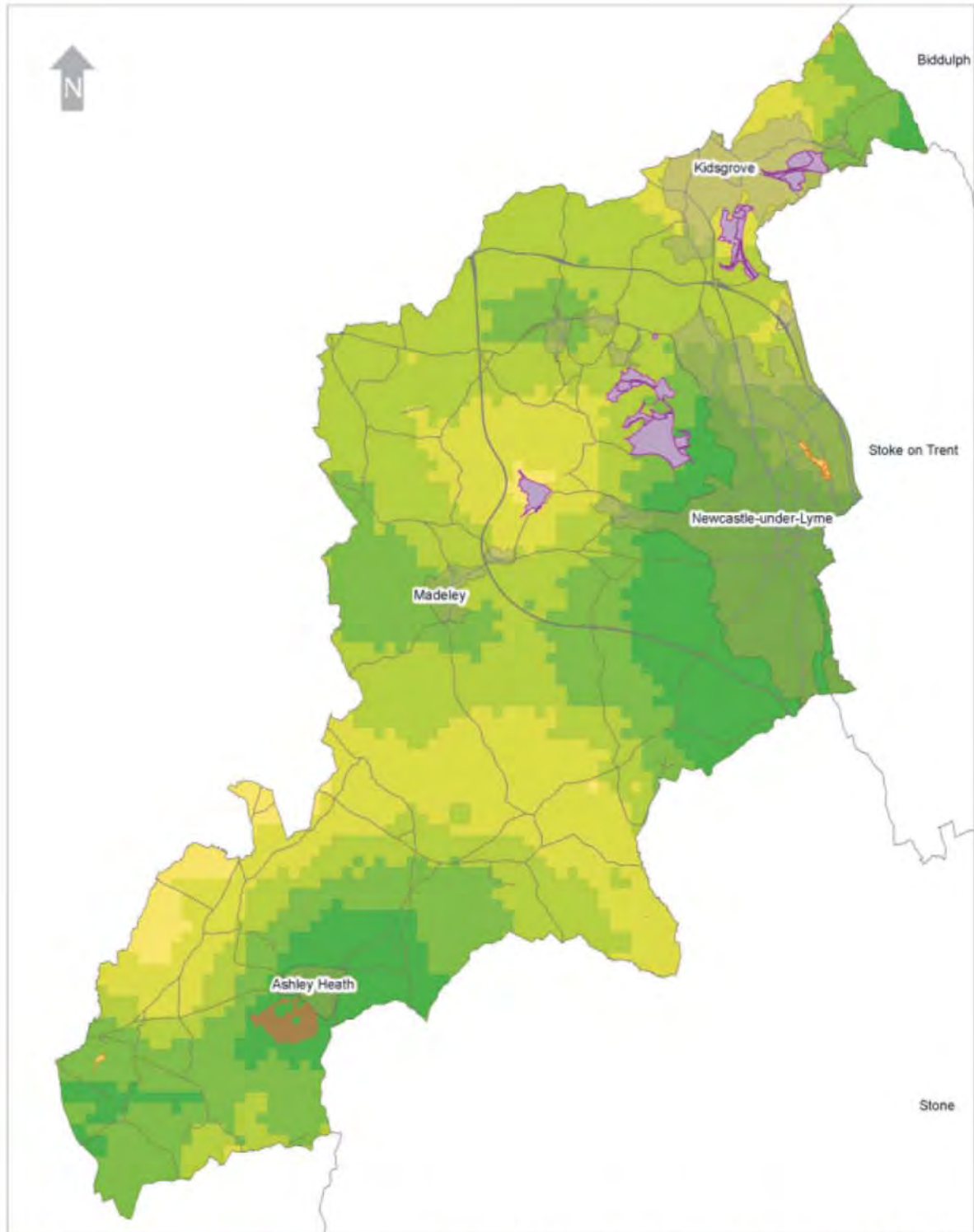
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Current provision (linear) within the Newcastle-under-Lyme District

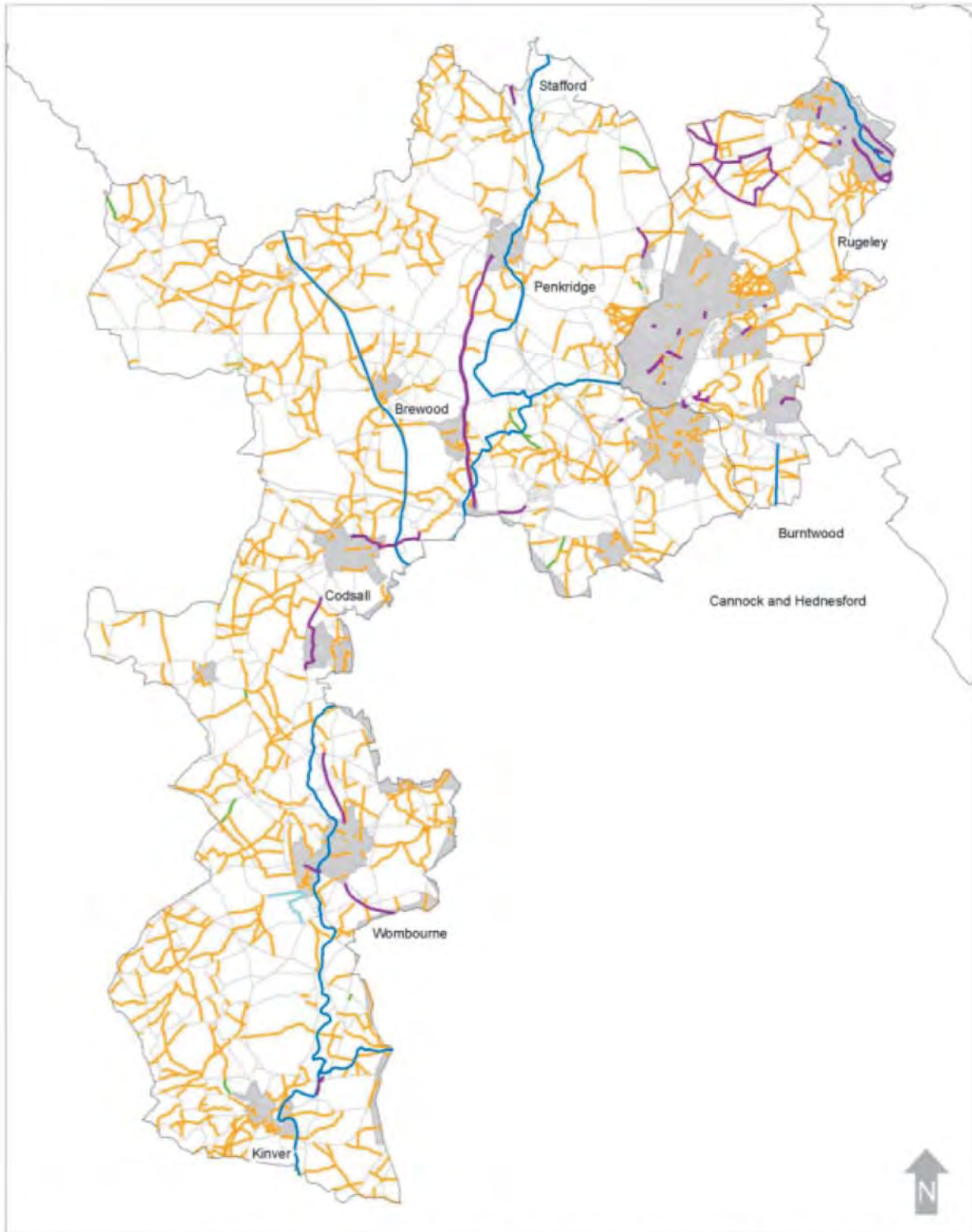
- Public rights of way
- Cycle tracks
- Towpaths
- Unmetalled roads and greenways
- Permissive access
- Other roads

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Current provision (greenspace) within the Newcastle-under-Lyme District with anticipated aggregate demand

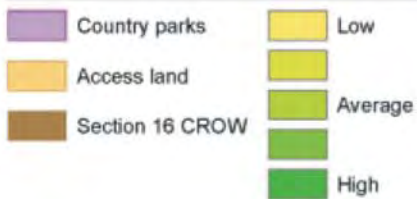
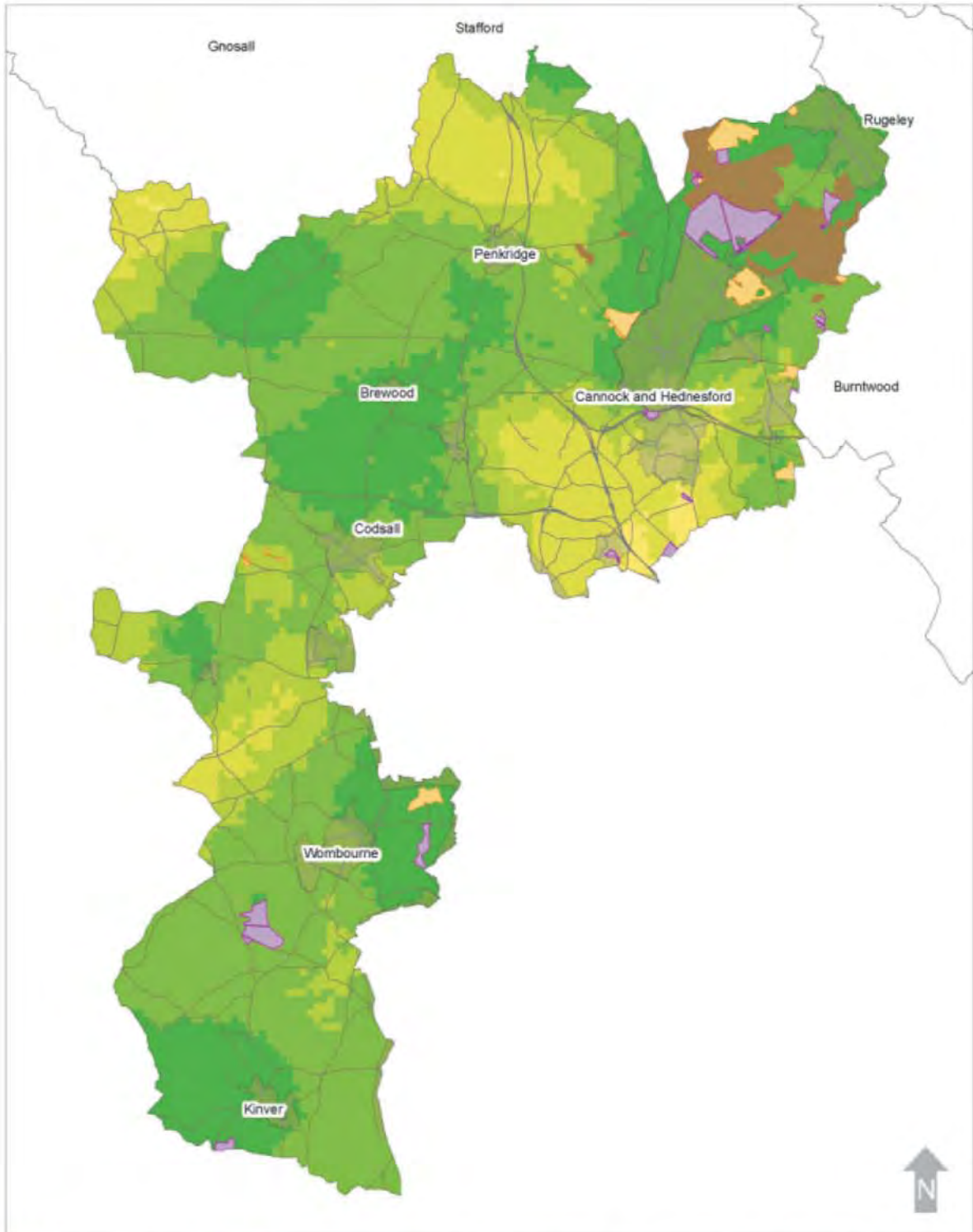
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Current provision (linear) within the Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire Districts

- Public rights of way
- Cycle tracks
- Towpaths
- Unmetalled roads and greenways
- Permissive access
- Other roads

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**Current provision (greenspace) within the
Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire Districts
with anticipated aggregate demand**

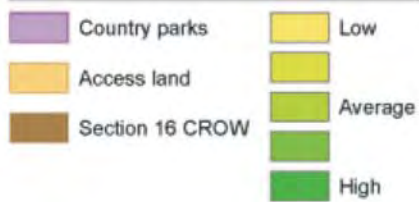
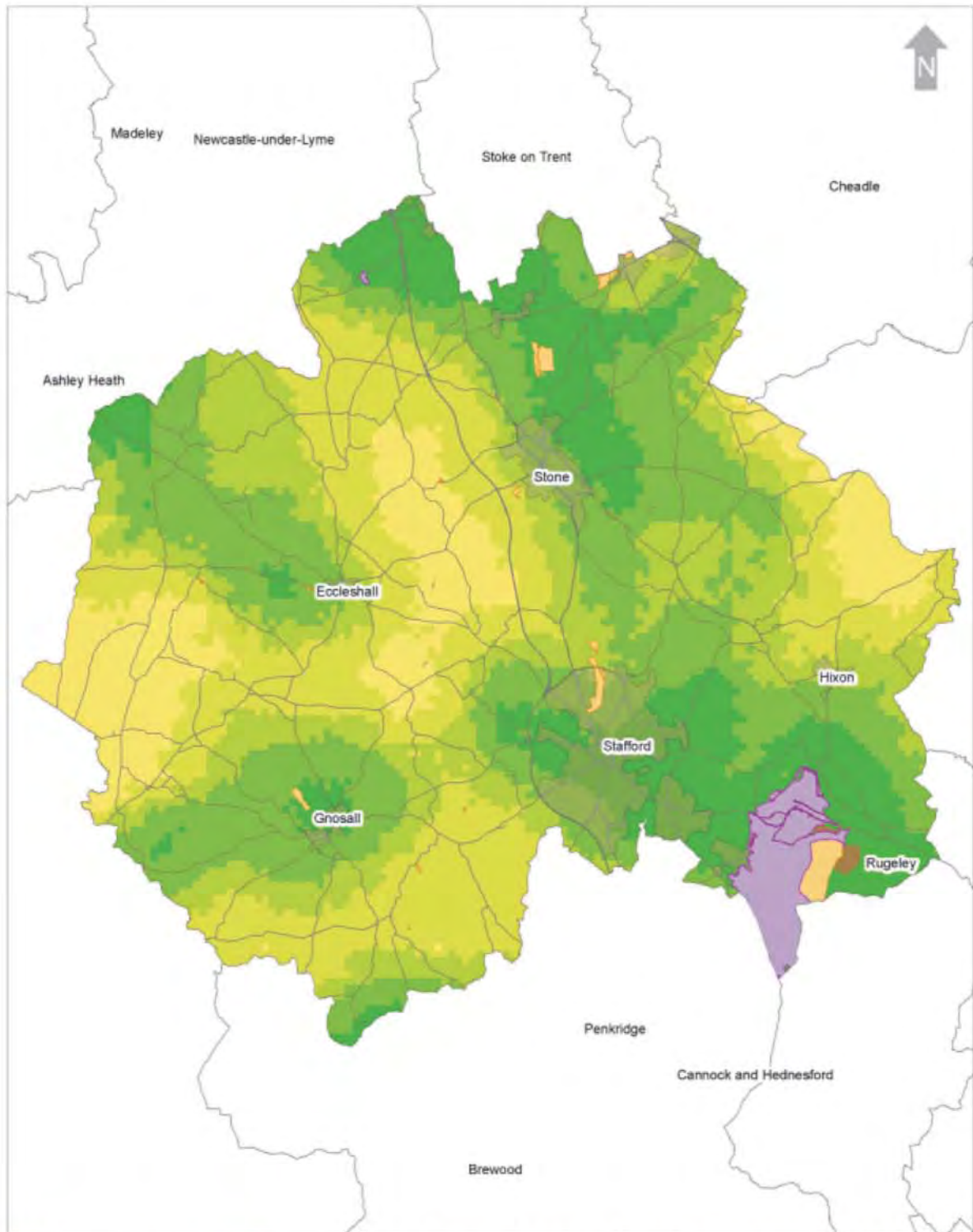
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Current provision (linear) within the Stafford Borough

