



**Solihull**  
METROPOLITAN  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Rights of Way

## Improvement Plan



November 2007 to  
November 2012



# Foreword

*By Councillor Ted Richards*

*Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways and Infrastructure*

I am pleased to be able to introduce the very first Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Solihull.

It is intended that this plan will be a strategic document that will provide the means over the next five years for us to be able to identify and propose real improvements to make the countryside and its rights of way more accessible and available to all.

Public rights of way are part of our heritage. With a network of over 211 kilometres of registered public rights of way available in the borough and many more in the urban areas, there are plenty of opportunities for everyone to go out and explore the many attractions of Solihull on foot, cycle or horseback. Together these routes form part of our sustainable transport network, which provides excellent opportunities not just for improving our health through exercise and recreation but also for travelling to work and facilities such as shops or the local public transport network.

We have made great strides in improving the network and have seen many positive results over the last few years. However there is still considerable work to do, and this plan lays out the steps we need to take.

We have consulted widely with many key organisations and individuals, both during the production of the Plan and the draft consultation process. You have let us know what we are doing well and where we need to improve. We have taken on board what you have told us, and I would like to thank all those who gave their time and expertise towards the development of our Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Over the next five years, we will strive to implement the key actions of this Improvement Plan that you have assisted us in identifying by seeking further funding and resources to make Solihull's rights of way network more accessible and enjoyable for residents and visitors alike.



*Ted Richards*

Ted Richards

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# 1. Executive summary

Public rights of way offer a unique resource, which provides opportunities for exercise, recreational activities, and access to facilities and the countryside in general.

The network of rights of way within Solihull is predominately made up of routes located in the two former rural districts of Solihull and Meriden. In total there are currently some 131 miles (211 km) of recorded public rights of way in the borough.

The majority of these routes are recorded as public footpaths however there is a small but well used network of public bridleways (paths that cyclists, horse riders and walkers can use) within the Borough.

Demand for the services that the network provides increase each year. Consequently, prompted by the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act, the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease, the drive to promote sustainable transport and the public's increasing desire to utilise and explore the network, the profile of rights of way has increased considerably over recent years.

In 2000 the government introduced (through the CROW Act) a new duty for councils to produce and publish, in collaboration with the local community, a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan'.

A Rights of Way Improvement Plan is a document in which highway authorities set out their plans for improving the network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways in their area.

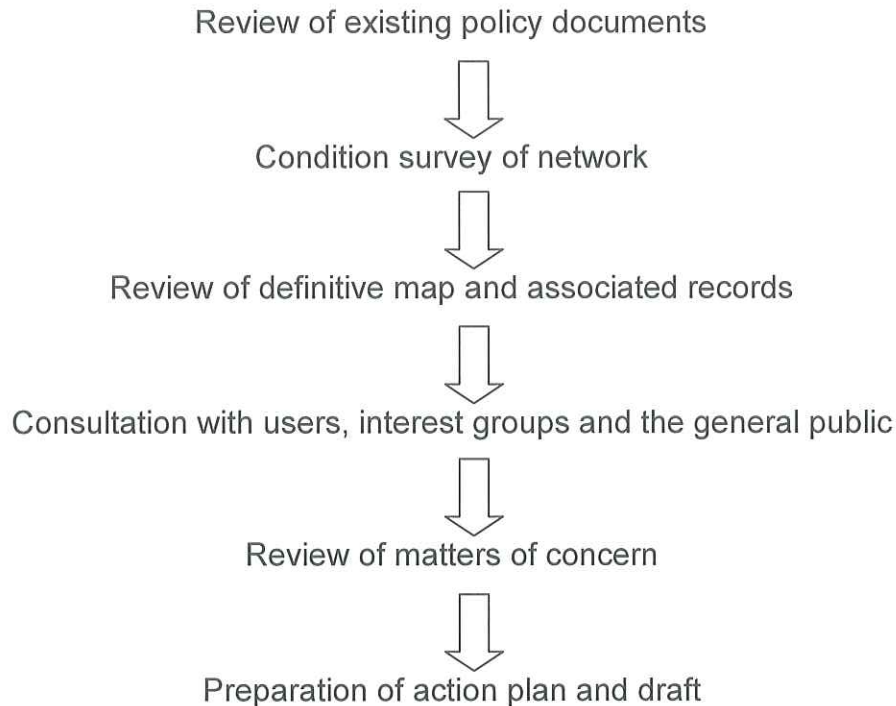
It is a statutory requirement and an important part of the process of making the countryside more accessible for everyone.

In developing a rights of way improvement plan for the borough we have carried out various assessments and surveys to help us better understand the



current state of the network on the ground and the needs and demands of current and future users.

The stages undertaken as part of this process are shown below.



As part of the process of preparing a rights of way improvement plan, local highway authorities are required to prepare a statement of action. The statement of action brings together the information and issues collected in the assessment and consultation stages of the plan. These issues have been grouped into seven themes.

- Signage
- Network Maintenance
- Promotion and information availability
- Practical Access
- Creating network links
- Road Crossings
- Records

For Solihull, we have developed an action plan based on the seven themes. This plan sets out the list of actions that we intend to take to improve the path network and provide greater opportunities for the users of those paths.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans are intended to be aspirational. The plan therefore includes a number of proposals for improvements to the rights of way network that it will not be possible to implement immediately.

No additional government funding or resources will be made available for implementing the statement of action, therefore the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will need to make links to a wide range of strategies (primarily the Local Transport Plan) in order to realise many of the future opportunities for funding.

An annual report will be produced containing details of progress that has been made towards the objectives in the plan. It is anticipated that as the Plan will eventually be incorporated into the LTP, reports on the delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will be included within LTP Annual Progress Reports.

A review of the ROWIP will be carried out after five years in 2012.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 *What is a rights of way improvement plan?*

2.1.1 In 2000 the government introduced (through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW Act) a new duty for councils to produce and publish, in collaboration with the local community, a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' (ROWIP).

2.1.2 This requirement demonstrated the government's recognition of the role that the public rights of way network can play in the wider social agenda. Producing the plan requires an authority to take a fresh look at how it manages its public rights of way network and encourages a shift in emphasis from addressing problems, as and when they occur, to a more planned approach.

2.1.3 The ROWIP stems from the authority's existing duties to:

- ❖ Maintain the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way
- ❖ Ensure that public rights of way are adequately signposted, maintained and free from obstructions

2.1.4 The plan must contain an assessment of the following matters:

- ❖ The extent to which local rights of way meet the present and the likely future needs of the public
- ❖ The opportunities that local rights of way provide for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the authorities area
- ❖ The accessibility of local rights of way to blind and partially sighted persons and others with restricted mobility

## 2.2 *What are public rights of way?*

2.2.1 The duty contained within the CROW Act refers to “Local Rights of Way”, which are defined in sections 60 to 62 of the CROW Act as being the footpaths, cycle tracks, bridleways and restricted byways within the authority’s area. Also the ways within the authority’s area which are shown in the definitive map and statement as restricted byways or byways open to all traffic.

2.2.2 A public right of way is a highway over which the public has a right to pass and repass along a defined route. Rights of way are recorded on an official document known as the definitive map. There are four types of right of way that are shown on the definitive map:

- ❖ Public footpaths (FPs): can be used by pedestrians with usual accompaniments (e.g. dogs, pushchairs).
- ❖ Public bridleways (BWs): can be used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.
- ❖ Byways open to all traffic (BOATs): can be used by pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and motor vehicles.
- ❖ Restricted Byways (RBs): can be used by pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and vehicles other than those that are mechanically propelled (for example by carriage drivers).

## 2.3 *What are the benefits of an improved network of public rights of way?*

2.3.1 A rights of way network that is legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised provides benefits for people and communities that reach further than simply recreational and leisure purposes.

2.3.2 Public rights of way are recognised as an important local resource for people to gain fresh air and exercise, to walk the dog, take the children to school, travel to work, or to reach local shops and services.



2.3.3 The rights of way network also provides free opportunities for outdoor recreation. Regular exercise can reduce stress and lead to healthier communities. There are benefits for the rural economy too, as a well-maintained and attractive network can attract visitors to an area. This in turn may deter anti-social behavior, littering, fly-tipping, raise general awareness about the network and assist in maintaining routes.