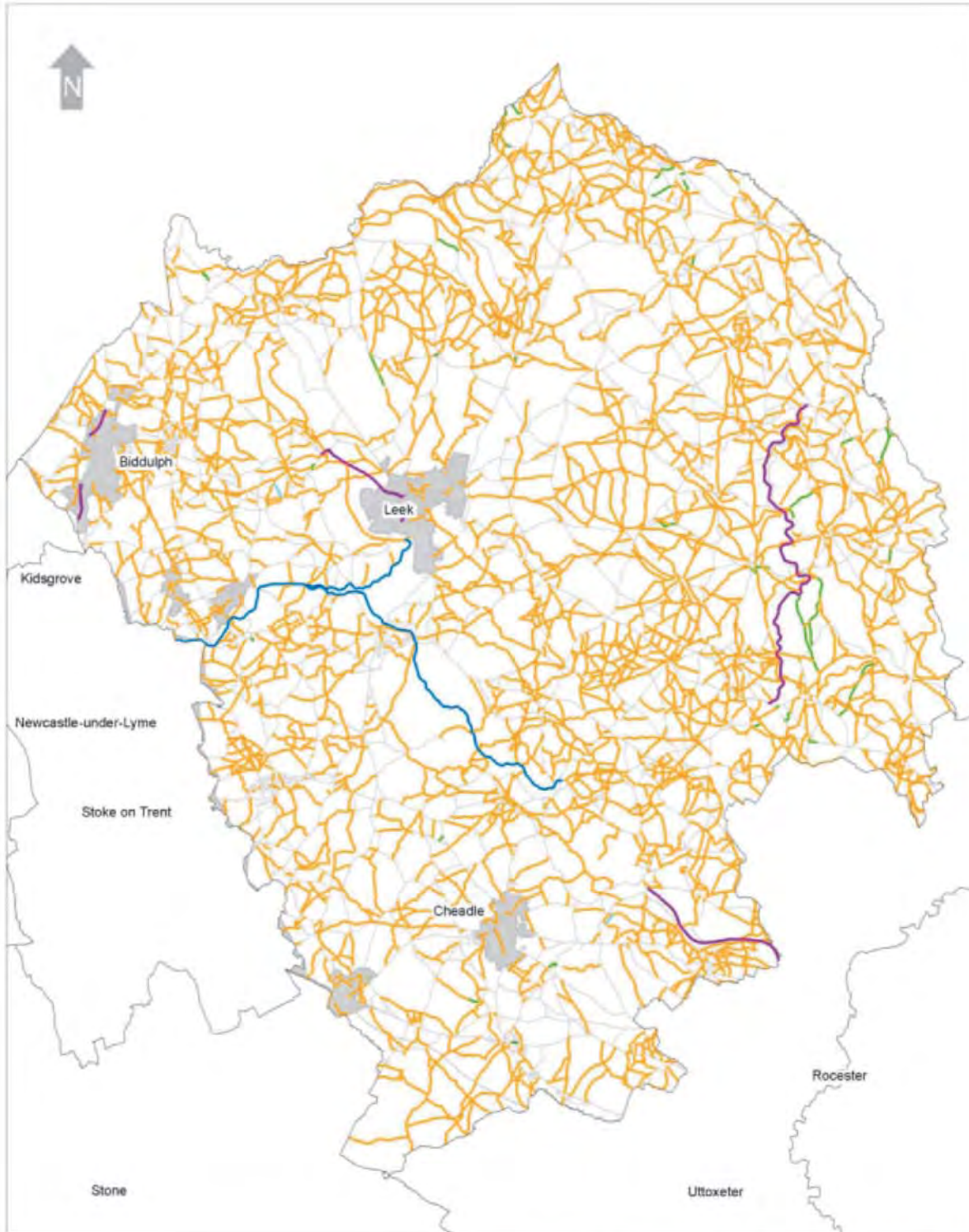
- Public rights of way
- Cycle tracks
- Towpaths
- Permissive access
- Unmetalled roads and greenways
- Other roads

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Current provision (greenspace) within the Stafford Borough with anticipated aggregate demand

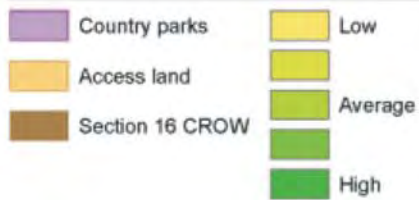
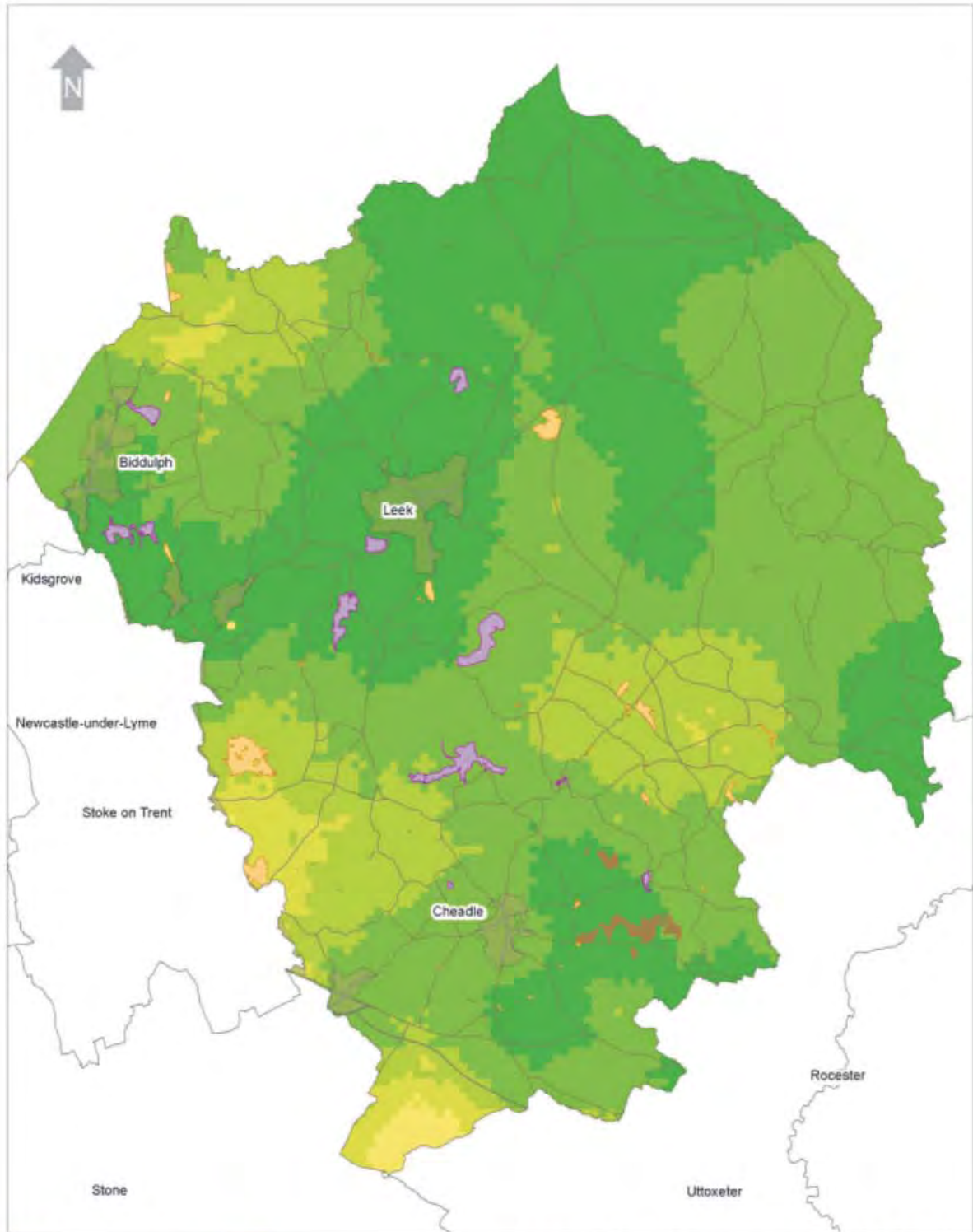
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Current provision (linear) within the Staffordshire Moorlands District

- Public rights of way
- Cycle tracks
- Towpaths
- Permissive access
- Unmetalled roads and greenways
- Other roads

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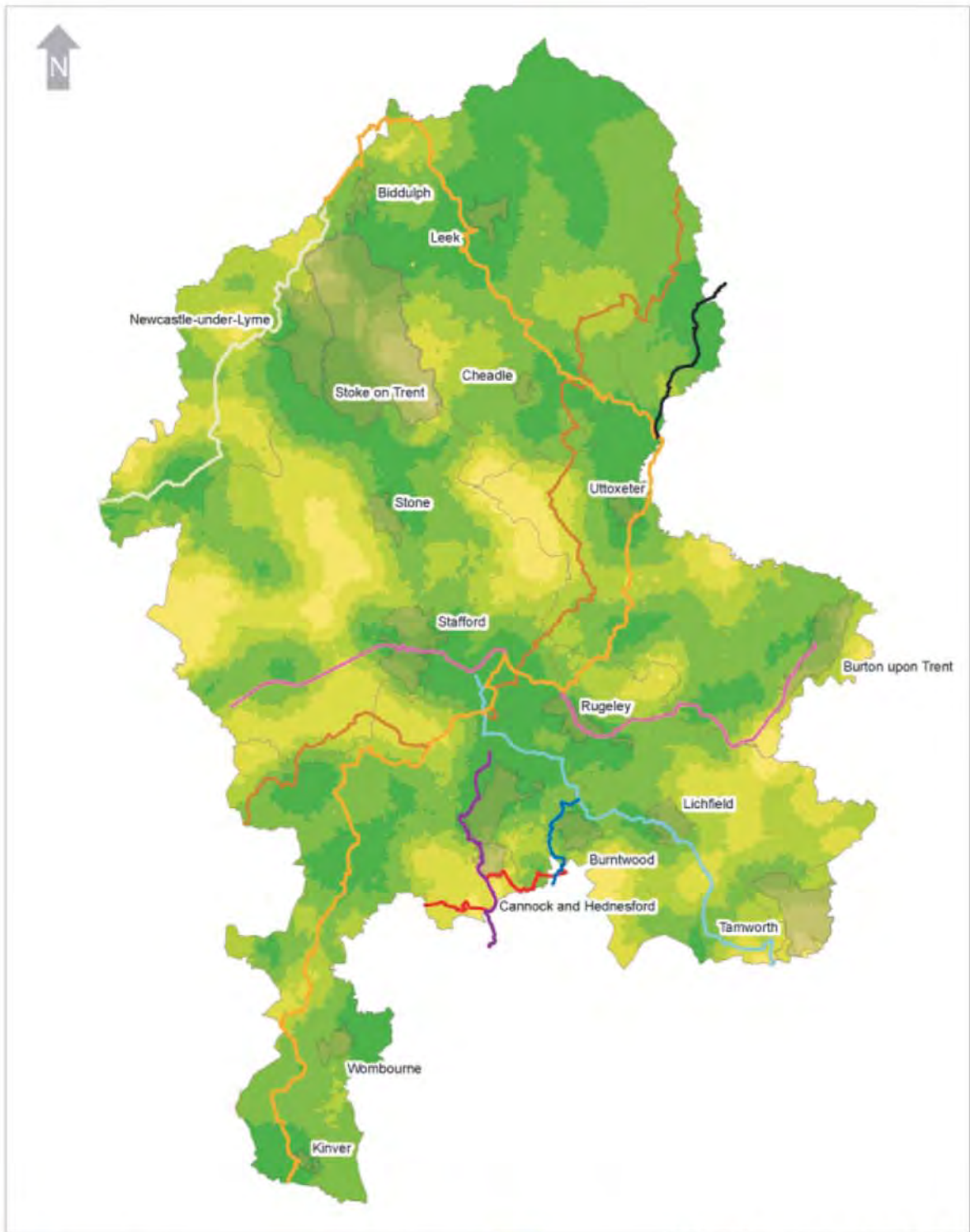


Current provision (greenspace) within the Staffordshire Moorlands District with anticipated aggregate demand

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Appendix H

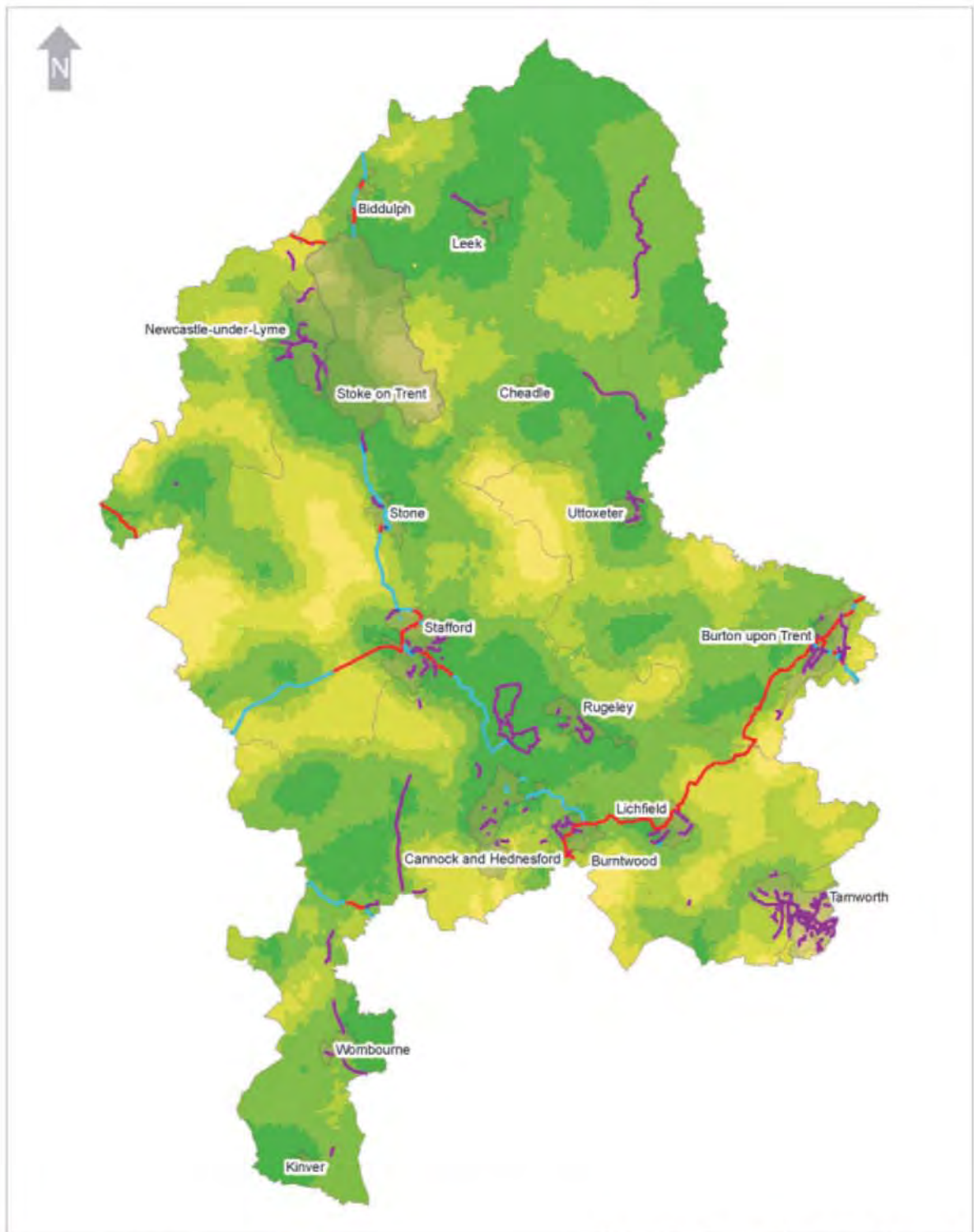
Strategic and Local Promoted Routes in Staffordshire



- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------|
| Beacon Way | Sabrina Way | Low |
| Forest of Mercia Way | Staffordshire Way | Average |
| Heart of England Way | Way for the Millennium | High |
| Limestone Way | Wulfren Way | |
| Newcastle Way | | |

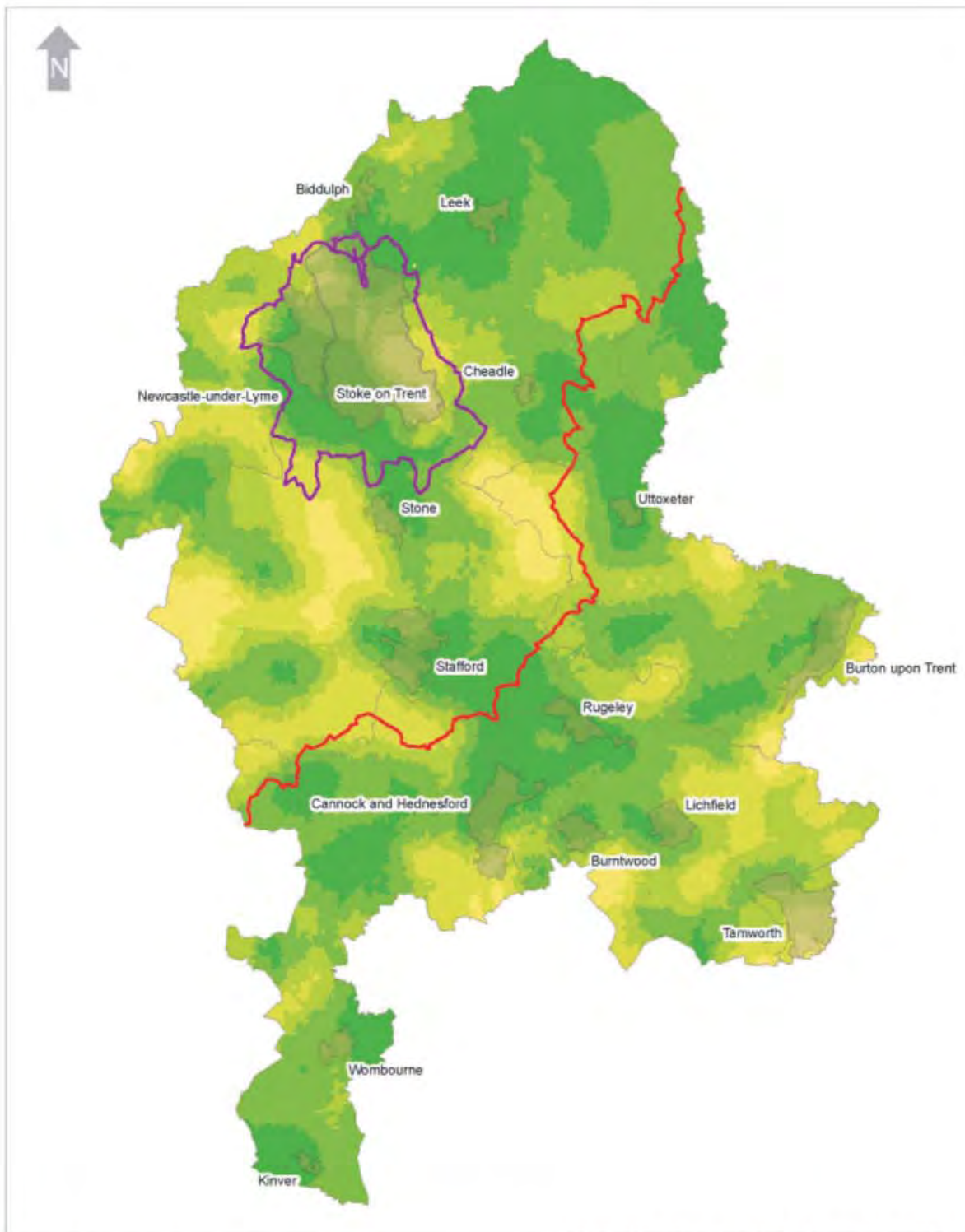
Strategic pedestrian routes with anticipated aggregate demand

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Strategic cycling network with anticipated aggregate demand

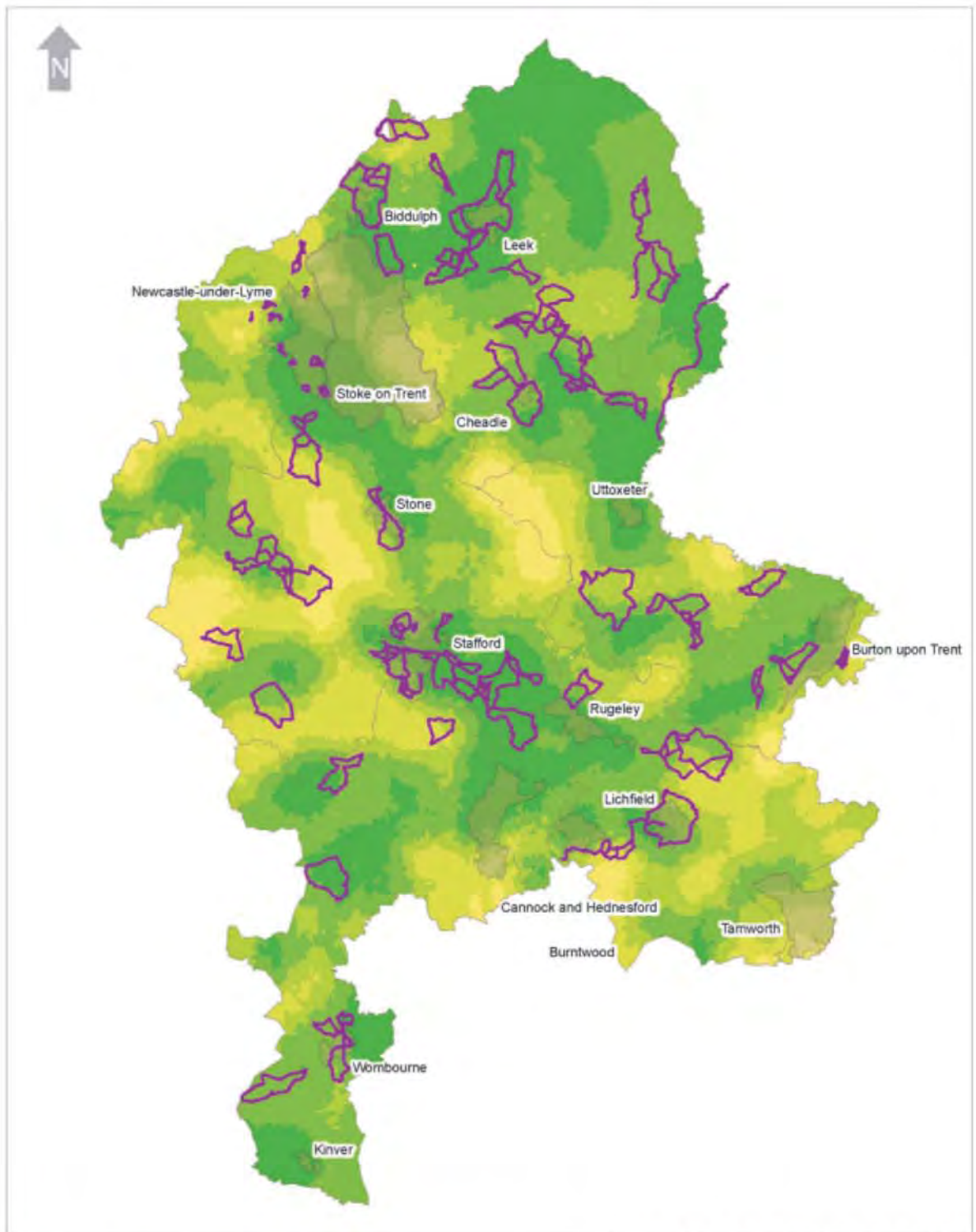
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- Draft Potteries Ring Route
- Sabrina Way
- Low
- Average
- High

Strategic equestrian routes with anticipated aggregate demand

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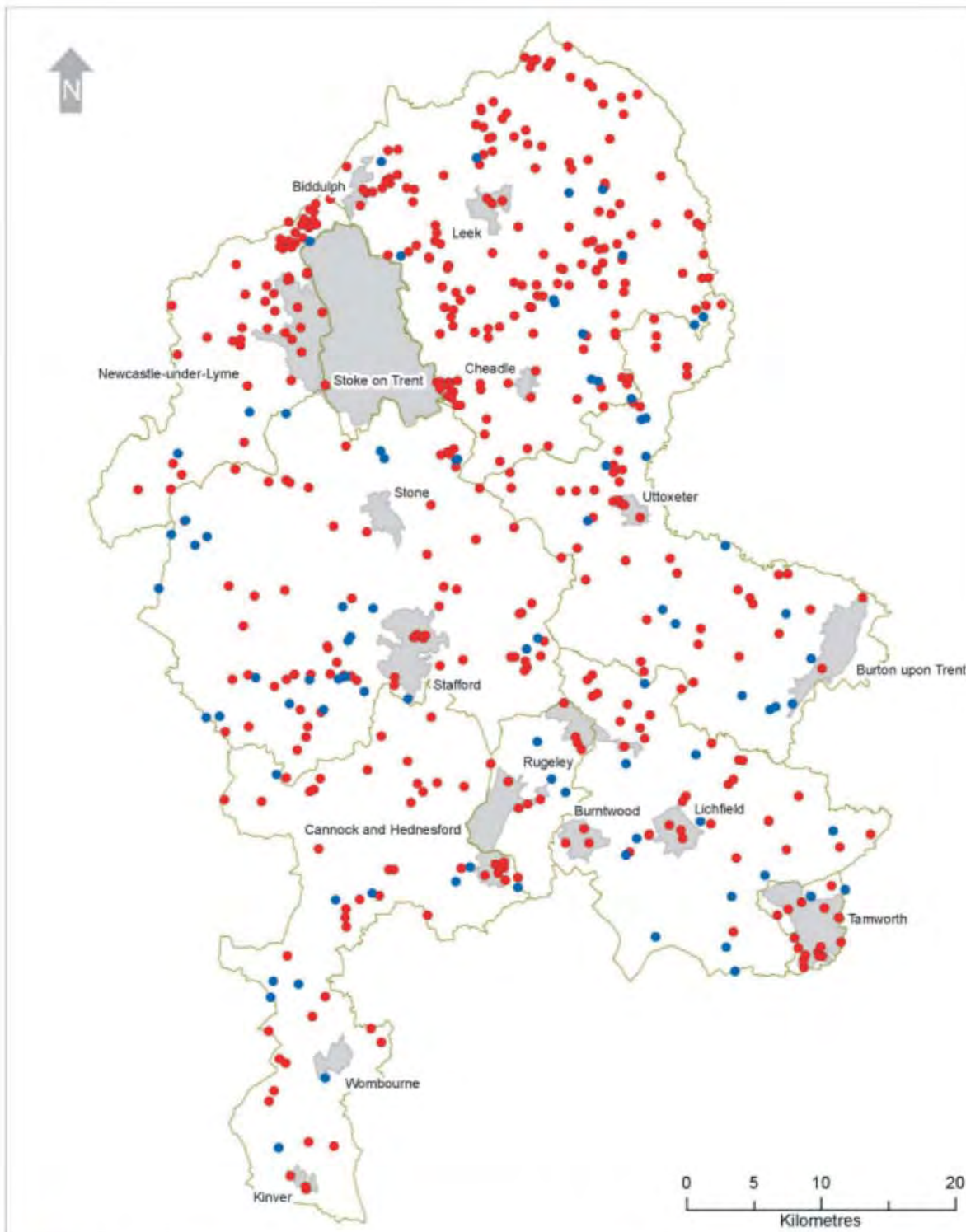


Locally promoted routes with anticipated aggregate demand

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Appendix J

Definitive Map Anomalies



- Cul de sac Rights of Way
- Routes restricted by built development *

Definitive map anomalies

* indicative only

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Appendix K

BVPI Performance Indicator: Percentage of Recorded Public Rights of Way that are 'Easy to Use'

BVPI Performance Indicator: Percentage of Recorded Public Rights of Way that are 'Easy to Use'

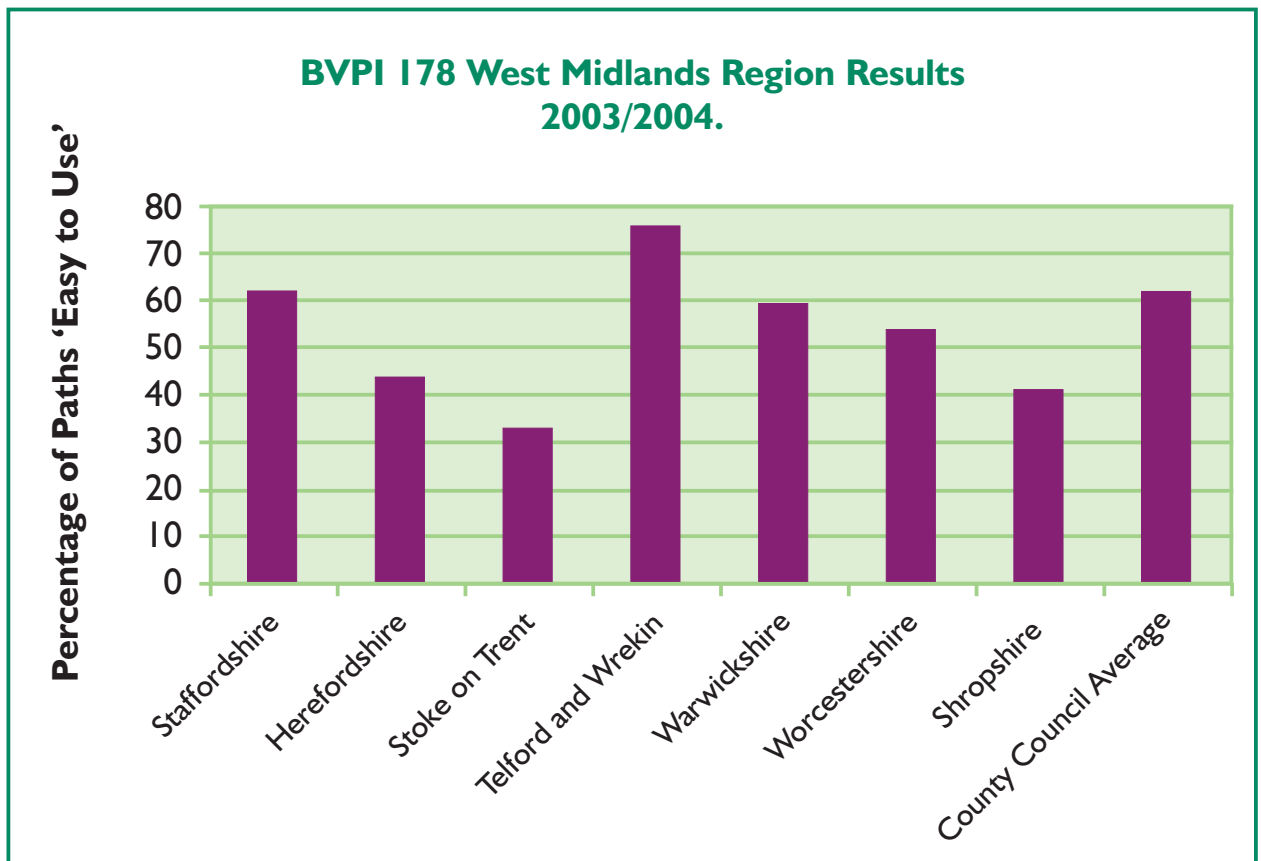
Each year the highway authorities' performance with regard to PROW is measured by the Best Value Performance Indicator No. 178 which assesses the percentage of the authorities' path network which is 'easy to use'.

The County Council is required by the Audit Commission to undertake a random survey of 5% of the recorded path network every year in order to assess the ease of use of those paths.

The surveys are undertaken in May and November, by volunteers, to a methodology prescribed by the Countryside Agency and the result forms the basis of a key Performance Indicator.

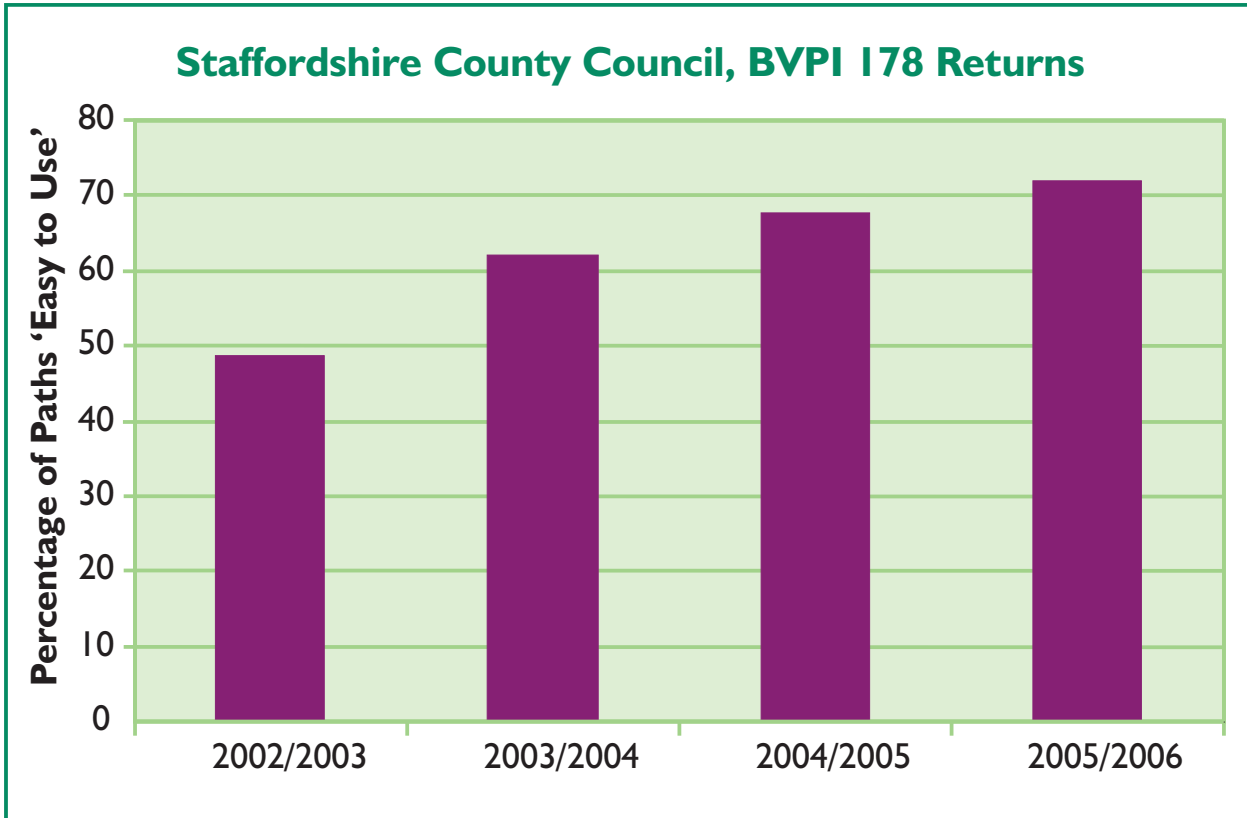
For the purposes of the survey, 'easy to use' means that the path is signposted or waymarked where it leaves a metalled road, free from significant unlawful obstructions or serious interference to the public's right of passage and any surface and lawful barriers are in good repair to a standard necessary to enable the public to use the path without undue inconvenience.