#### 2.4 *A rights of way improvement plan for Solihull*

2.4.1 The draft plan which follows has been produced by Solihull Council to meet this new duty and to set out a way forward to guide the Council in the management and development of its public rights of way over the next five years. In producing the draft ROWIP we have carried out consultations to take on board suggestions from members of the public and would now welcome your comments on the plan.

### **3. Background**

#### *3.1 Introduction to Solihull*

- 3.1.1 Situated at the southerly edge of the West Midlands conurbation, the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull borders Birmingham in the north and west, Worcestershire in the south and west, Coventry to the east and Warwickshire in the south.
- 3.1.2 Much of the Borough's population of 206,000 centres in the north on the communities of Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Fordbridge, Kingshurst and Smith's Wood and to the south in the towns of Solihull and Shirley.
- 3.1.3 Also in the Borough are the villages of Knowle, Balsall Common, Dorridge and the smaller rural villages of Barston, Catherine de Barnes, Cheswick Green, Hampton in Arden, Hockley Heath, Meriden, Tidbury Green, and Temple Balsall. The most notable new community in the Borough is just to the west of Shirley, where the new village of Dickens Heath has been built.
- 3.1.4 The Borough is bordered by the M6 and the M40, whilst the M42 divides the urban centre of the Borough from the rural south and east. Similarly, the A45 divides the south from the north of the Borough. Due to its location between the two conurbations of Birmingham and Coventry, many people's perception of Solihull is that of an urban area, however, almost two-thirds of the Borough's area of 17,832 hectares is greenbelt.
- 3.1.5 The plan below shows the relative location of towns and villages in the borough as described above. The plan additionally shows the extent of the registered rights of way network (shown in green) available within the borough.



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### 3.2 *Solihull's countryside*

3.2.1 The large proportion of Solihull's countryside plays an important role in shaping its image and character. It provides an attractive setting for many of the towns and villages and its accessibility is important in enhancing the quality of life enjoyed by the Borough's residents.

3.2.2 Solihull's countryside also plays an important role in a wider strategic planning sense. Its designation as greenbelt restricts the outward expansion of the West Midlands conurbation and prevents it merging with the City of Coventry.

3.2.3 Of particular significance is the narrow band of green belt known as the 'Meriden Gap', located between the eastern edge of Birmingham and Solihull and the western outskirts of Coventry. This area has the



potential to provide excellent opportunities for recreation for local people as well as the surrounding urban populations. The rights of way network could play an important role in providing sustainable access to facilities as well as offering a recreational facility in its own right.

3.2.4 With increasing personal mobility there have been greater demands on the countryside for informal activities such as walking and horse-riding, but also for more formal sporting uses. These developments have not had a detrimental impact on the countryside but have tended to draw more people into the countryside by car. Inconsiderate parking and damage to verges can affect local people and cause complaints from residents

### 3.3 *Public rights of way*

3.3.1 The majority of Solihull's 131 miles (211 km) of recorded public rights of way are situated in the less populated areas of the Borough. In addition there is an urban network of rights of way that is not currently recorded on the definitive map and statement. The size of this network is at present unknown, however it is possible that the Lost Ways Project as outlined in section 6.1.6 may assist in rectifying this situation.

3.3.2 Nearly all the routes recorded on the definitive map are public footpaths; there are currently only 7 miles (11 km) of public bridleway within the Borough. The proportion of the network recorded as public bridleway is therefore 5% - much lower than the national figure of 17%.

3.3.3 The promotion of recreational walking has increased in recent years, and has been supported with the development of a range of short walks within many of the Boroughs parks. These walks form the basis of a series of led walks undertaken throughout the year by Solihull Striders and Strollers and Discovery Walks in association with the Park Ranger Team and Primary Care Trust. Together these form an

important resource to encourage walking in the borough and make walking accessible to individuals who may not have had the confidence or experience to enjoy many of the more rural routes available in the borough. It is our intention to build on and expand the good work that has gone before by renewing the range of walks literature promoting short and medium length circular walks based on village locations across the borough. This work will be taken forward in partnership with Local Parish and Town Councils, and the Primary Care Trust and will see the publication of walks leaflets promoting circular countryside walks of up to 19 miles (30 km). This work will support similar initiatives developed by the Solihull Cycling Steering Group (SCSG) in partnership with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council to support and promote cycling in the borough. Under the brand 'Cyclesolihull' the SCSG have produced 12 circular cycle route leaflets which are supported by weekly cycle rides throughout the summer.

## 4. Policy framework

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan must be set within the context of other relevant plans and strategies at national and local, levels.

4.1.2 This section details the way in which national, regional and local strategies feed into the actions proposed by this plan.

### 4.2 The national policy context

4.2.1 Walking and Cycling: An Action Plan (DfT) – the government’s action plan for increasing levels of walking and cycling aims to make a positive contribution to many key public policy priorities, including health, environmental and social quality and urban congestion.

4.2.2 Many of the proposed actions are relevant to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. They include:

- ❖ improving access to town centres;
- ❖ creating sustainable communities;
- ❖ promoting health; and
- ❖ creating better routes and road crossings.

4.2.3 The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030 (DfT) – this strategy builds on the progress made since the implementation of the 10 year plan for transport and outlines the governments’ expenditure plans and longer term aspirations for transport in this country. Walking and cycling are a distinct theme within the strategy.



- 4.2.4 The government is hoping to tackle problems relating to social inclusion, congestion and public health by encouraging more people to travel on foot and by bike.
- 4.2.5 Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier (White Paper) (DH)  
– this plan identifies ‘Increasing exercise’ is one of its main priorities, and suggests that local authorities have an important role in increasing numbers of people walking and cycling to school or work, especially by:
- ❖ providing information
  - ❖ making more routes for walking and cycling available and
  - ❖ promoting professional training to encourage walking and cycling.

### 4.3 *The local policy context*

- 4.3.1 Local Transport Plan (LTP) – the LTP lays out an authority’s vision for transport networks within its area, analyses travel problems and opportunities and sets objectives and targets. It includes a five-year programme for implementing its longer-term strategy and provides the basis for gaining government approval for investment in local networks.
- 4.3.2 The rights of way network forms an important element in the delivery of key themes within the LTP and the ROWIP therefore forms an important part of the process by identifying priorities for actions to tackle, for example: accessibility, tackling congestion and safer roads.
- 4.3.3 The intention from government is that ROWIPs will begin to be integrated into Local Transport Plans (LTP) from 2005, with full integration by 2010. The ROWIP for Solihull was not in place during the formulation of the Boroughs current Local Transport Plan, and so could not be used to refer to in relation to issues effecting rights of way. Despite this, funding has been made available for walking and sustainable transport related projects in the Local Transport Plan and it

is expected that this tie in and exchange of information will be enhanced over future iterations of each plan now that the ROWIP has been developed.

4.3.4 Transport networks cross administrative boundaries and the seven authorities in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area have therefore produced a joint LTP with a shared vision for:

- ❖ a thriving, sustainable and vibrant community where people want to live and where business can develop and grow
- ❖ town, city and local centres that are attractive and vibrant, where high-quality public transport is the norm and walking and cycling are common-place
- ❖ cleaner air and less congested traffic conditions
- ❖ a safer community with fewer road accidents and with environments in which people feel secure
- ❖ equal opportunities for everyone to gain access to services and facilities and enjoy a better quality of life, with travel choices that are attractive, viable and sustainable

4.3.5 A first assessment for the production of the LTP showed that the following the key issues needed addressing in ROWIPs – although not every issue was felt to be relevant to every part of an authority's area or even to every authority:

- ❖ Maintenance and resurfacing which are consistent with the local environment, bearing in mind the urban nature of much of the Metropolitan Area
- ❖ Better lighting and improved drainage to encourage more walking to school and use for access to local facilities
- ❖ Negotiations with landowners in order to upgrade signs and surfacing to comply with the requirements of disability legislation

- ❖ Dealing with obstructions and clearing vegetation to make routes easier to use and providing better signs
- ❖ Improving connections to local facilities, such as shops, workplaces, schools and public transport facilities
- ❖ Encouraging greater use of rights of way in support of LTP objectives and targets

4.3.6 The LTP indicated that these issues and proposals for improvement should be refined during the development of ROWIPs, in consultation with the public and interested parties, including adjoining authorities and Local Access Forums. ROWIP proposals would contribute towards key objectives, by:

- ❖ improving the networks so people will more easily be able to walk or cycle between homes and facilities such as local shops, schools, workplaces and recreational facilities and as a result increasing accessibility. Their implementation will be, as far as possible, designed to meet the needs of people with mobility difficulties so that rights of way can be used by the majority of people
- ❖ enabling people to walk or cycle instead of going by car, especially in association with School Travel Plans and Company TravelWise, to achieve reduced congestion. Networks will include access to bus, Metro and railway stops and stations so that people can use public transport, instead of cars.
- ❖ giving people an alternative to the car and integrating with safety schemes, especially where RoWs cross roads, to help achieve road safety targets
- ❖ giving people an alternative to the car, especially for short journeys that are the most polluting, will contribute towards improved air quality.