Regional Comparison



Data from Audit Commission via www.bvpi.gov.uk

In Staffordshire, performance has shown a sustained increase since 2002/03.



Appendix L

Community Paths Initiative

Community Paths Initiative

Background

The Community Paths Initiative (CPI) was established in 1991/2 to replace a Parish Paths Maintenance Scheme with Parish Councils. The Path Maintenance Scheme was abandoned because of the low participation rate of Parishes (less than 8%) and its high administration costs. More recently, some Parish Councils have expressed an interest in seeing a change in the current relationship between the County Council and Parishes on public path work.

The CPI operates on a bidding system whereby Parish Councils and other community bodies, in conjunction with Parish Councils, compete annually for grants towards any local path project which would improve or promote their path network. Particular preference is given to bids that incorporate topping-up through local funding and sponsorship. This match-funding is frequently in the form of voluntary labour. It was expected that this approach, rather than the Path Maintenance Scheme, would encourage greater Parish Council and local community involvement in the care, maintenance and promotion of local rights of way networks and generate additional funding and resources locally. The CPI has proved to be a major success. It has enabled a far wider range of projects to be supported than was possible under the former Path Maintenance Scheme.

The CPI has been over-subscribed in most years. In this respect, therefore, the CPI has been the victim of its own success. The County Council is anxious not to disappoint Parish Councils. Where it is possible, therefore, to identify bids concerned with path maintenance, these schemes are funded directly from the maintenance budget. By a commitment to undertake a proportion of the bids under public path maintenance and additional resource management, it has been possible so far to support the majority of schemes submitted. So far over 200 schemes have been grant-aided under the CPI. The County Council would not have been in a position, because of other demands on the rights of way maintenance budget, to undertake the majority of these schemes.

The CPI has received a significant boost in previous years with additional funding from the Staffordshire Environmental Fund (SEF) and from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ASLF). This additional funding added considerably to the success of the CPI. As well as increasing the level of funding available for worthwhile projects, the additional funding from SEF enabled the appointment of a full-time Project Officer for two years. Once again, this allowed more staff time to be devoted to encouraging greater participation by local communities in rights of way work. The level of community involvement and interest generally increased over those years. This was evident by the increase in the number of Parish Councils that applied for funding. The temporary appointment of the Project Officer expired, and, owing to lack of funding, it was not possible to extend the appointment.

It is possible for the County Council not to actively seek the involvement of local communities in public path work. In terms of meeting its statutory obligations, the resources allocated to the CPI could be used to respond to any local complaints received. Parish Councils would be left to use their own discretionary powers and funding for public path work, as they thought appropriate. However, this is not a realistic option. This approach would run counter to the major importance that the County Council attaches generally to its relationship with Parish Councils and the obvious benefits which accrue from the Scheme.

These benefits are becoming increasingly more important to the County Council because of budgetary reductions and the impact of the new duties imposed by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 on existing staffing levels. The existing maintenance budget for rights of way work and staffing levels are already constrained. Most of the work undertaken on the public path network tends to be labour-intensive. Furthermore, regular use of the path network still remains the best form of maintenance. Hence, any contribution which the Parish Council makes towards either maintaining or promoting their own local path network through circular walks leaflets is invaluable. In addition, the CPI positively encourages participants to seek additional funding from other local sources.

The County Council's current financial input to the CPI is an annual sum in the region of £7,000 taken from the maintenance budget for rights of way. The ability to increase funding from this source is strictly limited, given the ongoing need to meet statutory maintenance obligations. The CPI can only maximise its full potential if it is able to expand. This can only be achieved with the provision of new funding, additional to and separate from the maintenance budget for rights of way, to increase the level of grant-aid available annually to Parish Councils and to enable the appointment of a Project Officer.

Appendix M

Consultations Undertaken in Staffordshire

Consultations undertaken in Staffordshire

Introduction

One of the four guiding principles that influence all aspects of the County Council's activities in Shaping the Future of Staffordshire 2006-2021 The Sustainable Strategy for the County is:

“Valuing the contribution of the voluntary sector and community sector and enabling it to contribute to meeting the shared goals of partners.”

Local communities, landowners and users alike, all have a stake in the countryside and their support and engagement is crucial in developing any proposals to improve access to it.

A shared approach to developing the draft ROWIP, which involves all stake holders, will help to encourage ownership of its policies and actions and will engage local communities with a stake in the countryside.

Since the preparation of the ROWIP began, every opportunity has been taken to inform and consult the local community and other bodies and organisations about what the ROWIP will achieve and to involve them in establishing the strategic policy framework and many of the actions identified in the draft ROWIP.

Talks were given on the ROWIP to the Area Committees of the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association and other community groups to raise its profile and to assist in the evaluation of the existing access network. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan Officer also became involved in the Local Transport Planning process by attending District Stakeholder Meetings.

Parish Councils, User Groups and other interested bodies were invited to submit schemes and identify routes and works that may facilitate access to the countryside for the less agile, together with any issues which, in their view, if resolved would serve to improve access to the countryside.

The Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum, (the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Local

Access Forum at the time) have been regularly updated on the preparation of the draft ROWIP and were asked to prioritise a raft of actions for improving the network based on their varying interests, knowledge and experience.

Horse riding and cyclist groups were asked to forward information relating to known gaps in the recorded network, together with information about further potential off-road routes.

A path user questionnaire was formulated and distributed through a variety of outlets including libraries, Country Park Visitor Centres and the County Council's website. Members of the County Council's Ranger Service also used the questionnaire in street surveys to gather information from non-users of the countryside. The questionnaire was offered in the three languages together with Braille and large type. The aim of the questionnaire was to determine a user profile and explore the major barriers to accessing the countryside in Staffordshire.

We have also taken into account the results from the regular survey of users undertaken at the County Council's Country Parks, and the survey of visitors to the Cannock Chase AONB, undertaken by Staffordshire University on behalf of the AONB Partnership.

The key findings of the consultations are detailed below.

I. Consultation with Parish Councils, District Councils, User and Interest Groups

Over 300 individuals and organisations were contacted in September 2004 and given an outline of the ROWIP process. Their views were sought on possible improvements to the existing access network that they considered to be desirable. Over 90 responses were received.

Key Issues identified by Parish Council Responses

Over one-third of the total responses received came from Parish or Town Councils. Their main concern was the need to improve access for the less agile through either surface improvements or by replacing stiles with kissing gates. Other key issues raised were clearance of vegetation and the delays in determining applications under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Figure 1 below shows a breakdown of the responses received from Parish Councils.

Key Issues Identified by User Group Responses

Over 28% of the responses came from User Groups, most of whom were walkers and horse riders.

Walking User Groups

Walkers represented over 16% of the total responses. The majority of issues raised were

suggested additional routes. Again, improving access for the less agile through either surface improvements or by replacing stiles with kissing gates was another key issue raised.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the responses received from User Groups representing walkers.

Horse Riding User Groups

About 10% of the total number of responses received were from groups representing horse riders. The two major issues identified were network cul-de-sacs (31.8%) and suggested additional routes (31.8%). Other key issues were the delays in determining applications under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and unsafe main road crossings.

Figure 3 shows a breakdown of the issues raised in responses received from User Groups representing horse riders.

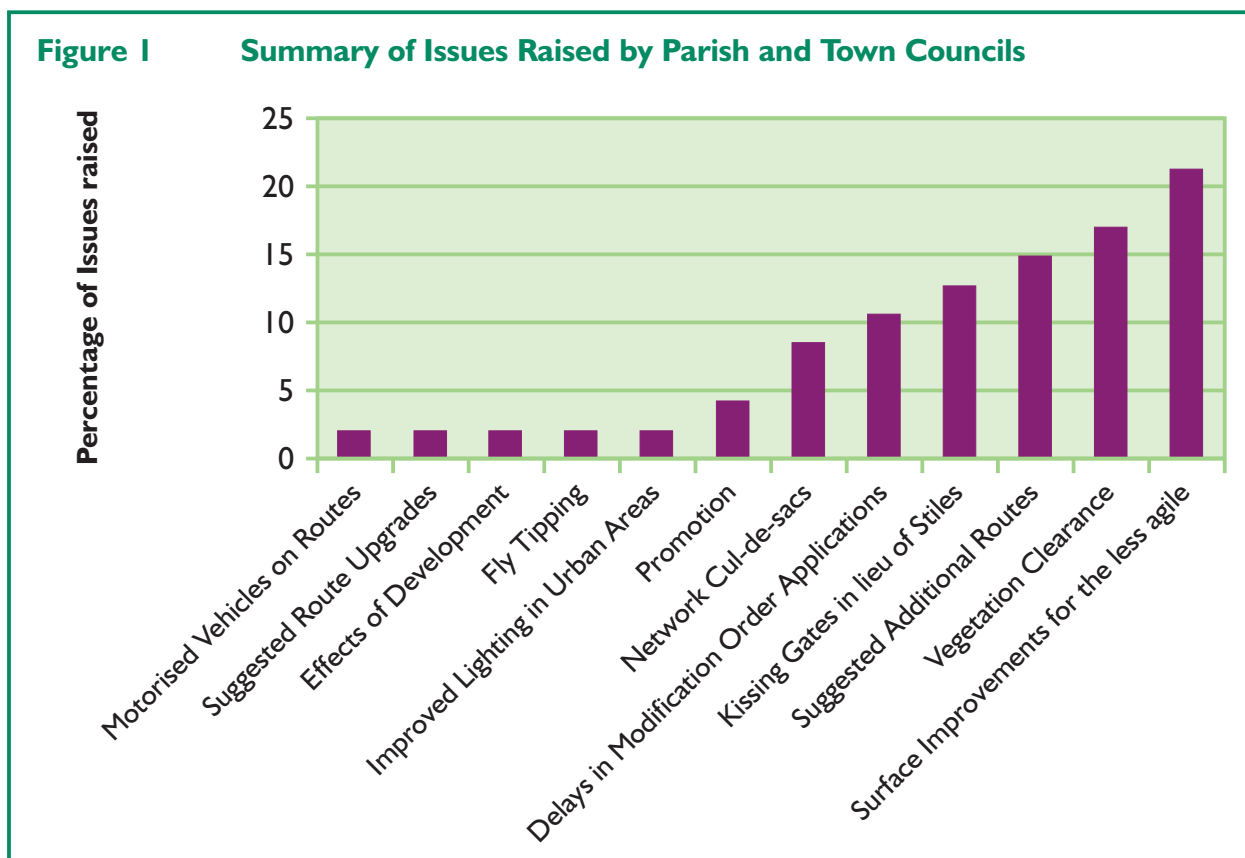


Figure 2 Summary of Issues Raised by Walking User Groups

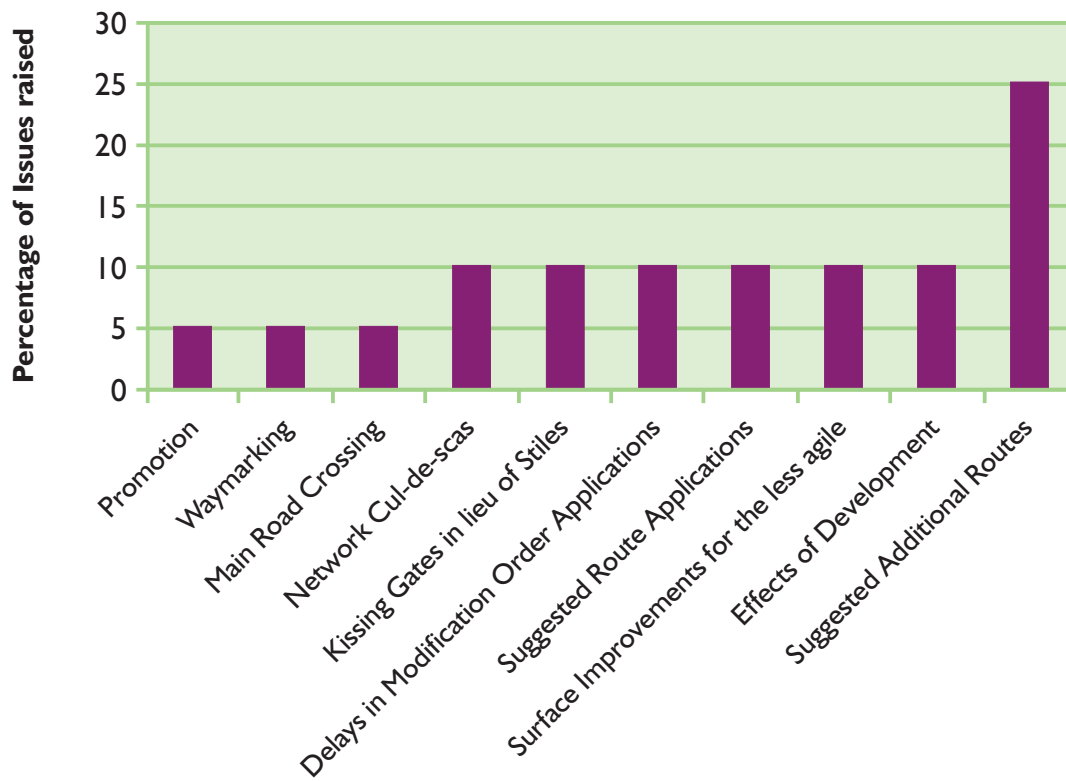
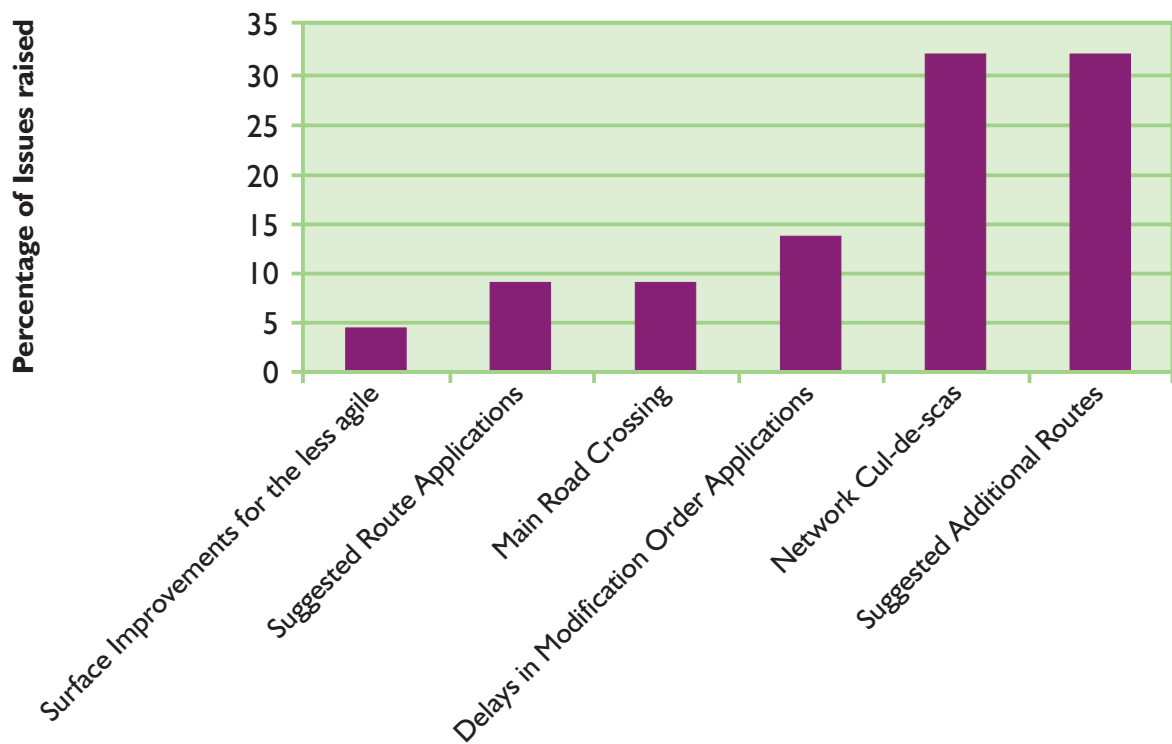


Figure 3 Summary of Issues Raised by Horse Riding User Groups



Other User Groups

Only one response was received from a user group representing cyclists. This raised the issue of network cul-de-sacs together with main road crossings. No responses were received from groups representing motorised users, runners or the less agile.

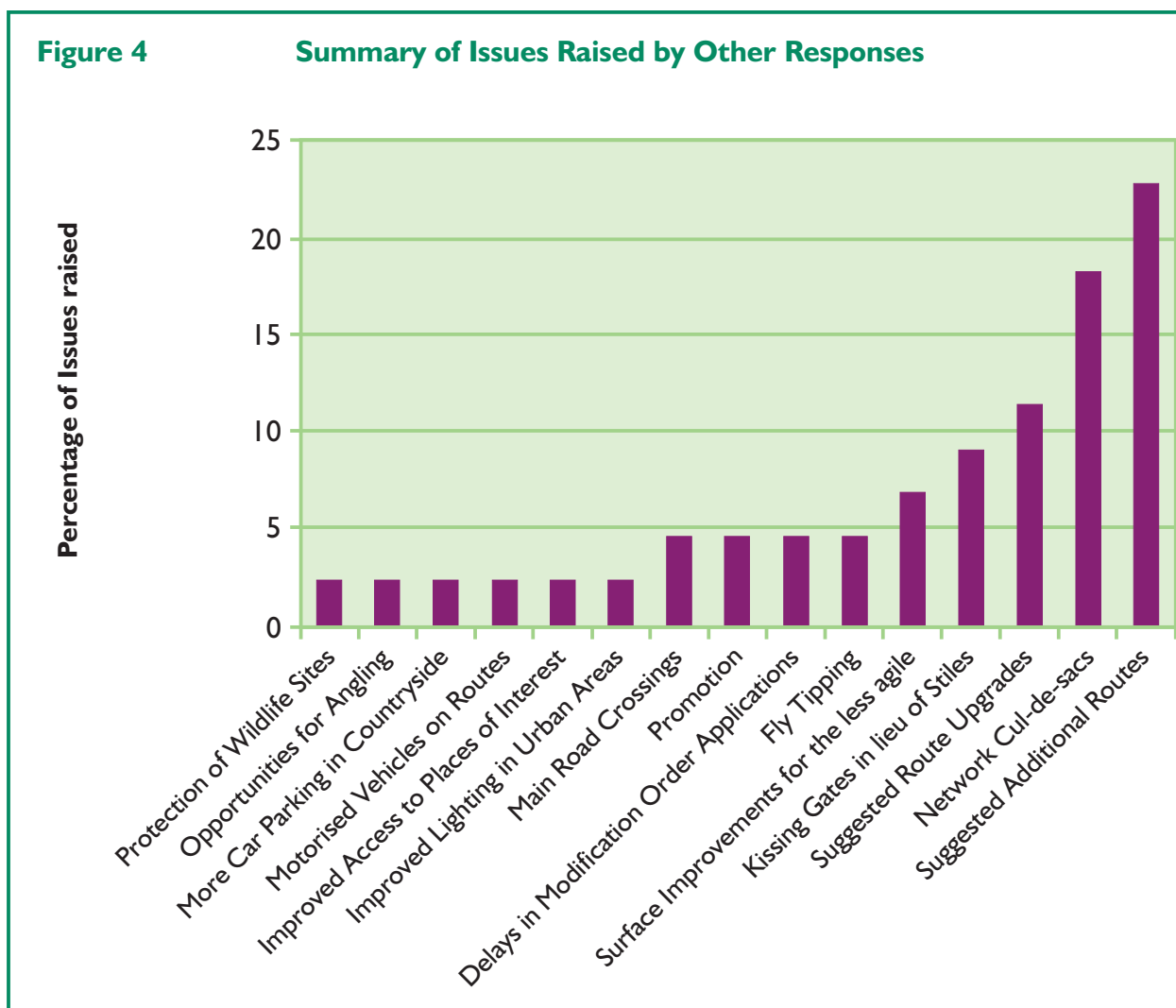
Key Issues Identified from Other Responses

Over one-third of the total responses received were from either the public (16.3% of total responses) or groups representing wider interests including the Peak District National Park Authority, District and Borough Councils,

the National Farmers Union, English Nature, local environment groups, Staffordshire University, Civic Societies and one local Member of Parliament.

Again, the key issues raised were suggested additional routes (22.7%), closely followed by network cul-de-sacs (18.2%). Another 16% of the identified issues related to improving access for the less agile through either surface improvements (6.8%) or by replacing stiles with kissing gates.

Figure 4 shows a breakdown of the responses received from both members of the public or those representing wider interests.



The key issues identified through the consultations with Parish Councils, District Councils, User and Interest Groups can be summarised as follows:

- The maintenance and improvement of rights of way in particular their surface treatment, and upgrading of any path furniture to comply with the requirements of Disability Discrimination legislation.
- Dealing with obstructions and clearance of overhanging vegetation to enable routes to be more accessible and easy to use, including better and more informative signage.
- The improvement of the connectivity within the network particularly to local facilities and to resolve anomalies in the existing network such as gaps (especially public bridleways), paths which stop at Parish boundaries, paths which duplicate others and paths obstructed by development.
- The better lighting of rights of way, safer road crossings and improvements to the surface maintenance to enhance their condition and attractiveness to enable and encourage greater use of the network by people of all abilities.
- The encouragement of greater use of rights of way through promotion.
- The opportunities for improving rights of way in relation to large scale developments.
- The need to reduce the time taken to deal with applications under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Detailed below are quotes arising from the consultations with Parish Councils, District Councils, User and Interest Groups:

- *“Improve urban short-cuts by surfacing and lighting to encourage their use”*
- *“Height of some stiles is too high”*
- *“like to see a review of the existing formal and informal access routes across Cannock Chase”*

- *“two anomalies on the definitive map which, if regularised would give recognition to the current routes used by walkers”*
- *“would ask for better all round maintenance”*
- *“local roads are not safe for walking and this makes links with bridleways very difficult”*
- *“main problem is the lack of signposting and Waymarking”*
- *“guidance notes and leaflets for landowners are useful”*
- *“burnt out cars and fly tipping are just two issues about which landowners would seek action”*
- *“need to extend access to safer routes for horse riding, off road”*

2. Consultation with Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum

The views of the Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum, (the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Local Access Forum at the time) were sought. Members of the Forum were asked to prioritise a top 20 of proposed actions to identify priorities based on their varying interests, knowledge and experience.

The top 5 themes which emerged from this exercise can be summarised as follows:

- Increase the opportunities for community involvement in the care, improvement and promotion of the access network.
- Work to improve the connectivity of the network for all types of users.
- Increase promotion of the access network.
- Adopt a zero tolerance of unlawful obstructions and seek the least restrictive option in any licensed obstructions.
- Increase the frequency of planned maintenance on paths in close proximity of urban areas.

See Appendix E, Staffordshire, Stoke and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum, for further details of the Forum's involvement in the development of the ROWIP.

3. Staffordshire User Questionnaire

The User questionnaire which was formulated for distribution to the public is attached. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather the following information:

- Profile of users
- Frequency of use
- Purpose of Use
- Distance travelled for use
- Reason for non-use/barriers to enjoyable use
- Suggestions for improvement

The questionnaire was made available at the five main Libraries in the County, as well as at Country Parks managed by the County Council and at District or Borough Council offices and at some of the larger Parish Council offices. The questionnaire was also made available on the County Council's website. Numerous known

user groups were also forwarded copies of the questionnaire on request. Members of the County Council's Ranger Service also undertook a street survey of people in the town of Burton upon Trent to gather information about non-users. The questionnaire was placed on deposit from mid-March to mid-September 2005.

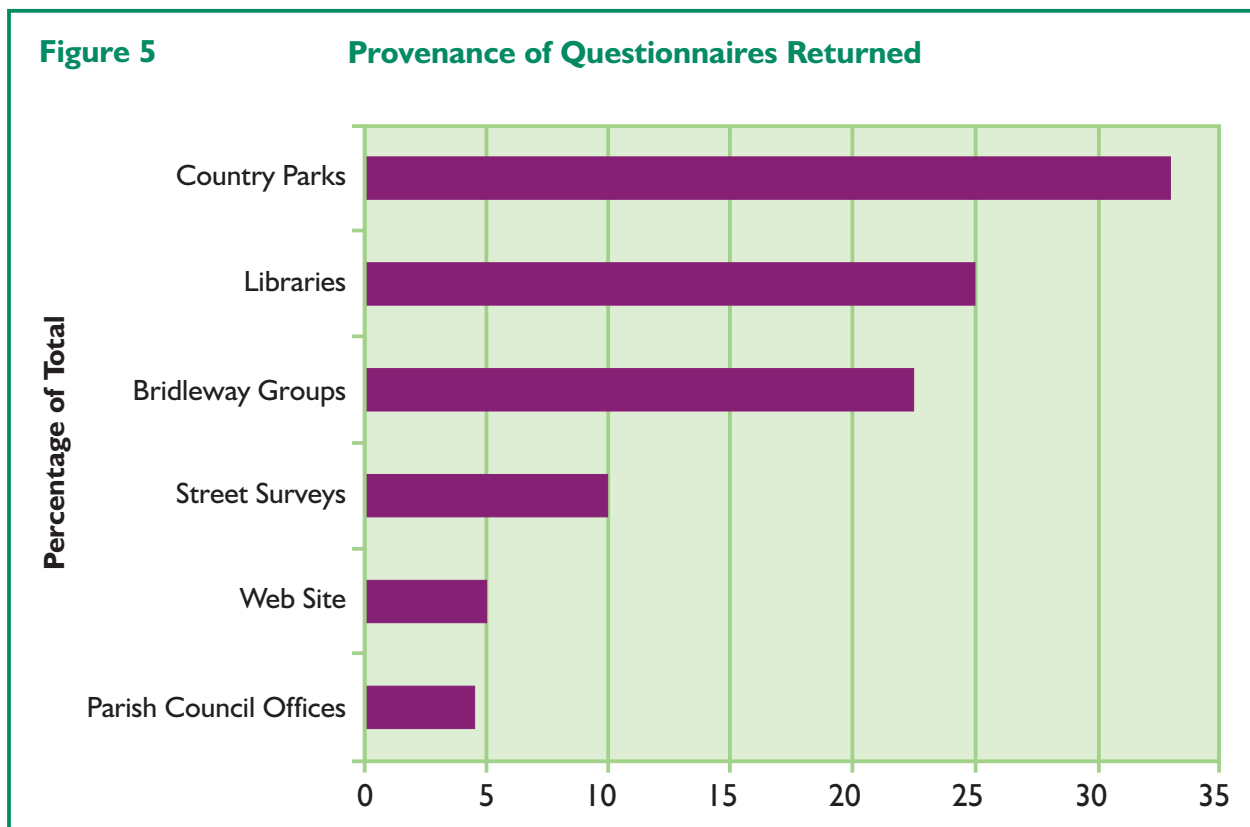
No responses have been received from carriage drivers. Other groups, like the disabled, may be under-represented. The engagement of non-users has also been particularly difficult despite the face to face interviews.

Questionnaire Responses

A total of 200 questionnaires were returned, from 15 points of dissemination.

Figure 5 details the provenance of the returned questionnaires.

The majority of the returned questionnaires emanated from the Country Park sites, closely followed by those disseminated by local horse riding groups.



Profile of Respondents

Over 56% of the questionnaires returned were completed by females. Of the 24% of total respondents who identified themselves as horse riders, 87.5% of these were female. Of the 20% of those identifying themselves as cyclists, 57.5% were male.

The dominant age group of all respondents is between 35 and 44, however, over 68% of the questionnaires were completed by people aged 35 and over. Of the 24% of total respondents who identified themselves as horse riders, 52.1% were aged 34 or below.

Figure 6 details the age ranges of respondents.

Patterns of Usage

A total of 82% of the respondents identified themselves as walkers, with 20% as cyclists and 24% as horse riders. In many cases, respondents identified with more than one type of use. No carriage drivers or motorcyclists completed the questionnaire and only 3.5% were 4X4 users.

Over 98.5% of respondents cited pleasure together with health and recreation as being the main reason for accessing the countryside. A further 25% cited dog walking as a reason and only 5% stated that they used the path network to either get to school or work.

Over 58% of respondents accessed the countryside more than once a week, with 27% doing so more than once a month. Those that identified themselves as horse riders or cyclists are accessing the countryside more often.

Figure 7 shows a breakdown of frequency of use by user types.

Lengths of Routes Preferred

Clearly, the preferred length of route tends to depend on the type of activity. However, the majority of walkers, cyclists and horse riders expressed a preference for routes between 2 and 8 miles in length.

Figure 8 shows a breakdown of route preference by user types.

Interestingly, even when one considers the preferred route length against age groups, there remains a preference for medium length routes.

Figure 9 shows the routes preferred by the differing age groups.