4.3.7 Unitary Development plan (UDP) – the Council has a statutory duty to prepare, monitor and review a development plan to assess future land use needs (for example, for housing, business, shopping and recreation) and make provision for them by the designation of land. The plan is also intended to contain policies with which planning applications for development will have to accord, unless the importance of other material considerations prevails. The current UDP was prepared in 2006 and covers the period up to 2011. It is a full replacement for the 1997 Solihull UDP.

4.3.8 The main aims of the UDP include:

- ❖ Transport – to incorporate into the UDP the principles embodied within the LTP with the aims of reducing the need for travel, tackling traffic congestion and promoting public transport, cycling and walking as alternative means of travel to the use of the car.
- ❖ Countryside – to guide future change in the Solihull countryside, in order to conserve and enhance its character, whilst assisting the management of a diverse and prosperous rural economy, thereby contributing to overall quality of life.
- ❖ Recreation – to promote the maintenance and development of opportunities for sport, recreation, leisure and the arts in accessible locations, in order to meet both the needs of local communities and the overall population of the Borough.

4.3.9 Key policies and proposed actions identified in the UDP that are relevant to the ROWIP include:

- ❖ POLICY C10 – RECREATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE – the Council recognise the positive role that the Green Belt in the Borough can play in providing opportunities for access to the open countryside and outdoor sport and recreation. Existing sport and recreation facilities in the countryside will be protected, providing they respect the character and quality of the countryside, and the

Council will seek to improve access by developing a network of greenways [car-free off road routes connecting people with facilities and the countryside] and quiet roads.

❖ PROPOSAL C10/1 GREENWAYS AND QUIET LANES

The Council will identify and seek to implement a network of greenways and quiet lanes in the Borough.

❖ POLICY T16 – CYCLING

The Council will promote the maintenance and improvement of Solihull's Strategic Cycle Network and will seek linkages with cycle ways and cycle routes beyond the Borough boundaries. Developers will be required to make proper provision for cycling in new development proposals. This will include links to the strategic cycle network, where appropriate, and the provision of secure cycle parking facilities. Financial contributions may be necessary in accordance with Policy IM1, which sets out that the council should seek to enter into Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 agreements with developers where appropriate.

❖ PROPOSAL T16/1 IMPLEMENTING THE CYCLING STRATEGY

The Council will seek to implement the proposals in the 1999 Cycling Strategy for Solihull and make further provision for cycling within the Borough.

❖ POLICY T17 – WALKING

Developers will be required to recognise walking as an appropriate mode of travel and make proper provision in new developments to provide safe, secure and attractive routes for pedestrians as an alternative to car use for short journeys. This will include links to the footpath network where appropriate. Financial contributions may be necessary in accordance with Policy IM1.

The Council will promote the maintenance and improvement of the network of footpaths and public rights of way in Solihull and will seek linkages with pedestrian routes outside the Borough boundaries. This will consequently create opportunities for leisure including access to the countryside and the canal systems.

❖ PROPOSAL T17/1 IMPLEMENTING THE WALKING STRATEGY

The Council will support proposals that contribute towards the achievement of the Walking Strategy for Solihull and provide increased opportunities for people to walk.



## 5. Stakeholders and their needs

### 5.1 Consultation

5.1.1 The statutory guidance for producing ROWIPs states that authorities should consult widely about the needs of all users and potential users of the rights of way in their areas in order to identify what improvements they should make to their network.

5.1.2 In order to make this assessment, consultation was undertaken with both the general public and with various groups with an interest in visiting or managing the countryside. Six different questionnaires tailored to specific groups were developed to encourage feedback and gain maximum benefit from the responses.

5.1.3 The groups consulted as part of this process are shown below

- ❖ Adjoining authorities
- ❖ Parish and Town Councils
- ❖ The Local Access Forum
- ❖ Land owners and occupiers
- ❖ Network users (walkers, cyclists, equestrians and motorised vehicle users)
- ❖ Other interest groups including mobility and visual impairment support groups.
- ❖ The general public

5.1.4 A list of interest groups consulted as part of this process is shown in the Appendix in section 10 of this plan.

5.1.5 The questionnaires were distributed through the Council's website, direct posting, Local libraries and Tourist Information centres, Council Offices and publications. Additionally, fliers promoting the consultation

process and seeking feedback from the public were posted at the start of popular routes and parish notice boards across the borough.

5.1.6 Consultation started at the beginning of August 2006 and finished at the end of May 2007. In total, 535 questionnaires were issued. Of this number 191 questionnaires were completed and returned in the supplied free post envelopes. 10% of the returned questionnaires were received through the online form that was available on the Solihull MBC website.

## 5.2 *Response from members of the public*

5.2.1 A total of 169 completed questionnaires were received from members of the public and/or interest groups who used, or would like to use, public rights of way. The break down of the response from the different types of use was:

	<b>Responses (No.)</b>	<b>Proportion of response (%)</b>
Walkers	127	75.4
Horse riders	9	5.3
Cyclists	31	18.3
Off-road motorists	2	1

5.2.2 Although the questionnaires were mainly distributed within Solihull, it was apparent that a number of respondents lived outside the Council's area.

5.2.3 The majority of respondents to the general walking questionnaire who gave their age were over 60 (56%), with a further 36% being aged between 45 and 59. Only nine questionnaires were received from people less than 44 years old, and of these none were under 18. Just over 14% of respondents stated that they were less than fully mobile.

5.2.4 66% of respondents were male and the vast majority (98%) of those that completed the questionnaire described their ethnicity as 'white'.

5.2.6 Of those that responded to the general walking questionnaire, 116 indicated that they were solely interested in walking. A number of the respondents also participated in other forms of access: 27 cycled, 7 rode and one was involved in off-road motoring.

5.2.7 The four most common reasons given for preventing people from using the countryside more often were given as:

	<b>% of respondents</b>
Lack of time	58
Lack of knowledge of where to go	23
Poor condition of paths	16
Lack of local paths	14

### 5.3 *Points raised by walking groups*

5.3.1 Frequency of visits to the countryside - The frequency with which respondents walked varied considerably. 60% reported walking at least once a week, with 12% doing so everyday. 34% of people walked at least once a month and 4% walked less often than weekly. The number of respondents who never walked was 3%.

5.3.2 Information was requested on the length of time spent walking per outing, both during the week and at weekends:

<b>Weekdays (per outing)</b>		<b>Weekends (per outing)</b>	
less than half an hour	10	less than half an hour	3
half an hour to an hour	33	half an hour to an hour	13
1-2 hours	27	1-2 hours	26
more than 2 hours	38	more than 2 hours	58
I don't walk on weekdays	11	I don't walk on weekends	4
	119		104

5.3.3 Weekday walks tended to be shorter in duration, with 36% walking for one hour or less during the week, compared with 15% at weekends.



The proportion of those undertaking longer walks of more than two hours duration was greater at the weekend (56%) than during the week (32%). 9% of respondents did not walk during the week, compared with only 4% at the weekend.

#### 5.4 *Walking - preferences*

5.4.1 The most popular reasons given for going walking were for the enjoyment of walking itself (76% of respondents) and to enjoy the countryside (75%). The next most common reason, to keep fit, was quoted by 53% of respondents. 33% of those that replied were members of a formal walking group.

5.4.2 Only 27% of people walked in the countryside directly from their home. Of those that traveled to walk, 14% walked within a ten-minute drive of their home, 35% between 10 and 30 minutes away and 23% more than 30 minutes drive away.

5.4.3 When asked how often they walked from and to various places when making local utility journeys, people responded as follows:

		<b>Home to work</b>	<b>Home to school / college</b>	<b>Home to shops or other facilities</b>	<b>Work to shops or other facilities</b>	<b>Home to bus stops or railway station</b>
No.	Usually	0	2	37	14	33
	sometimes	6	1	46	12	35
	never	36	16	12	18	16
	not applicable	44	65	5	41	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>93</b>

5.4.4 From this it can be seen that the most common destinations are reported as being shops, bus stops, railway stations and other local facilities.

5.4.5 The four most commonly identified improvements that would encourage people to carry out more local journeys on foot were: better pavements (37%), less litter (35%), fewer obstructions on pavements (32%) and less traffic or pollution (27%).

## 5.5 *Walking - access and facilities*

5.5.1 63% of respondents usually accessed the countryside where they walk by car; the next most common means was on foot (21%). Trains and bicycles were each used by 3% of respondents, but no one reported using buses. Twelve respondents (10%) quoted other means of access, which generally involved a combination of by car and by foot.

5.5.2 When asked which types of walks they preferred, the overwhelming response from 94% of respondents was for circular routes. The next most popular types were paths next to sites of natural beauty (47%), paths next to sites of historic interest (41%) and leafleted promoted routes (34%).

5.5.3 The most common facilities sought by people in the countryside were car parks (identified by 65% of respondents), places to sit and rest (58%), refreshments (48%) and toilets (41%). Over one third of respondents (34%), however, stated that they looked for remote places with no facilities.

5.5.4 Most people felt that it was easy to find information about local walks (61%), but 27% did not and 12% did not know.

5.5.5 By far the most common ways of finding information about local walks was using maps (77%) and leaflets (63%). Books were the next most common source, reported by 46% of respondents.

5.5.6 When asked where they would like to find information on places to walk in the countryside, libraries proved the most popular choice and were identified by 68% of respondents. The next four preferences were:

tourist information centres (54%), local newspapers (44%), Solihull MBC website (42%) and the internet (37%).

- 5.5.7 The majority of people (70%) felt that the routes they currently used met their current needs.
- 5.5.8 People were asked to identify the three main problems for walkers on rights of way in Solihull. The most commonly reported problems proved to be: lack of maintenance (29% of all problems reported), difficulty in following the line of the path (22%) and stiles that were difficult to use (15%).
- 5.5.9 Most people (78%) felt that they would use public rights of way more if they were improved. The sorts of improvements that they felt would add to their enjoyment included: better vegetation clearance (64%), better signing (50%), information leaflets (41%) and safe parking (39%). 27% of respondents indicated that they would like to see more gates and 23%, fewer stiles.
- 5.5.10 Respondents had mixed feelings about whether they liked to explore new places to walk or to stick to ones that they already knew. Three-quarters of the respondents said that they preferred a mixture of both.
- 5.5.11 The factors that most put people off using particular paths were: overgrown paths (77%), fast roads to cross (56%) and crops growing on paths (47%).

## 5.6 *Points raised by cyclists*

- 5.6.1 Frequency of visits to the countryside - the frequency with which respondents cycled also varied, but use was more frequent than for the walkers. 81% reported cycling at least once a week, with 23% doing so everyday. 19% of people cycled at least once a month, but less than weekly, and no one reported cycling less often than that.



5.6.2 Information was requested on the length of time spent cycling per outing:

1-2 hours	7
2-4 hours	12
4-6 hours	9
6-8 hours	2
More than 8 hours	1

5.6.3 61% of cyclists on average spent up to 4 hours on an outing and the remainder (39%) more than this.

5.6.4 Cycling preferences - the most popular reasons given for going cycling were for the enjoyment of cycling itself (94% of respondents), and to keep fit and to enjoy the countryside (both 74%). 61% of those that replied were members of a formal cycling group.

5.6.5 Cycling was reported being an activity that all respondents mostly carried out direct from home. Of those that traveled to cycle, 77% went less than five miles from home, 10% between 6 and 10 miles and 13% more than 11 miles.

5.6.6 Cycling access & facilities - when asked which types of rides they preferred, the overwhelming response from 84% of respondents was for circular routes. The next most popular types were long distance routes (52%), and leaflet-promoted routes and paths next to sites of natural beauty (both 26%).

5.6.7 The most common facilities sought by cyclists were refreshments (69%). Only 12% of respondents stated that they looked for remote places with no facilities.

5.6.8 By far the most common ways of finding information about local cycling routes were using maps (83%) and local knowledge (59%). Leaflets were the next most common source, reported by 31% of respondents.

5.6.9 Cyclists were asked to identify the three things that put them off using paths in Solihull. The most commonly reported problems proved to be: poor condition of bridleways (78%), too many gates (44%) and fast roads to cross or ride along (37%).

5.6.10 93% of respondents said that they preferred to experience a mixture of new places and ones that they already knew when cycling in the countryside.

## 5.7 *Points raised by equestrians*

5.7.1 Nine responses to the specialist questionnaire were received from equestrians. This is not a sufficient number to allow general conclusions to be drawn about the needs of this type of user across the borough, however the response received did show that in certain areas there was a real demand for off road equestrian routes. It was clear from the detailed response submitted that the main issues centered around the overall lack of public bridleways in Solihull and the hazards caused by busy roads (both from crossing them to access other routes and from having to ride along them).

5.7.2 A number of the responses included information that was useful at a local level, especially for the area around Meriden. The points relating to Meriden are summarised below:

- ❖ To make the single-track Harvest Hill Lane a 'quiet lane' as it provides the only circular route utilizing a local bridleway.
- ❖ To look at the possibility of diverting bridleways at present cut by the A45.
- ❖ To work with local landowners to seek to reopen permissive routes that have in the past been used by horse riders.

- ❖ To assess the installation of ‘Pegasus’ crossings at key locations and improve signage and safety measures to alert drivers to the presence of horse riders using the road.

### 5.8 *Points raised by off-road motorists*

- 5.8.1 Not enough responses were received to the specialist questionnaire for off-road motorists to allow any conclusions to be drawn about the needs of this type of user of the countryside.
- 5.8.2 It is suggested that this low response rate can be attributed to the sparse nature of unrestricted byways and other classes of Greenlanes available across the borough.

### 5.9 *Points raised by Parish & Town Councils*

- 5.9.1 Response - all 12 Parish and Town Councils within Solihull were sent a copy of the questionnaire. Of this number, 50% responded.
- 5.9.2 Extent and condition of the local rights of way network - when asked what they felt about the extent of the different types of public rights of way in their area, there was general satisfaction with the current provision, with as many Councils feeling there were too many footpaths and byways as felt that there were too few. None of the responding Councils felt that there were too many bridleways, and two reported that there were not enough routes for horse riders.

	Not enough	About the right number	Too many	No opinion
Footpaths	1	3	1	
Bridleways	2	3		
Byways	1	2	1	



5.9.3 Looking at the general condition and signage of local rights of way, two Councils felt that these were very good or good, one that they were adequate and two that they were poor.

5.9.4 Priorities for local paths – Parish Councils were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the provision, condition and use of paths in their area. The results are set out below:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There are enough public rights of way in the parish	1	4		1	
The public rights of way do not go to the places that people want			2	2	
The public rights of way are in a poor state	1	2	1	2	
Public rights of way are used by too many people to be enjoyable				2	2
Public rights of way are easy to find		3	1	2	
Public rights of way are badly sign posted	1	1		3	
There is enough information available about public rights of way		2	1	2	
The public rights of way are an important facility for local people	2	4			
Dog fouling on routes is a big problem	1	1	1	2	
Vandalism of signs and gates along routes is not very common		3	2	1	

- 5.9.5 These results suggest that Parish Councils recognise the importance of public rights of way as an important local facility but feel that, although there is on the whole a reasonable network of public rights of way, individual paths do not necessarily run where local residents would prefer to see them.
- 5.9.6 Parish Councils did not feel that paths were over-used, but perceived that there were problems caused by vandalism of stiles and gates and, to a lesser degree, by dog fouling.
- 5.9.7 Views on the condition, signposting and ease of finding paths were generally split.
- 5.9.8 When asked to identify the frequency with which they had encountered a number of common path problems over the past twelve months, Councils reported that the three most common problems were:
- ❖ vegetation encroaching upon paths;
  - ❖ insufficient clearance from overhanging trees and
  - ❖ problems arising from rough and rutted path surfaces.
- 5.9.9 Problems arising from other users and landowners were considered the least frequent two categories of problem, with only one council reporting that it occasionally encountered reports of hostility from or problems with landowners.
- 5.9.10 When asked to rank in order the three things that would most improve access to the countryside, Parish Councils indicated that the replacement of stiles and barriers with gates or gaps was the most important issue, followed by the reinstatement of paths through crops or following ploughing. In third place was the need to improve Waymarking along paths.