Figure 6

Age of Respondents

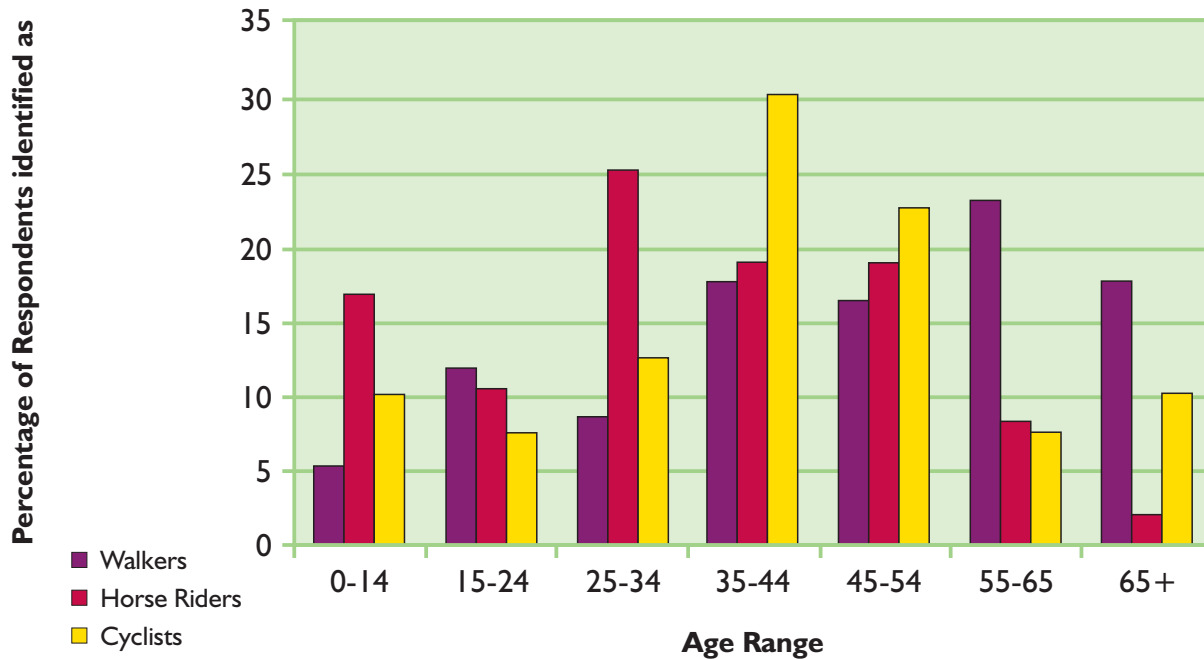
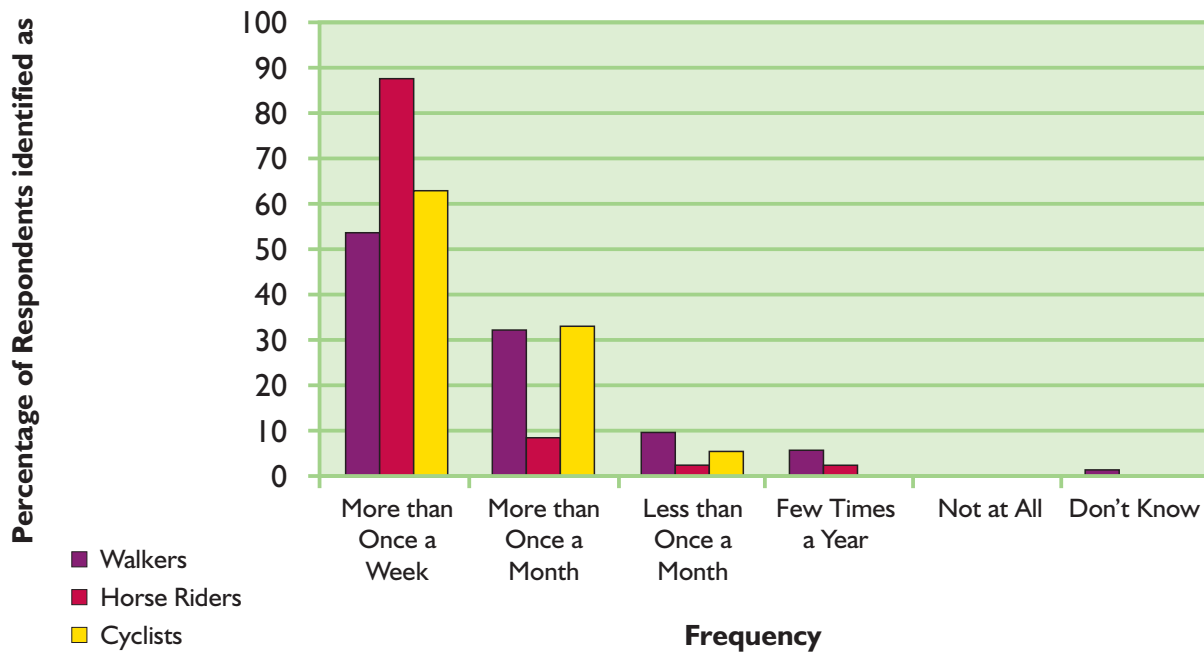
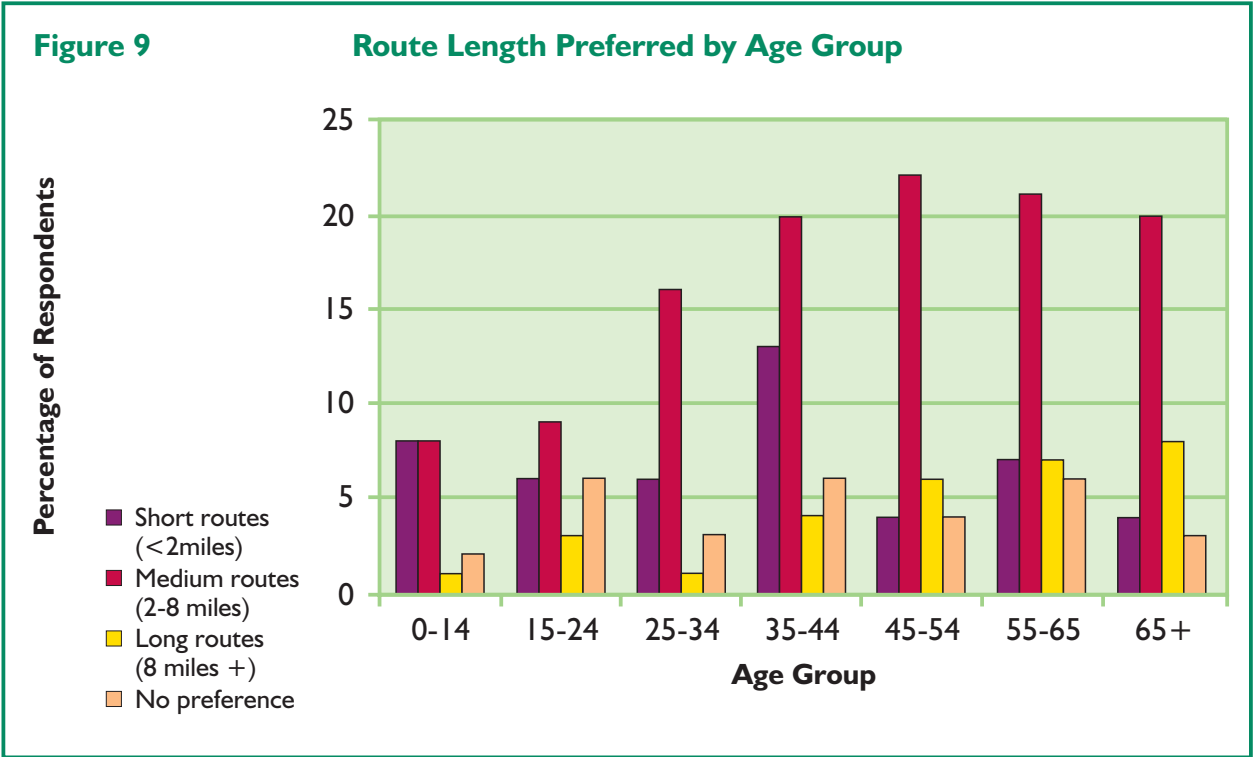
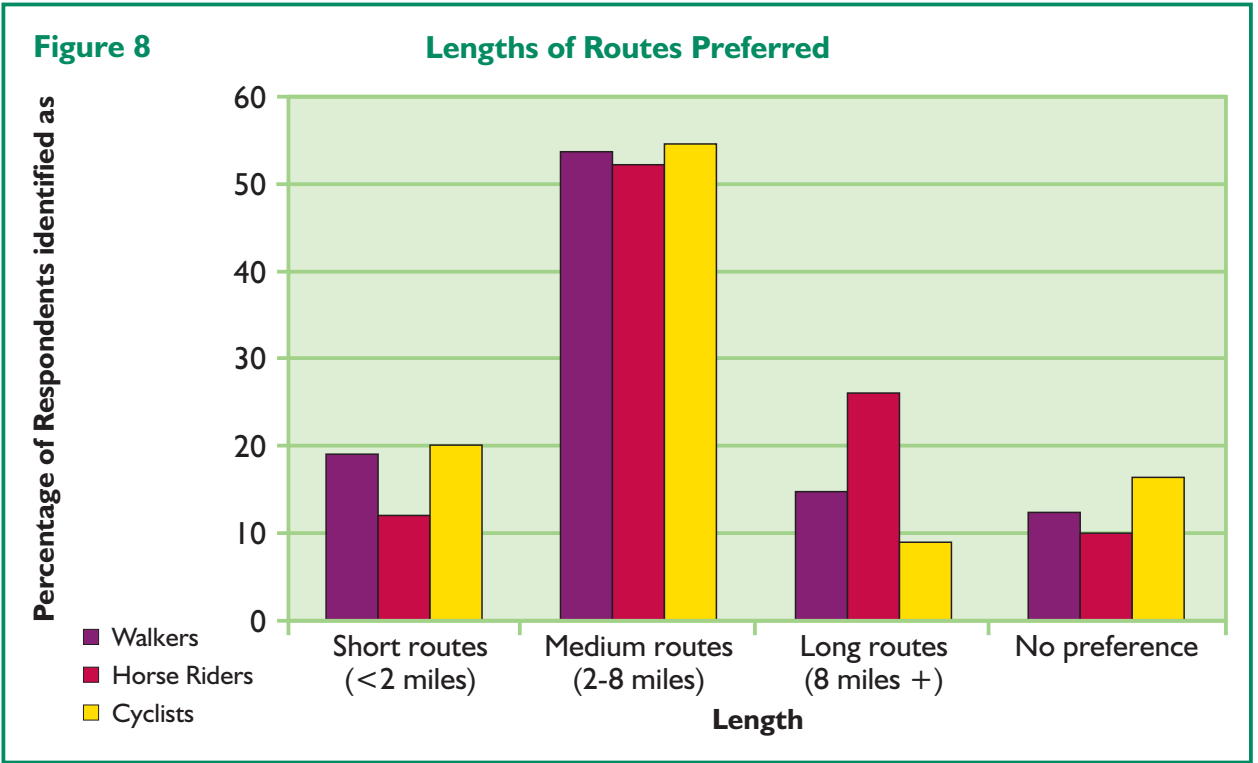


Figure 7

Frequency of Use





Sources of Information

The majority of those completing the questionnaire appear to access the countryside regularly. The main source of information with regard to where they can go is derived from local knowledge. Ordnance Survey maps remain a key source of information for all users. It is apparent that the information available to horse riders in leaflet format is very limited and the use of websites is relatively minimal.

Figure 10 shows the percentage of each user type that use various sources of information to find out where to access the countryside.

Distances Travelled to Access the Countryside

When asked to estimate the distance that they travelled to access the countryside, differences emerged in the differing types of user. Of those that identified themselves as walkers, 49.7% usually travelled between 0 and 10 miles to access the countryside. For cyclists, the figure was not dissimilar with 45% travelling this distance. However, with those that identified themselves as horse riders, 75% usually travelled between 0 and 10 miles, with 58.3% travelling between 0 and 3 miles. No horse riders recorded a usual travelling distance between 16 and 50+ miles, however, 14.7% of walkers stated that they usually travel this distance.

Figure 11 shows the percentage of each user types travelling various distances to access the countryside.

Access to the Countryside Methods of Transport

The dominant mode of transport for all users to access the countryside is the car. Over three quarters of respondents identified as walkers use the car, although 46% of this group also stated that they go by foot. This means that whilst the car remains the dominant means of getting to the countryside, walking from home forms a large part of their countryside access. Very low percentages of all user types utilise public transport, for cyclists this is understandable as the facilities for carrying bicycles on buses are limited.

Figure 12 shows the percentage of each user types utilising various modes of transport to access the countryside.

Deterrents to Accessing the Countryside

When asked what deters them from accessing the countryside, the main reason cited by users was a lack of signposting and waymarking, closely followed by overgrowing vegetation. A general lack of information together with problems experienced with stiles, gates and other obstructions closely followed.

Figure 13 Details a breakdown of those deterrents identified by all users.

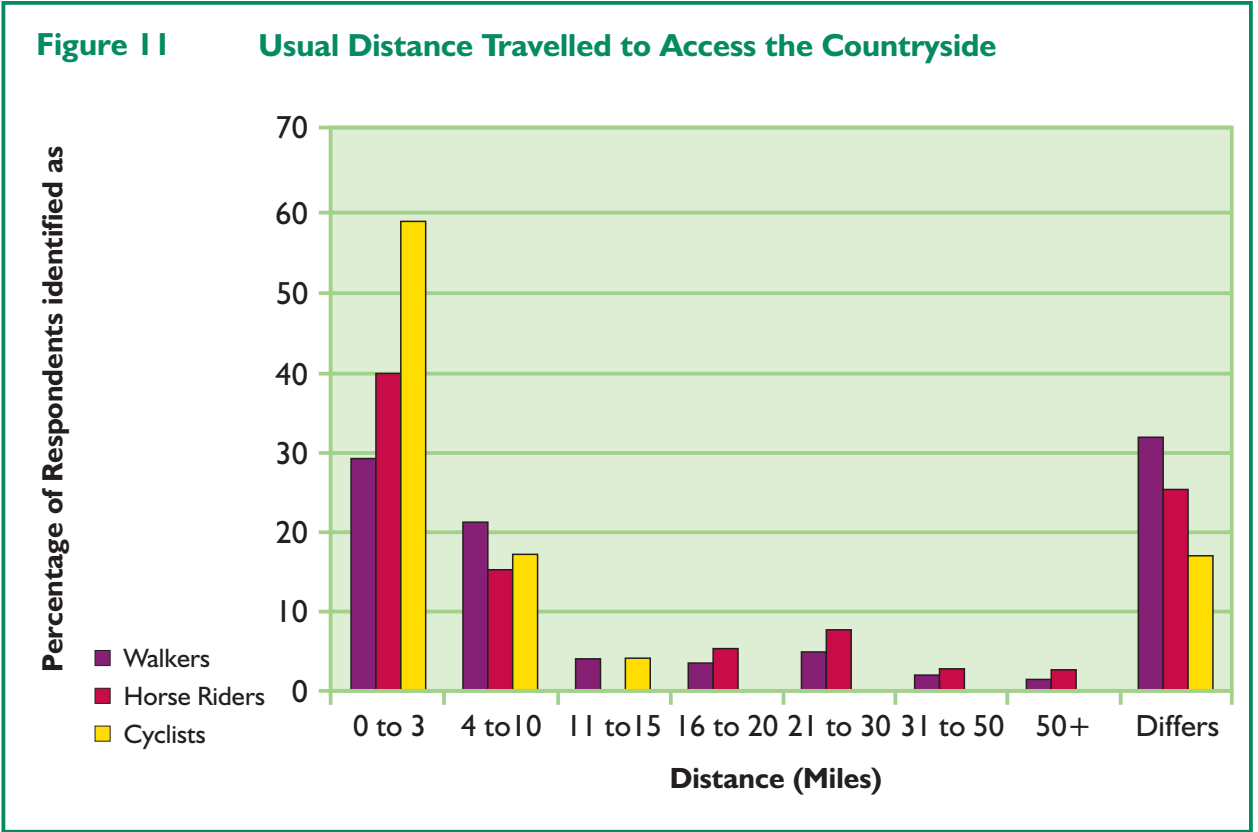
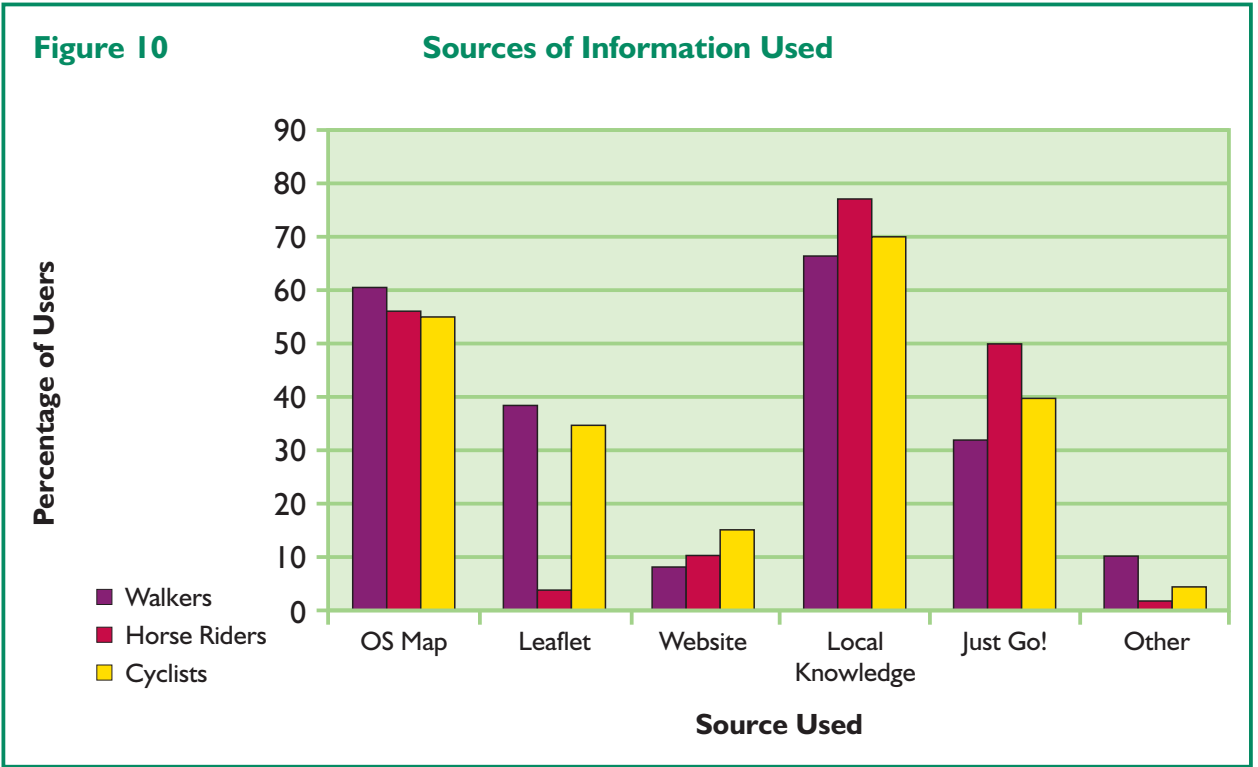