5.9.11 A similar question was asked about the three things that would most encourage people to use the network of public paths. The favourites in this respect were identified as:

- ❖ good quality circular trails and accompanying leaflets;
- ❖ confidence that paths will be found to be in good condition and
- ❖ paths linking to other places of interest (e.g. the next village).

5.9.12 Priorities for adding to or changing the local network – Parish Councils were asked to consider a series of options for adding to, or changing, the local network (ranging from creating new footpaths or bridleways to diverting paths) and identify their top three priorities.

5.9.13 The most important option, appearing among the top three priorities of 80% of responding Parish Councils, was considered to be that of exchanging redundant paths for new, more useful, ones. This was followed by the option of linking up existing paths to create more usable and circular walks and, thirdly, by diverting cross-field arable paths to run along field edges.

5.9.14 Priorities for utility paths - Parish and Town Councils were asked to identify their top three priorities for improving those 'utility' paths that were used within the village or town for getting from A to B. Vegetation clearance was cited as the main improvement, followed by the signing of paths and excluding illegal users (e.g. motorcyclists).

5.9.15 Community involvement - half of the Parish Councils that responded indicated that they either had a nominated Councillor who monitored local rights of way or had an active volunteer group that worked on local paths. The other half had no special arrangements for rights of way.

5.9.16 All except one of the Parish Councils stated that they would be interested in receiving further details about a Parish Path Warden



Scheme that Solihull Council is investigating the feasibility of developing to improve the management and monitoring of the network.

5.9.17 When asked what would encourage their Parish Council to become more involved in maintaining, improving and promoting local paths, four out of six Parish Councils identified the need for access to grants and other funding. One Parish Council also highlighted a need to identify an available workforce or volunteer group to carry out the works.

#### *5.10 Points raised by land managers*

5.10.1 The response - eighteen land managers responded to the questionnaire.

5.10.2 All respondents managed agricultural farms, 17 of which were up to 500 acres in extent. Of those who identified where they managed land, 50% were based in Meriden, 22% in Berkswell and 17% in Knowle.

5.10.3 The type of land managed varied, but pasture for livestock was the most common (94%), with arable second (72%) and woodland third (40%).

5.10.4 Effects of public access - almost all the respondents (88%) reported having public rights of way crossing land which were their responsibility. Only two of the managers that responded reported having other types of access across their land (canal & disused railway). Although it is recognised that there are a number of permissive routes in the borough, none of the land managers responding to the consultation reported permissive access being given across land that they managed.

5.10.5 None of the land managers felt that public access brought significant benefits, either direct or indirect, to their businesses and only one felt that there was a significant benefit to the local economy as a whole. Some 53% did however feel that public access brought significant

benefits by nurturing an appreciation and understanding of the countryside.

5.10.6 The most significant problems arising from the existence of public rights of way were reported to be:

- ❖ Dogs running loose (75%);
- ❖ Stock getting out (75%);
- ❖ The misconception that the 'right to roam' applies to all land in Solihull (75%) and
- ❖ Inadvertent trespass by path users (69%).

5.10.7 When asked what three actions would be most valuable in assisting with making the public more aware of their responsibilities as well as their rights, 50% of land managers who provided information felt that working with schools was a priority, 44% favoured the provision of information boards in the countryside or alongside paths and 37% that there should be more promotion of the Country Code. A number of respondents (31%) suggested that better leaflets and printed material should be provided.

5.10.8 Providing greater and improved access - the factor most likely to encourage managers to provide greater public access over their land was considered to be the diversion of existing paths in exchange for more desirable links in the network (29%). This response was matched by the number of land managers who felt that nothing would encourage them to provide greater access.

5.10.9 The reasons given as discouragement for providing greater access included the implications for Occupier's Liability and taking on additional responsibilities for the maintenance of path surface and structures (e.g. gates).

## 6. Assessment of the rights of way network

### 6.1 *The definitive map*

6.1.1 The definitive map provides a legal record of public rights of way. It shows where paths run and who has the right to use them. The definitive map gives a snapshot of the state of the rights of way network at one particular date in the past; this is known as the “relevant date” of the map. The definitive map is accompanied by a document, the definitive statement, which includes a written description of routes and details of their widths. If a route is shown on the definitive map and statement, this is conclusive evidence that the public have the right to use it, even if in practice it is blocked or has not been used for many years.

6.1.2 Solihull Council has a legal duty to keep the definitive map up to date and to make it available to the public.

6.1.3 The history of Solihull’s definitive map - Solihull has a complicated administrative past, with several boundary changes, which is reflected in the history of its definitive map. In addition, a definitive map has never been produced for the part of the Borough formally known as Solihull County Borough.

6.1.4 Over the years, some routes have been added to, changed or taken off by means of formal legal process known as Modification Orders. However, the definitive map and statement, where they exist, have not been consolidated to form a new definitive map.

6.1.5 The failings of the current map and statement have previously been identified, and in response an action plan was developed in 2006 to begin the process to update and improve the accessibility of information related to rights of way. Currently a consolidation and assessment of existing records is being undertaken and will shortly



report on steps taken (improvements made) and further work required to develop a borough wide consolidated definitive map.

6.1.6 Unrecorded routes - the definitive map is only conclusive of the routes actually shown on it and at any time there can be a number of rights of way which are unrecorded. Changes in the law mean that authorities will now have until 2026 (“the cut off date”) by which to add nearly all these rights to the definitive map. If they fail to do so by then, the rights will be lost. A national project, the Discovering Lost Ways Programme, has been set up by Natural England to systematically research old documents to identify evidence of unrecorded rights of way. Solihull will need to be in a position to take advantage of this initiative when it becomes active in the Borough.

6.1.7 The development of a regular maintenance procedure to ensure that the definitive map and statement remain updated as regularly as possible will assist in ensuring that maximum value is gained from these projects. The authority will also continue to work with its partners and stakeholders such as the Ramblers Association and local volunteers who can have an active role in ensuring that unrecorded routes and routes with incorrect status are identified and progressed where appropriate. This process will assist ensuring that the borough is prepared and able to handle the additional resource implications, which will be brought about as a result of the Discovering Lost Ways programme.

## 6.2 *The physical condition of the network*

6.2.1 Measuring the condition of the network - a nationally recognised method exists for assessing the ease of use of public rights of way. This methodology has been used by the authority since 2003. The survey information, based upon a random sample of 12.5 km of rights of way, is gathered by Council during the months of May and November in order to take into account seasonal weather conditions

and land management practices. The data is used to produce a figure for a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 178), which is provided to the Audit Commission every year.

6.2.2 BVPI 178 is defined as:

*“the total length of public rights of way, which were easy to use, as a percentage of the total length of the public rights of way network”.*

6.2.3 ‘Easy to use’ in relation to rights of way means:

- ❖ Signposted or waymarked where they leave the road in accordance with the authority’s duty under s.27 of the Countryside Act 1968, and to the extent necessary to allow users to follow the path.
- ❖ Free from unlawful obstructions and other interference, (including overhanging vegetation) to the public’s right of passage.
- ❖ Surface and lawful barriers (e.g. stiles, gates) in good repair and to a standard necessary to enable the public to use the way without undue inconvenience.

6.2.4 BVPI 178 results – the results of the survey over the past three years have shown a steady improvement in the ease of use of rights of way within Solihull:

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
BVPI 178 (%)	41	48	60

The 60% compliance figure for 2006/07 is in line with the authority’s target for this indicator which was set at 60%.

6.2.5 It is felt that improvements outlined in this plan will allow the authorities BVPI 178 performance to continue to increase. The target set for the 2007/08 period is 70%, for 2008/09 is 75% and 2009/10 is 80%.

- 6.2.6 The most recently available Audit Commission data (2005/06 period) suggests that Solihull has now moved out of the bottom quartile of all reporting Metropolitan Authorities for BVPI 178.
- 6.2.7 The targets for 2007/08, if achieved, will place the Authority's performance above the average for all reporting Metropolitan Authority's. Targets for 2008/09 and 2009/10 will increase performance further and are expected to move the Authority into a top quartile position.
- 6.2.8 Signing - the survey results show that the drive to improve the signing of paths, which had been identified as a contributing factor of path failures in previous BVPI surveys, has been productive. The number of paths failing as a result of missing or defective signage has decreased significantly, with results showing that only 2 fingerposts of the 44 surveyed in the 2006/07 surveys were found to be defective.
- 6.2.9 Despite this, many of the fingerposts on parts of the network are due for replacement. In order to ensure that our current pass rate does not drop, we intend to carry on the current programme of signage installation/replacement that has been developed over the last 18 months.
- 6.2.10 Ploughing & cropping - analysis of the 2006/07 survey results identified that path failures as a result of ploughing and cropping offences and obstructions/poor surface condition are the main factors currently restricting performance. These issues have previously been identified and measures are in place through the improvement strategy prepared in the autumn of 2006 to tackle these specific areas. The impact of these measures will be assessed through future Best Value Performance Indicator 178 survey results, however early indications are that it is having the desired effect by reducing the instances of obstructions caused by ploughing and cropping.
- 6.2.11 As part of this strategy, the role of a Rural Footpath Ranger has been developed to assist the Rights of Way Officer in resolving reports of



problems and in investigating and liaising with landowners regarding cropping offences. This additional resource has already proved invaluable, allowing the Officer and Ranger to work proactively as well as reactively to resolve many seasonal and permanent issues that can cause BVPI 178 failings.

6.2.12 Anomalies - whilst a path may be clearly signed and apparently easy to use, there are local anomalies and obstructions on some routes, which have become established on the ground, but which do not necessarily follow the correct legal line of the path. Where this is the case, the variance or obstruction on the route will cause the path to fail on the BVPI survey, but will not in many instances affect the public's use or enjoyment of the route.

6.2.13 The solution to this problem lies in the Council's work to review the definitive map and statement (see section 6.1 above).

6.2.14 Assistance of volunteers - in order to support the work of the Rights of Way Officer, volunteer groups have been engaged, particularly over the last 12 months and have carried out numerous physical improvements to the existing network. Over this period three volunteer groups have at various times worked in co-ordination with the Council on the network to improving access and ease of use. This work assists in improving specific routes and will reduce the likely hood of future BVPI survey failings. In 2006/07, seven gates, two flights of steps, vegetation clearance and waymarking has been undertaken on the network. The support of these volunteers from, A Coventry Way Association, Birmingham Midweek Conservation Volunteers and the Kenilworth Footpath Preservation Working Group has had a significant impact on the network and It is our intention to continue to engage with this valuable resource into 2007/08 and beyond.

## 7. Statement of action

### 7.1 *Introduction*

- 7.1.1 As part of the process of preparing a rights of way improvement plan, local highway authorities are required to prepare a statement of action. This statement should be developed using the information collected in the assessment and consultation phases of the plan. The statement of action and its associated 'action plan' is the most important part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan as it sets out the list of actions that we intend to take to improve the path network and provide greater opportunities for the users of those paths.
- 7.1.2 The statement of action and the action plan itself have, following feedback on the draft version of the plan, been further refined and tailored to better meet the requirements of current and future users. This consultation period ran for a period of two months in the autumn of 2007, closing on the 19th November 2007. Feedback received following the consultation on the draft plan is explored in further detail in Section 9 of the plan.
- 7.1.3 No additional government funding or resources will be made available for implementing the statement of action, therefore the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will need to make links to a wide range of strategies (primarily the Local Transport Plan) in order to realise many of the future opportunities for funding. Possible sources of joint working and funding opportunities have been included with the statement of action however this is by no means exhaustive.
- 7.1.2 Statutory guidance states that the statement of action should stem from the Council's assessments. This has been achieved by drawing from the views which resulted from the consultations with users and others with an interest in public rights of way, and setting these within the

opportunities and constraints identified in the assessment of the rights of way network and of the legal record – the definitive map.

7.1.3 The statement is structured around the following sections:

❖ Issues identified:

- Key and detailed points raised from consultations;
- Issues raised from an assessment of the physical condition of the network and
- Matters relating to the legal record of rights of way

❖ Themes for guiding action:

- Groups of issues, which can allow the targeting of action to address general needs or those, raised by specific stakeholder groups.

7.1.4 The themes are developed further and form the basis of the action plan that follows in section 8. The action plan will help to prioritise and guide the Council’s work over the coming years.

7.2 *Issues identified*

7.2.1 Issues identified during consultation - consultation with user groups and members of the public identified a series of issues. Some of these were general to all users of the rights of way network and are included under ‘key points’ below. Others related to the more specialised needs of individual groups that are listed below under ‘specific issues’.

7.2.2 Key points:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Signing	Lack of signs.  Lack of waymarking.  Users wandering off the line of the path due to inadequate waymarking.



<b>Subject</b>	<b>Issue</b>
	Signs could include the path number, destination and information about reporting path problems.
Maintenance	Concerns in some cases about insufficient maintenance.
Surfacing	<p>Muddy surfaces.</p> <p>Surfaces generally unsuitable for 'urban' walkers going into the countryside.</p> <p>Drainage problems.</p> <p>Problems caused at field entrances due to stock congregating.</p> <p>Damage to surface by horses and motor vehicles.</p>
Obstructions	<p>Problems with furniture e.g. locked gates, barbed wire across stile.</p> <p>Obstruction on routes from ploughing/crops.</p> <p>Overhanging vegetation sometimes a problem.</p> <p>Undergrowth should be cut more often.</p>
Stiles and gates	<p>Stiles sometimes too high</p> <p>Do not comply with British Standard</p> <p>Stiles not maintained.</p> <p>A barrier to horse riders, wheelchair users and people with pushchairs.</p> <p>Lack of dog gates.</p>
Information provision	<p>Interest from users in information being made available in leaflet/guide format.</p> <p>Interest in provision of information boards.</p> <p>Need to raise awareness of the countryside code.</p>
User responsibility	Concern about uncontrolled dogs and about gates being left open.
Accessibility for those with limited mobility / those with pushchairs	<p>Few routes available. Interest in more circular routes.</p> <p>Problems related to type of furniture – can't cope with stiles and some kissing gates.</p> <p>Different abilities mean that there is a need for different sorts</p>

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Issue</b>
	<p>of routes.</p> <p>Need to identify routes that are potentially accessible to people with a disability.</p>
Safety	<p>Some concern from illegal use of routes.</p> <p>Some concern for personal safety e.g. lack of lighting.</p> <p>Concern about crossing busy roads.</p> <p>Need for speed limits on some rural roads that link paths.</p> <p>Problems with stock in fields crossed by paths.</p>
Extension of the existing network	<p>Not enough bridleways, both for horse riding and cycling.</p> <p>Paths need to be better connected to cut down road walking.</p> <p>Permissive paths to complete circular routes.</p>
Participation	<p>Willingness for local Parish and Town Councils to engage in the network improvement process.</p> <p>Reintroduce the 'Footpath Forum'.</p>
Accessing the network	<p>Interest in links to public transport.</p> <p>Safe parking needed at start of some routes.</p> <p>Some existing lay-bys would benefit from routes leading from them.</p>
Going outside Solihull	<p>Links with paths outside Solihull.</p>
Resources	<p>Lack of resources limits maintenance and enforcement action.</p> <p>Cross-compliance requirements, whereby farmers may be penalised where they fail to maintain rights of way in compliance with the Highways Act 1980 could help to improve awareness and access.</p> <p>Encourage local businesses to contribute to costs of maintaining paths.</p>

### 7.2.3 Specific Issues:

<u>Walkers</u>	<u>Urban</u>
	Better pavements Less litter Fewer obstructions on pavements More and better-sited pedestrian crossings Exclude unauthorised users from routes, e.g. cyclists on footpaths
	<u>Rural</u>
	More circular routes  Stiles are not easy to use  Support for a policy to improve accessibility through the removal of stiles and installation of kissing-gates where appropriate.  Paths can be obstructed and overgrown. More frequent cutting needed  Steps could be taken to make problems easier to report  Safety  Fear of getting lost.  Breaking up of the network by main roads
	<u>Dog Walkers</u>
	Lack of dog litterbins.  Lack of dog gates in stiles.
<u>Horse Riders</u>	Shortage of bridleways.  Not enough off-road riding opportunities.