Figure 12

Method of accessing countryside

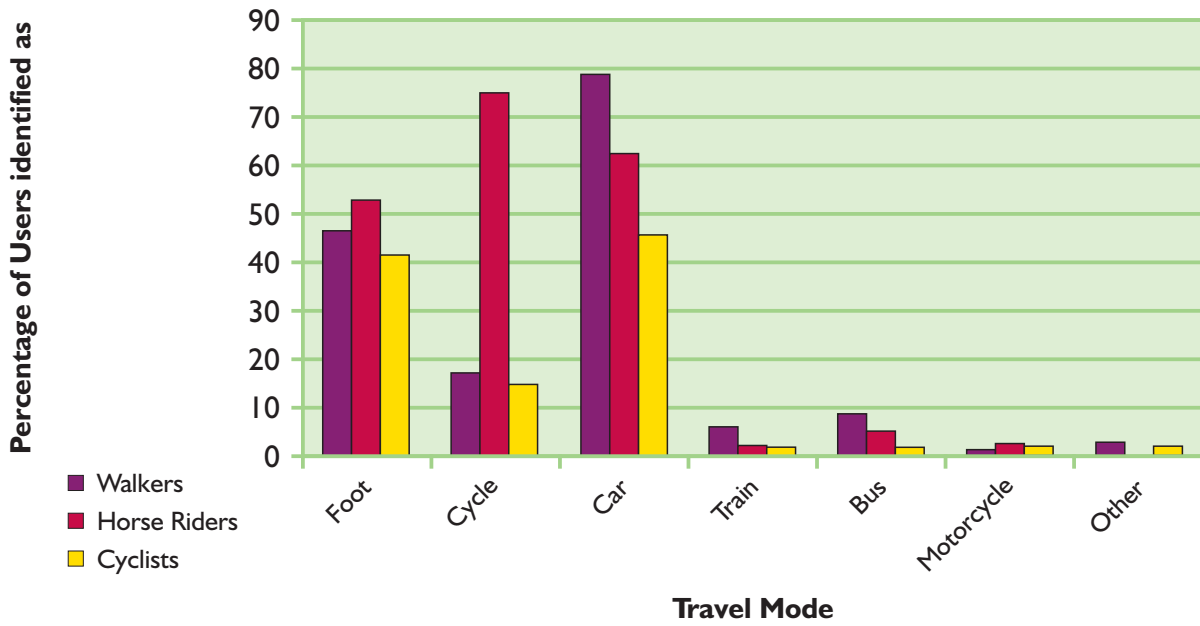
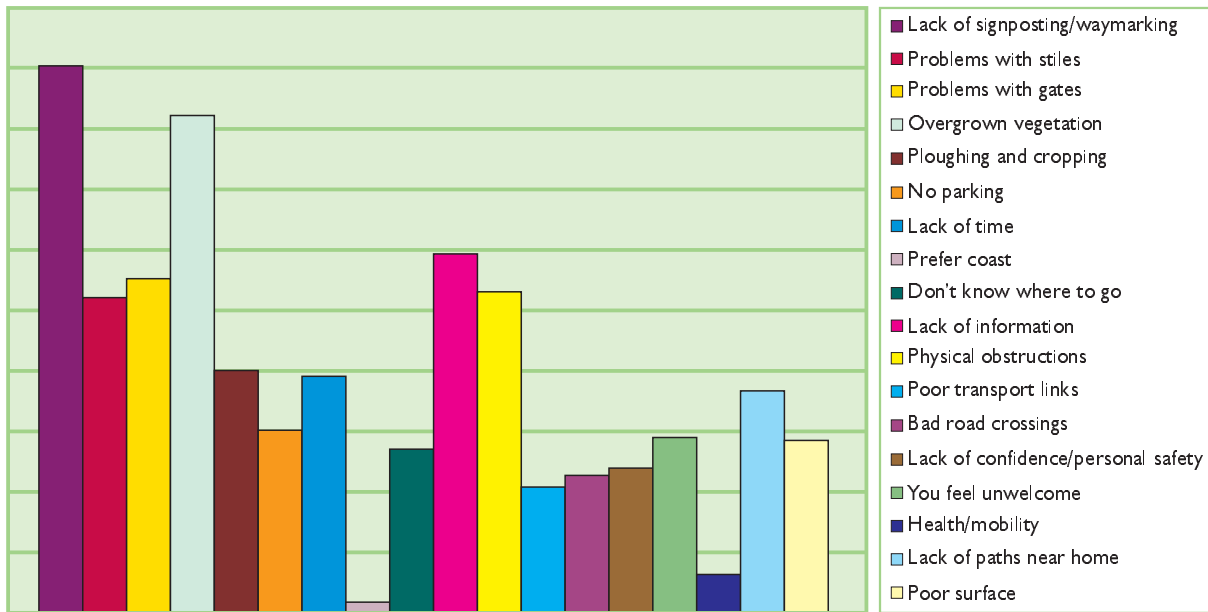


Figure 13

Deterrents to Accessing the Countryside



Other issues identified included dog fouling, fast roads, inconsiderate car drivers and loose dogs.

When asked what would improve access to the countryside, the responses included the following:

- More bridleways
- Better stiles for the less agile
- Slow down road traffic
- Improve overall path maintenance
- Better car parking
- Improved public transport links
- Improved tolerance between different users

The key issues identified through the questionnaire completed by members of the public and the user groups can be summarised as follows:

- Horse riding is enjoyed predominantly by women and girls
- Main reason for accessing the countryside, for all users, is for health and recreation
- Dog walking is a significant trip generator for countryside access
- Horse riders access the countryside more often than most other users
- Routes of between 6 to 8 miles are preferred by the majority of all types of users
- The information available to horse riders relating to route availability is very limited
- The majority of countryside access for all types of users is within 10 miles from home
- The dominant mode of transport used to gain access to the countryside is the car.

The six major deterrents to accessing the countryside for all users can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of signposting/waymarking
- Overgrown vegetation
- Lack of information
- Physical obstructions
- Problems with gates
- Problems with stiles.

Other significant deterrents to accessing the countryside that were identified can be summarised as follows:

- Poor surfaces;
- Lack of user confidence;
- Bad main road crossings;
- Ploughing and cropping; and
- Lack of time.

4. Staffordshire County Council Country Park User Questionnaires

As part of its drive for continuous improvement and to facilitate benchmarking with other authorities, Staffordshire County Council regularly conducts a survey of users of its Country Parks. Whilst the main thrust of the information gathered relates to the individual parks, some pertinent points have emerged:

- 12% of visitors to Apedale Country Park and 20% of visitors to Cannock Chase Country Park travel from holiday accommodation or friends.
- Visits are predominantly as a result of a previous visit or by recommendation, few visits result from leaflet promotion.
- No visitors felt unsafe in the country parks.
- An average of 12% of visitors reported experiencing problems accessing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways.

5. Cannock Chase AONB Visitor Survey 2000

As part of the development of the AONB Management Plan, the AONB Partnership commissioned Staffordshire University to undertake a visitor survey to the AONB in 2000. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the use of the AONB, together with users' views on ways in which their enjoyment could be improved.

Whilst the survey was specific to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, many of the findings are related to general issues associated with access to the countryside by the public. They can be summarised as follows:

- The majority of visits are of short duration, two thirds lasting less than two hours
- Cyclists' visits last longer and their impacts tend to be enhanced
- 81% of visitors arrive by car
- Cycling and running activities are dominated by younger, male participants
- Horse riding is more evidently a female activity
- Access Issues identified included littering, conflicts between differing users, fears over vehicle security and problems with signposting/waymarking of paths
- Suggested improvements included more toilet provision, refreshment points, litter and dog bins, more surfaced paths for wheelchairs and pushchairs.
- More signage, maps, guided and self guided walks were also requested.

Appendix N

Statement of Action

Key to Statement of Action Tables

Resources required to deliver action points:

- ★ Achievable within existing budgetary and staffing resources.
- ★★ Achievable within existing budgetary and staffing resources and additional funding already secured via LTP.
- ★★★ Only achievable with additional external funding.

Estimated costs:

It is difficult to estimate costs precisely. The following have been used as a guide. Where delivery is primarily a staffing issue then no symbol is shown.

- £ Where it is estimated that the action will cost less than £10,000 per year.
- ££ Where it is estimated that the action will cost between £10,000 and £50,000 per year.
- £££ Where it is estimated that the action will cost more than £50,000 per year.

Abbreviations for key partners/organisations:

BHS	British Horse Society
BW	British Waterways
CLA	Country Land and Business Association
JLAF	Staffordshire, Stoke and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NFU	National Farmers Union
PCTs	Primary Care Trusts
CUCT	Caldon and Uttoxeter Canals Trust
BEN	Black Environment Network
SMDC	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
PDNPA	Peak District National Park Authority

Other Abbreviations:

BVPI 178	Best Value Performance Indicator 178 which monitors the 'ease of use' of public rights of way.
CPI	Community Paths Initiative
LTP	Local Transport Plan (2006-11)
WHI	Walking for Health Initiative

Theme 1: A better signed, maintained and accessible path network				
1. Improve the condition of the network				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Review the current priority system for in-house path maintenance work.	★	BVPI 178	SCC JLAF User groups Parish or town councils	Review completed by December 2008
b) Review existing enforcement policy and procedures.	★	BVPI 178	SCC JLAF	Review completed by July 2008
c) Develop a rolling programme of Public Path Orders for resolving permanent obstructions.	★	No. of issues resolved	SCC District/Borough & Parish or town Councils User groups	Programme completed by March 2008
d) Improve waymarking on routes. Survey (and replace if necessary) 30% of roadside fingerposts annually.	★	BVPI 178	SCC User groups Parish or Town Councils	Ongoing (✓)
e) Review the annual maintenance programme.	★	BVPI 178	SCC JLAF User groups Parish or Town Councils	Review completed by December 2008
f) Establish a database of all path furniture installed on the network.	★	Database established	SCC User groups Parish or Town Councils	Completed by 2009/10

2. Improve the accessibility of routes				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Establish “least restrictive option” working practices for new stiles and gates.	★	Adoption of revised working practices	SCC JLAF Landowners	Operational by 2007/08
b) Replace stiles with kissing gates through the Community Paths Initiative.	★	No. of gates fitted	SCC. District Councils Parish or Town Councils	Ongoing
c) Identify and improve routes suitable for people with disabilities through the Community Paths Initiative and in partnership with District Councils	★★ ££	No. of paths improved	SCC District Councils Parish or Town Councils	Ongoing (✓)
d) Produce landowner guidance leaflet to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ploughing and cropping ● Maintenance of structures ● Responsibilities with livestock ● Other obstructions. 	★★ £	Production of leaflet	SCC JLAF Parish or town Councils User groups NFU, CLA	Leaflet produced December 2008

Theme 2: A more connected and safer network for all users				
1. Improve links with the wider countryside				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Ensure that all Access Land sites are accessible by a public right of way.	★★ ££	% sites accessible	SCC Natural England Landowners	All sites accessible by 2010/11
b) Establish a pedestrian route which links Froghall and Oakamoor	★★ £	Route established	SCC CUCT BW Landowners North Staffordshire Railway Co. SMDC	Route completed by 2011/12
c) Establish a long distance walking route along the River Trent and which links to the River Tame	★	Route established	SCC Environment Agency Other Las	Route completed by 2009/10

2. Improve the provision of off-road routes for horse riders and cyclists				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Develop a strategy/priority system for resolving cul-de-sac routes.	★	Strategy developed	SCC JLAF User groups	Completed by March 2008
b) Review the current prioritisation system for dealing with Modification Order applications.	★	Review completed	SCC District and Parish Councils JLAF User groups	Review completed by March 2008
c) Review licensed horse riding schemes on County Council owned access land.	★	Review complete	SCC JLAF User groups Parish or town Councils	Review completed by December 2008
d) Develop and establish the Potteries Ring Route.	★★ ££	Length of total established	SCC District/Stoke User groups	20% of route in 2007/08 40% of route 2008/09 80% of route 2010/11

3. Improve safety				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Establish at least one horse riding/cycling route in each District.	★	No. routes completed	SCC District and Parish or town Councils Sustrans User groups	One route per annum
b) Establish at least one circular route for the less agile in each District.	★	No. routes completed	As above	As above
c) Develop a series of 6 circular walking routes based on the Way for the Millennium.	★	No. of walks developed and established	SCC	Routes established March 2008
d) Develop a strategy/priority system for dealing with routes severed by road schemes	★★ ££	Development of strategy	SCC Highways Agency User groups JLAF	Completed by March 2008

Theme 3: Encourage greater community involvement in the rights of way work				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Review the Community Paths Initiative.	★	Review completed	SCC JLAF Parish or town Councils User groups	Review completed March 2009

Theme 4: Protect the path network				
1. Improve the availability of rights of way information				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Make the Definitive Map and Statement available for public inspection via the County Council's website.	★	Definitive Map available on website	SCC	Available by 2007/08 (✓)
b) Make the registers of Modification Order applications and Public path Order applications available on the County Council's website.	★	As above	SCC	As above

2. Provide quality information about rights of way				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Continue to provide prompt and authoritative rights of way information to potential developers and other outside agencies.	★	Information provided	SCC Developers LPAs	Ongoing
b) Develop a 'Public Rights of Way Guide for Developers'.	★	Guide developed	SCC	Guide available by 2007/008 (✓)
c) Continue to update the Definitive Map and Statement for legal events and related boundary and descriptive changes.	★	Review progress	SCC	Updated Definitive Map published by 2009/10

3. Promote Improvements to the Rights of Way Network				
Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Work closely with local planning authorities and site developers to reduce the impact of development on the path network and to secure improvements.	★	BVPI 178	SCC LPAs Developers	Ongoing

Theme 5: Encourage greater use of the rights of way network by engendering an understanding of the benefits of outdoor recreation

1. Promote better understanding

Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Promote the social and health benefits of walking, riding and cycling through the County Council's website.	★	Information available on website	SCC Natural England WHI	Available by 2008/09

2. Encourage use

Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Establish and promote circular routes to be used for healthy walking schemes.	★★ ££	No. of routes promoted	SCC Parish and District Councils User groups WHI PCTs	Ongoing
b) Publish the annual guided walks programme.	★	Programme published	SCC	Ongoing (✓)
c) Revise and publish 'Countryside Facilities for the Disabled' leaflet.	★	Leaflet published	SCC	Leaflet published March 2008
d) Promote the value of the network to ethnic minorities through the Rainbow Countryside Scheme.	★	Information available	BEN	Leaflet published March 2008
e) Identify and promote sustainable routes for disabled motorised vehicle users in the Peak District National Park.	★	No. of routes promoted	SCC PDNPA	Ongoing
f) Review the opportunities and different means for encouraging greater use of the network.	★	Advice available to SCC	JLAF	2008/9

3. Improve the quality of information

Proposed actions	Resources	Monitored by	Key Organisations	Time scales Quick wins (✓)
a) Publish information about 'easy access' paths on the County Council's website.	★	Information available on website	As above	Available 2008/09

Appendix O

Summary of Consultations in response to draft ROWIP

Parish Council	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Burntwood Town Council	<p>Comment in general that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ measurements should be expressed in imperial, not metric terms ■ more action is needed on rights of way in the Lichfield area ■ there is no specific reference to Burntwood ■ the document could have been produced in a more-user friendly format. <p>They also suggest that parish and district councils could assist with examining and retrieving the historical evidence relating to definitive map modification order applications.</p>	<p>The ROWIP is a strategy for managing the public path network across the County in general. It does not deal with specific towns or villages, although some examples are given.</p> <p>More specific and detailed consideration will be given to assessing and addressing the needs of specific areas at the implementation stage of the ROWIP.</p> <p>Overall, the comments which have been received about the ROWIP have been favourable.</p> <p>The examination of the evidence which accompanies definitive map modification order applications is extensive and has to be carried out by specially trained staff.</p>
Ingestre with Tixall Parish Council	<p>Comment on the recent cut in the staffing levels of the Rights of Way Legal team and the impact on determining definitive map modification order applications. They also mention that the ROWIP does not refer to the impact of the path network on tourism and that the Heart of England Way is not shown on Appendix A.</p>	<p>The ROWIP proposes a review of the existing working practices and priority criteria for determining definitive map modification order applications so that the County Council can give priority consideration to applications with greater public benefit. The economic and social benefits of outdoor recreation are discussed in detail at Appendix B.</p> <p>The Map at Appendix A has been amended.</p>
Great Wyrley Parish Council	<p>Generally supports the aims and ambitions of the ROWIP, although they consider it to be over-long and repetitive. They wish to see action on the ground.</p>	<p>One of the aims of the ROWIP is to improve service delivery and to improve the path network so that it reflects the needs of its users.</p>
Kings Bromley Parish Council	<p>Considers that the plans and ideas in the ROWIP are very good. Their concern is that there will not be sufficient funds for its implementation.</p>	<p>The ROWIP acknowledges that securing additional funding for rights of way work will be challenging given the current financial climate. However, some of the proposals are ongoing and will be easily achievable in the short-term, whilst others will require substantial funding and more co-operation between other parties over a much longer period of time.</p>
Eccleshall Parish Council	<p>Comment on the recent cut in the staffing level of the Rights of Way Legal team and suggest that parish councils should be involved in reviewing the prioritisation system for public path orders and modification order applications.</p> <p>They also suggest that developers should be charged for rights of way information.</p>	<p>The ROWIP proposes a review of the existing working practices and priority criteria for determining definitive map modification order applications so that the County Council can give priority consideration to applications with greater public benefit.</p> <p>Amendment to Theme 2.2 to include Parish Councils.</p> <p>The County Council currently charges for rights of way information supplied in response to searches. Information is provided free of charge to developers to ensure that rights of way are not obstructed as a result of the development.</p>

Parish Council	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Shenstone Parish Council	Support the thrust of the ROWIP and make specific comments about the accessibility of routes in their parish and local area.	More specific and detailed consideration will be given to assessing and addressing the needs of particular areas at the implementation stage of the ROWIP.
Cheslyn Hay Parish Council	Consider that there is nothing controversial in the ROWIP. They agree that the ageing population will be an issue in the future but feel there is no easy solution to making paths more accessible. They also raise several issues about paths in their area.	More specific and detailed consideration will be given to assessing and addressing the needs of particular areas at the implementation stage of the ROWIP. We will endeavour to work closely with Parish Councils at that time.
Keele Parish Council	<p>Finds the draft ROWIP an excellent statement of the problems affecting rights of way particularly in the Keele area and is encouraged by the County Council's proposals for improvement.</p> <p>Their principal concern is the lack of an adequate network of bridleways in the Keele area.</p>	More specific and detailed consideration will be given to assessing and addressing the needs of particular areas at the implementation stage of the ROWIP.
Fulford Parish Council	Welcomes the proposals contained in the draft ROWIP and hope that funding will be made available to implement it.	The County Council shares their concerns about the availability of funding to implement the ROWIP proposals and emphasises that partnership working is fundamental to its success.
Stowe by Chartley Parish Council	Welcomes the opportunity to become involved with establishing circular horse riding routes. They comment that they have been successful in bidding for grant-aid under the Community Paths Initiative scheme, but are often constrained by the level of grant available. They also recognise that the health benefits associated with outdoor recreation are considerable.	The County Council welcomes their support and their ongoing commitment to become involved with rights of way work.
Kinver Parish Council	Seem concerned at the lack of reference to Kinver as a honey pot area for outdoor recreation because of its scenic amenity and because of the growth in the number of retired people living in South Staffordshire.	<p>The ROWIP is a strategy for managing the public path network across the County in general. It does not deal with specific towns or villages, although some examples are given.</p> <p>More specific and detailed consideration will be given to assessing and addressing the needs of the higher demand areas, such as Kinver, at the implementation stage of the ROWIP.</p>
Mary Booth - Gnosall Parish Council	Supports the need to continue and expand the Community Paths Initiative. Also stresses the importance of Parish Councils and their local knowledge in dealing with rights of way issues.	The ROWIP acknowledges that partnership working is fundamental to the success of the ROWIP and the need to develop and increase greater community involvement and partnership working is a key priority.