<u>Cyclists</u>	<p>More traffic free routes across parkland and open spaces.</p> <p>More linked routes.</p> <p>Suitable surfaces (e.g. not stony or sandy).</p> <p>Better street cleaning at edges of roads.</p> <p>Continuity of cycle routes</p>
<u>Motor Users</u>	Investigation of condition of 'E Roads' inherited from Warwickshire.
<u>People with limited mobility</u>	Replacing stile with gates / gaps
<u>Non-users</u>	<p>Confidence that paths will be found to be in good condition</p> <p>Better promotion through good quality circular trails and accompanying leaflets</p>
<u>Town and parish councils</u>	<p>Vandalism of gates and stiles</p> <p>Making a local network more attuned to the needs of the local population</p> <p>Development of a Parish Path Warden Scheme</p> <p>Access to grants to allow local action over path improvements</p>
<u>Owners and managers of the countryside</u>	<p>Dogs running loose</p> <p>Stock escaping</p> <p>Walkers and other users wandering off the path</p> <p>Greater provision of information / promotion of the countryside code</p>

7.2.4 Issues identified by analysis of the physical network - a random survey of approximately 10% of the total network of public rights of way was

undertaken as part of the annual BVPI 178 network surveying requirements.

#### 7.2.5 Issues identified through this process were:

- ❖ The quality of signage at the start and along routes varied considerably from parish to parish. Many routes remained unsigned or were signed with older signs requiring repair/replacement. The variations seen are a result of a fingerpost installation programme developed by the council that began in 2005. This programme is working to identify and replace damaged and missing signs on the whole network with new high-visibility signs. This programme continues and has resulted in significant improvement in signage quality and frequency to date.
- ❖ Surface condition has also been highlighted as an issue on certain rural routes. It is the council's responsibility to cut back and keep down vegetation growing from the surface of arable headland rights of way. The survey has highlighted that there are many routes that are not currently being cut and that in peak growing season the routes in many cases can become overgrown. Vegetation clearance on arable headland routes is an important aspect of keeping rights of way open and maintained through out the year. Getting access to cut these routes can be difficult and in some cases The Council has developed a mowing programme to tackle vegetation growing on arable headland and enclosed routes. This programme is expanding annually however it is recognised that the current programme of 2 cuts a year is not enough to keep certain paths clear throughout the year. Further funding will need to be identified, potentially from external sources, to significantly increase the number of routes cut and or/their frequency.
- ❖ Issues of ploughing and cropping have been highlighted also. This is a seasonal problem and will need to be targeted annually. In order to be effective it is important that action can be taken quickly.

7.2.6 Issues identified by analysis of the Definitive Map & Statement - the fragmented nature of Solihull's definitive map means that there is a need:

- ❖ To produce a single consolidated paper definitive map and statement
- ❖ To produce a "path history" for all definitive public rights of way
- ❖ To display the above as layers on a GIS.

7.2.7 The Council is currently taking steps to identify and resolve these issues, as outlined in sections 6.1.3 – 6.1.6. It is expected that this process will be completed in 2008.

### 7.3 *Themes*

7.3.1 The issues that have been identified through the consultation process and analysis of information held by the Council have been grouped into a number of themes:

#### 1. Signage

Visible, accurate and regular signage on the network is essential to encourage use and allow users to follow the correct route. This also has the added benefit of reducing the associated problems of trespass which land managers can experience.

#### 2. Network Maintenance

Routes that are poorly maintained discourage use and restrict access to users and potential users. Improvements to identified issues, including surface upgrades and restrictive boundary crossings, will significantly improve accessibility of the network to users.

#### 3. Promotion and information availability



Up to date and accurate information on the network gives users choice and allows them to tailor their use of the network to meet their needs. A lack of information and associated promotion discourages users and potential users from making the most of the countryside. Further publicity of routes with associated walks literature is required to successfully encourage greater use of the rights of way network.

#### 4. Practical Access

The network available to those with limited mobility can seem restricted. Greater use of the network will only be achieved by improving the accessibility of routes.

#### 5. Creating network links

The off-road network available to horse riders and cyclists is extremely limited. By creating or upgrading links between existing routes the value of the network can be considerably improved.

#### 6. Road Crossings

Crossings over busy roads physically restrict access and discourage use of the wider network. Processes need to be put in place to identify and assess these breaks in the network.

#### 7. Records

Ongoing work to improve the quality and range of information held on the network needs to be continued and expanded. A particular focus here is the Borough's Definitive Map and Statement.

## 8. Action plan

### 8.1 *Format of the action plan*

8.1.1 The action plan identifies ways in which the Council can address the issues identified for each of the themes. The action plan will look at what needs to be done under the following headings:

<u>Research</u>	– what additional information or consultation is needed?
<u>Policy</u>	– how the Council intends to develop its own policies and procedures
<u>Quick Wins</u>	– specific actions that can be taken quickly
<u>Strategic aims</u>	– longer term goals where action can be sought over the lifetime of the Improvement Plan.

### 8.2 *The action plan*

8.2.1 The following tables detail the actions that the Council proposes to take. Each table indicates:

Aim – the goal toward which the Council intends to work

Links – how the aim links in with existing medium term Council Objectives and Priorities

What will be done? – the range of actions proposed to achieve the goal

Priority – the intended timescale for achieving the action:

A: 1 – 2 years

B: 3 – 4 years

C: more than 4 years

Resources – the estimated cost of the proposed action, in staff time or funding.

✓ = Funding/resources required are available fully or partly from existing budgets..

👤 = Additional resources required

£xx = Approximate cost of additional funding required


Partners – key partners and stakeholders. Potential sources of funding and/or resources that can assist in achieving the action are shown in *Italics*.



**Theme 1: Signage**

**Aim:** To achieve a situation where all public rights of way are adequately signposted and waymarked

**Links:** Council Objective 2 – Improving your quality of life

What will be done?		Priority	Resources	Partners
<b>1a</b>	Research Survey at least 25% of the total network of roadside fingerposts each year	A, B, C	✓ + 	Volunteer Groups, Environmental Champions
<b>1b</b>	Policy Develop a priority system for signposting public rights of way	A	✓	Local Access Forum
<b>1c</b>	Policy Develop a policy for including destination and distance information on key paths	B	✓	Local Access Forum Natural England
<b>1d</b>	Quick Win Where signposts are scheduled for replacement, begin to include destination and distance information	B	✓ + £500PA	Natural England Local Transport Plan

<b>1e</b>	Strategic aim	Achieve a fully signposted and waymarked network	B	✓ + £5,000 + £500PA	
<b>1f</b>	Research	Investigate feasibility of developing range of waymarks tailored to needs of users with visual impairments.	C	✓ + £500	Linked action: 4h RNIB Disabled Peoples Network Physical Activity and Health Delivery Group
<b>1g</b>	Strategic aim	Work with partners to identify and install warning signs on road where horse and cycle use is common.	C	✓ + £500PA	SMBC (Others)

**Theme 2: Network Maintenance**

**Aim:** To improve overall standards of maintenance of the rights of way network

**Links:** Council Objective 2 – Improving your quality of life  
Priority 6 – To improve transport facilities throughout the borough

What will be done?		Priority	Resources	Partners
<b>2a</b>	Research Survey at least 25% of the total network each year and action identified issues	A, B, C	✓ + £1000PA	Volunteer Groups Local Transport Plan
<b>2b</b>	Research Identify and log all field edge paths in borough which require regular clearance	B	✓	Volunteer Groups Local Landowners National Farmers Union
<b>2c</b>	Research Survey all bridle routes in borough and develop a programme for improving boundary crossings focusing on the improvement/installation of standalone gates with	A, B	✓ + £5000	Volunteer Groups Local Transport Plan British Horse Society



		appropriate latches				
<b>2d</b>	Quick Win	Continue and develop field edge maintenance programme. Investigate the feasibility of developing this programme to cover three cuts a year.	A		✓ + £5000PA	Local Access Forum SMBC (Others) National Farmers Union
<b>2e</b>	Quick win	Continue to remove stiles and unnecessary structures from the network	A,B		✓	<b>Linked action: 4e</b> National Farmers Union Countryside Landowners Association
<b>2f</b>	Policy	Develop a system for the public to report problems, including investigating feasibility of including contact information on signage and structures on the network.	A		✓ + ↑	SMBC (Others)
<b>2g</b>	Policy	Develop a pro-active	A, B		✓	Local Access Forum

		enforcement policy to tackle obstructed paths				National Farmers Union Countryside and Landowners Association
<b>2h</b>	Strategic aim	Develop an information fact-sheet for landowners and users giving advice on the management of rights of way. (Based on British Standard 5709 and Rights of Way Act 1990.	B	✓ + £1500 + 500PA		<b>Linked action: 4e</b> <i>Natural England</i> <i>Local Transport Plan</i> <i>National Farmers Union</i> Local Access Forum Countryside and Landowners Association
<b>2i</b>	Quick win	Continue to take legal action against persistent non-compliance with legislation	A	✓		<b>Linked action: 2g</b> SMBC (Others) Rural Payments Agency
<b>2j</b>	Quick win	Continue to work with and support volunteer groups that undertake practical, promotional and research work on the network	A	✓		Volunteer Groups Environmental Champions