Organisation	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Robert Cox Mid Staffs Ramblers Association	Expresses concern that access to a significant proportion of the path network is denied each year because paths are ploughed illegally or obstructed by crops. He feels that the County Council should declare its intent to resolve this ongoing problem.	There are proposals in the ROWIP which will, hopefully, address this issue. These include improving working relationships between the highway authority and landowners, producing a guidance leaflet for landowners and a review of the County Council's existing enforcement policy and procedures.
Sustrans	Support the general tone of the themes in the Statement of Action and Appendix N. They make the following suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the establishment of more greenways as a means of providing more off-road routes for horse riders and cyclists ■ a regional route network ■ a Staffordshire Cycleway similar to those provided in Cheshire and Lancashire ■ issues relating to specific cycling routes 	Over the Plan period, the ROWIP proposes to increase the provision of off-road routes for all users, but especially cyclists and horse riders. Success will depend on funding being available and partnership working with agencies like Sustrans to maximise the resources available.
Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Wolverhampton Joint Local Access Forum	Suggest the following amendments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the review of the priority system for path maintenance work and annual maintenance programme should be combined and the JLAF should be involved. ■ include action to complete the national cycle network (NCN). ■ include action to establish at least one walking route in each district ■ amend Theme 2.3d in Appendix N to omit "major" ■ include action for the JLAF to be involved in encouraging greater use of the path network 	<p>Paths included on the annual maintenance programme are given priority because their use is high, therefore, the two reviews do not relate to and will not consider the same issues.</p> <p>The ability to deliver completion of the NCN is beyond the scope of the ROWIP.</p> <p>The ROWIP proposes the establishment of one horse riding and cycling route in each district. Walkers will be able to use these routes.</p> <p>Amendments to Themes 1.1e, 2.3d and 5.2f</p>
National Farmers Union West Midlands Region	Stresses the need to consult with farmers and landowners on any changes to path furniture and the importance of keeping the Definitive Map up to date. They also comment on the length of time taken by the authority to process Modification Order applications and wish to see more paths diverted out of farmyards.	The ROWIP acknowledges the need for partnership working and the NFU and landowners are regarded as key organisations in many of the proposals contained in the ROWIP.
North Staffs Bridleways Association	Are delighted with the proposals to improve the network for horse riders and are happy with the phased approach and time-scales for improvements. They are also pleased about the proposal to support the Potteries Ring Route which they have promoted.	

Organisation	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Staffordshire Area of Ramblers Association	<p>Congratulate the County Council for producing a comprehensive and well-argued Plan, which addresses all the major issues. They have concerns about funding for its implementation.</p> <p>Specifically, they accept the principle of a “sliding scale” of maintenance based on a path’s likely use, but are concerned about this policy on local paths and on the will to meet statutory obligations.</p> <p>In addressing definitive map anomalies such as obstructed routes, they consider that the emphasis should be on securing an alternative route rather than on extinguishment.</p> <p>They support the proposal to review the prioritisation system for dealing with maintenance work but feel that enforcement action should be given a higher profile.</p>	<p>The ROWIP proposes that the review of the prioritisation system for dealing with rights of way maintenance work will be carried out by user groups, parish councils and the JLAF. The issue of local paths will, therefore, be taken into account. There is no intention on the part of the County Council to shirk its statutory responsibilities but the review will provide a means of allocating scarce resources in favour of those paths which have a higher degree of use.</p> <p>Regarding obstructed routes, the County Council’s role is to protect and enhance the path network and alternative routes are secured wherever possible.</p> <p>Enforcement action is taken where the circumstances of the case warrant such action and where the problem cannot be resolved by any other means.</p>
Moorlands Hub	Suggest three circular cycling routes for the Cheadle area.	<p>The County Council welcomes the routes suggested by the Hub which seem very worthwhile. However, the ROWIP is a strategy for managing the public path network across the County in general and does not deal with the creation of specific routes.</p> <p>The routes will be discussed with the Hub at the implementation stage of the ROWIP.</p>
Inland Waterways Association (Stoke-on-Trent and Lichfield Branches).	Generally content with the ROWIP but suggest spelling and amendments to the text and canals listed and shown on the map.	Amendments to text on canal towpaths on page 29.
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Stresses the need to check the Staffordshire Ecological Record for any environmental or ecological constraints before maintenance work is carried out on public rights of way.	The County Council already has an established protocol for ensuring that there are no environmental or ecological constraints before any maintenance work is carried out.
North Staffordshire Railway Company	Expresses a wish to be involved in the establishment of the long distance walking route linking Froghall and Oakamoor.	Amendment to Theme 2.1b.
British Waterways	<p>Recognise in principle that towpaths provide an opportunity and valuable contribution towards sustainable transport routes and links for cycling and walking within Staffordshire. However, they wish to be consulted on detailed proposals as they develop.</p> <p>As a general rule they are not willing to designate any towpaths as public rights of way and horse riding is not permitted on towpaths for health and safety reasons.</p>	The ROWIP acknowledges that the County Council does not have the capacity to deliver the improvements in the ROWIP alone and welcomes the involvement of other agencies.

Organisation	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Cannock Chase AONB Partnership	Supports the development and delivery of a co-ordinated ROWIP and welcomes the publication of the document. They comment that encouragement of greater use of the network and its facilities must be tempered with the provision of appropriate information and education about the use of the countryside and land management practices to control the use of sensitive areas such as AONB.	
Natural England	<p>Pleased that the layout and detailed content of the draft ROWIP follows the Statutory Guidance for producing Rights of Way Improvement Plans. The document is well thought out and contains a great deal of valuable supplementary statistical evidence and background information.</p> <p>More details on monitoring the implementation of the Plan including policy and funding links to the Staffordshire LTP are required.</p>	Amendments to the Introduction and Chapter 5.
Newcastle Ramblers' Group	<p>Considers that the ROWIP provides an impressive and achievable Plan for the improvement of rights of way in Staffordshire.</p> <p>They agree with many of the proposals, including prioritising resources in areas of higher demand and feel that Parish Councils and volunteer groups could assist more with waymarking paths, compiling a database of path furniture and identifying and improving routes for the less agile.</p>	The County Council welcomes the involvement of parish councils and volunteer groups, particularly with rights of way maintenance work and in identifying and improving routes.

Adjoining Authority	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Peak District National Park Authority	Congratulates the County Council on the content and presentation of the ROWIP and recognises that many of the themes are consistent with its own policies and priorities to improve accessibility in the Peak Park. The PDNPA are also keen to play their part in the delivery of a number of the ROWIP's aims.	The County Council welcomes their involvement, particularly with rights of way maintenance work and identifying and improving strategic routes.
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	Welcomes the emphasis of prioritising rights of way maintenance work in areas of high demand and seeks to work in partnership with the County Council to deliver the general and some more specific aims of the ROWIP.	Amendments to Theme 1.2b, 1.2c, 2.2b and 2.3a.
Derbyshire County Council	Congratulates the County Council on the content and presentation of the ROWIP and welcome the opportunity for partnership working on resolving mapping anomalies and improving the network.	

Individual Member of the Public	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Peter J. Smith	Considers the ROWIP to be a well-thought out strategy and understands the need for prioritising rights of way maintenance work, although some concern is expressed about little used paths falling into disrepair. He supports the Community Paths Initiative and suggests that user groups could assist with gathering information on path furniture.	Amendment to Theme 1. If.
Geoff Budd	Considers the ROWIP to be a very comprehensive and interesting document. He supports the establishment of promoted routes and comments that problems on these routes should be constantly attended to. He also states that there is no Definitive Map for Burton-on-Trent.	Maintenance work on promoted routes is currently given priority and it is anticipated that it will continue to do so when the current prioritisation system is reviewed as part of the ROWIP proposals. The Definitive Map for Burton-on-Trent was published in December 2004.
Dr. Gerald Gittens	<p>Considers that the ROWIP presents a well-reasoned draft Plan. He expresses concern about the validity of the survey results which do not seem to have involved a fair proportion of regular users.</p> <p>He points out that the County Council has a legal obligation to maintain all public paths and recommends time controlled criteria. He also feels that more action should be taken against landowners when they fail to meet their legal obligations.</p> <p>He agrees that the social and health benefits are one of the best driving forces for improving the accessibility of the network.</p>	<p>The County Council made every effort to consult as widely as possible. (see Appendix M). However, the response to the questionnaires which were made available in many County Council outlets and the street survey were generally poor.</p> <p>There is no intention on the part of the County Council to shirk its statutory responsibilities but the review will provide a means of allocating scarce resources in favour of those paths which have a higher degree of use.</p> <p>There is a proposal in the ROWIP to review the County Council's existing enforcement policy and procedures.</p>
David Kidney MP	Approves whole-heartedly of the proposals in the ROWIP and is enthused by them. He encourages the County Council to put the priorities into effect as they have been formulated and offers his support.	
Mrs. L.J. Gamston	<p>Generally agrees with the proposals and content of the ROWIP. Comments that routes should be well waymarked, with destination and distance, and accessible, particularly promoted routes. Path furniture must be maintained in good order and, wherever possible, the needs of the less agile should be met.</p> <p>Expresses reservations about being able to recruit volunteer help.</p> <p>Agrees with the prioritisation of actions in Appendix N.</p>	<p>The proposals contained in the Statement of Action will address most of these concerns and comments.</p> <p>Fingerposts currently display the status of routes. However, whilst there is some merit in displaying distance and destination, the cost of signing individual routes would be prohibitive at the present time. Parish Councils could be asked to consider the suggestion as a possible project under the Community Paths Initiative.</p>

Individual Member of the Public	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Geoff Loadwick	<p>Congratulates the County Council on producing a well-reasoned draft Plan.</p> <p>He feels that the prioritisation of footpath maintenance work is sensible but wishes to see a “defined and graduated set of maximum target times”. He welcomes the use of gaps rather than stiles and the proposal to produce a guidance leaflet for landowners. He also feels that there is a need for more way marking particularly through farm yards.</p>	<p>The review of the prioritisation system for maintenance work will cover such issues as targets for completion of work.</p> <p>Amendment to Theme 1.1d to include waymarking, as well as replacing missing fingerposts.</p>
Rachel Davis	<p>Seem concerned at the lack of reference to Kinver as a honey pot area for outdoor recreation because of its scenic amenity and because of the growth in the number of retired people living in South Staffordshire.</p>	<p>The ROWIP is a strategy for managing the public path network across the County in general. It does not deal with specific towns or villages, although some examples are given.</p> <p>More specific and detailed consideration will be given to assessing and addressing the needs of the higher demand areas, such as Kinver, at the implementation stage of the ROWIP.</p>
Brian Buxton	<p>Points out that horse riders and cyclists are prohibited on the Jinny Trail.</p>	<p>Amendment to text on Greenways on page 29.</p>
Derek G. Heaton	<p>Considers that the ROWIP is an excellent document with many welcome improvements, particularly those associated with improving access for the less agile. He hopes that sufficient funds are made available for their implementation.</p>	
Peter Hill	<p>Points out the contribution that horse riding makes to employment, sales and tourism and that the lack of bridleway provision impedes the leisure and tourism industry. Concern is also expressed about the reclassification of the RUPPs to footpaths in the Special Review.</p>	<p>The ROWIP acknowledges that the percentage of the network available to horse riders and cyclists is poor. There are a number of measures in the ROWIP, which are key priorities, to address this shortfall in access provision, including the re-prioritisation of outstanding Section 53 applications.</p> <p>The County Council acknowledges that reclassifying many RUPPs to footpaths in the Special Review has contributed to the inadequate provision of bridleways. However, the County Council has given its commitment to addressing the shortfall in bridleway provision in the ROWIP.</p>
Marylin Anderson	<p>Points out that the Jinny Trail is not a Greenway because horse riders and cyclists are prohibited and that the proposed NCN route to the north of Rolleston is not shown on the Strategic Cycling Network Map.</p>	<p>The term Greenway is used to describe off-road routes which are generally for shared use by all classes of user, although in some cases cyclists and/or horse riders are prohibited. This is the case on the Jinny Trail.</p> <p>Amendment to Strategic Cycling Network Map.</p>
Noel Lovatt	<p>Agrees with comments made in the ROWIP about the poor provision of bridleways in North Staffordshire.</p>	

Individual Member of the Public	Response to Consultation Document	SCC Comments
Harry Pugh	<p>Suggests that proximity to large conurbations should not be the main criterion for deciding priority for maintenance. He feels that priority should be based on the popularity, need and other criteria of individual routes.</p> <p>He also proposes two off-road routes which would be suitable for cyclists.</p>	<p>A key Action of the ROWIP will be a review of the criteria for prioritising rights of way maintenance work. Many factors will be taken into account to determine future priorities such as those suggested.</p> <p>The proposals for the two cycling routes will be investigated in due course.</p>
Muriel Buckley	<p>Expresses concern about the general lack of bridleways and off-road routes for horse riders, particularly in view of the growth in the number of horse owners. Concern is also expressed about the reclassification of paths and delays in determining Section 53 applications.</p>	<p>The ROWIP acknowledges that the percentage of the network available to horse riders and cyclists is poor. There are a number of measures in the ROWIP, which are key priorities, to address this shortfall in access provision, including the re-prioritisation of outstanding Section 53 applications.</p>
Michael J. Griffin	<p>Agrees with the proposals to publish the Definitive Map on the website, and the provision of the long distance walking route between Froghall and Oakamoor and the Potteries Ring Route.</p> <p>He feels that the level of maintenance on cul-de-sac routes should be minimal and that maintenance work could be undertaken by people doing community service.</p> <p>He also feels that parking facilities could be provided closer to some routes.</p>	<p>The review of the priority system for rights of way maintenance work will address the issue of a lower level of maintenance on less well-used routes. The County Council welcomes the involvement of all volunteer and community groups in rights of way work.</p>
County Councillor Mrs. Lovatt	<p>Comments that it is a good Plan, but a glossary is required at the beginning of the document.</p> <p>Expresses concerns about the delays in determining definitive map modification order applications and does not feel that reviewing the existing priority criteria will help to clear the backlog of applications.</p> <p>Other issues are raised relevant to the Biddulph area</p>	<p>Glossary included. Amendments to text in Chapter 4.</p> <p>The purpose of reviewing the priority criteria is not to remove the backlog. The current system of determining applications does not take into account the public benefit attached to the application. It is suggested that by reviewing the current arrangements, applications which are of most benefit to the general public will be given priority over those applications of lesser public benefit.</p>
E.K. Hamer	<p>Suggests that all finger posts, stiles and other path furniture should have a marker on them containing the Parish name, the status of the path and its number.</p>	<p>Fingerposts currently display the status of routes. However, whilst there is some merit in this suggestion, the cost of signing individual routes would be prohibitive at the present time. Parish Councils could be asked to consider the suggestion as a possible project under the Community Paths Initiative.</p>
Alan Walker	<p>Suggests insurance tool loan or provision and more publicity as ways of encouraging greater community involvement.</p>	<p>The Community Paths Initiative already sponsors the purchase of tools for Parish Councils and volunteer groups wishing to become involved in rights of way maintenance work.</p>

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