2k	Strategic aim	Investigate the feasibility of developing a Parish Path Warden scheme to create improved link with Parish Councils and encourage to undertake inspection, promotion and minor maintenance of network	C	<p style="text-align: center;">✓ + 🚶 + £2500</p>	<p><i>Local Transport Plan</i></p> <p>Local Access Forum Parish and Town Councils</p>
2l	Strategic aim	Work with planning officers to protect routes as green corridors through development sites and provide links with the countryside. Identify improvements resulting from planning applications which can improve rights of way.	B	<p style="text-align: center;">✓ + 🚶</p>	<p><i>Town and Parish Councils</i></p> <p>SMBC (Others) Local Access Forum Ramblers Association</p>




**Theme 3: Promotion and information availability**

**Aim:** Promote Solihull's public rights of way network for residents and visitors and provide up to date information on the Council's work on rights of way

**Links:** Council Objective 4 - Treating you as an individual  
 Priority 8 - To improve the customer experience by providing people with the information they require to make informed decisions on services provided

What will be done?	Priority	Resources	Partners
<p><b>3a</b> Quick win</p> <p>Develop the rights of way information available on the Council's website to include information relating to:                      Recent Improvements                      Path Closure                      Active/Proposed Legal Orders                      Problem Reporting form                      Users responsibilities</p>	A	✓	Natural England Primary Care Trust Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Local Transport Plan Town and Parish Councils National Farmers Union SMBC (Others)

<b>3b</b>	Strategic aim	Develop a series of printed walks leaflets centered on village locations.	B, C	✓ +  + £15,000	British Waterways Town and Parish Councils Heart of England Way Association
<b>3c</b>	Quick win	Publicise routes following completion of improvement works	A	✓	SMBC (Others)
<b>3d</b>	Strategic aim	Promote responsible use of rights of way network and Incorporate this information in to future promotional material	B	✓ + £500PA	<b>Linked action: 3a, 3b, 3e</b> National Farmers Union Town and Parish Council
<b>3e</b>	Strategic aim	Develop joint promotional material promoting Solihull's countryside	B	✓ + £2000 each	SMBC (Others) Natural England Local Transport Plan Funding Tourist Board Primary Care Trust Local Newspapers

**Theme 4: Practical Access**

**Aim:** Develop routes that better meet the needs of people with limited mobility

**Links:** Council Objective 3 - Closing the gap in inequality  
Priority 7 - to reduce inequalities in respect of health and education and improve access to work and leisure

What will be done?		Priority	Resources	Partners
<b>4a</b>	Quick Win Follow the policy of 'Gaps, Gates and Stiles on footpaths and Bridleways when repairing or authorising boundary structures	A	✓	
<b>4b</b>	Policy Record the number and position of structures on rights of way	A	✓ + ↑ + £2,500	Volunteer Groups Local Access Forum SMBC (Others)
<b>4c</b>	Policy Ensure any newly authorised stiles comply with BS5709	A	✓	Local Access Forum




<b>4d</b>	Policy	Develop and implement a policy for taking enforcement over unauthorised stiles	B	✓ + ♣	<b>Linked actions: 4a and 4c</b> Local Access Forum SMBC (Others)
<b>4e</b>	Quick win	Encourage landowners to remove unnecessary stiles and to replace other stiles with gates	A	✓ + ♣	<b>Linked Action: 2h</b> National Farmers Union Local Access Forum Countryside Landowners Association
<b>4f</b>	Strategic aim	Identify and record routes that are stile free or fully accessible.	B, C	✓	SMBC (Others)
<b>4g</b>	Quick win	Sign and promote in walks literature, stile free and fully accessible routes	A, B	✓ + £1000PA	<i>Natural England</i> <i>DEFRA</i> Town and Parish Councils
<b>4h</b>	Research	Research the needs of disadvantaged users and develop an action plan to identify ways to encourage	B, C	✓ + ♣ + £2,500	<b>Linked action: 5b and 5d</b> <i>Primary Care Trust</i> Disabled Peoples Network RNIB

		usage of the network and routes where surfaces could be upgraded to improve accessibility for all.				SMBC (Others) Physical Activity and Health Delivery Group
4i	Quick win	Continue to support and offer advice to the Solihull Sports and Physical Activity Network with a specific focus on the Physical Activity and Health Delivery Group	A		✓	Volunteer Groups Primary Care Trust
4j	Quick win	Work with existing healthy walking schemes and assist in delivering led walks and activities.	A		✓	Solihull Sports and Physical Activity Network Primary Care Trust Solihull Discovery Walks

**Theme 5: Creating Links**

**Aim:** Extend the network available for users, with a particular focus on horse riders and cyclists

**Link:** Council Objective 2 - Improving your quality of life  
Priority 4 - To provide a cleaner, greener more sustainable Borough

What will be done?		Priority	Resources	Partners
<b>5a</b>	Strategic aim Support and advise on applications for agri-environmental schemes that include the development of permissive access	A	✓	Natural England DEFRA
<b>5b</b>	Research Identify gaps/missing links in bridleway network in Meriden area where need has been identified	A	✓ +  + £3,000	<b>Linked action: 4h</b> SMBC (Others) Local Transport Plan Parish Council British Horse Society Local Access Forum Solihull Cycling Steering Group Landowners

<b>5c</b>	Strategic aim	Develop routes to create links with existing network at Meriden Shafts (specifically to the Packington area).	B, C	<p>✓ + ↑ + £30,000</p>	<p><i>Natural England</i>  <i>Local Transport Plan</i>  <i>DEFRA</i>  <i>Parish Council</i>  British Horse Society  Local Access Forum</p>
<b>5d</b>	Strategic aim	Work with cycling officer to develop alternative routes and upgrade existing footpath and bridleway surfaces to a suitable standard to improve accessibility and encourage use.	C	<p>✓ + ↑ + £15,000 PA</p>	<p><b>Linked action: 4h</b></p> <p><i>Sustrans</i>  <i>DEFRA</i>  <i>Natural England</i>  Cyclists Touring Club  SMBC (Others)  Birmingham International Airport</p>
<b>5e</b>	Quick win	Progress work to improve bridleway link from Shirley to Dickens Heath and at Marsh Lane in Hampton in Arden	C	<p>✓ + ↑ + £25,000</p>	<p><i>Sustrans</i>  Local Landowners  Cyclists Touring Club  Solihull Cycling Steering Group</p>



<b>5f</b>	Policy	Offer reduced fees to landowners who are willing to create additional paths or links to improve the path network.	B	✓ + £1,500 per order	SMBC (Others)
<b>5g</b>	Strategic aim	Promote creation orders and agreements to create links between existing paths or to improve popular walking routes, in particular circular walks.	B	✓ + + + £1,500 per order	SMBC (Others) Solihull Cycling Steering Group
<b>5h</b>	Strategic aim	Seek additional routes and improvements to existing routes as part of large development sites.	A	✓ + + +	SMBC (Others)
<b>5i</b>	Strategic aim	Develop literature showing available routes to horse riders	C	✓ + £1,000 Each	DEFRA Natural England British Horse Society Parish and Town Councils

5j	Strategic aim	Kenilworth Green Way Access; Work with partners to develop links onto the greenway focusing on providing cycle and equestrian access from Berkswell	B	✓ + £7,500	Berkswell Parish Council Balsall Parish Council Sustrans Warwickshire County Council Solihull Cycling Steering Group
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**Theme 6: Road Crossings**

**Aim:** Improve the safety and availability of public rights of way affected by main or busy roads

**Link:** Council Objective 2 – Improving your quality of life  
Priority 6 – To improve transport facilities throughout the borough

What will be done?		Priority	Resources	Partners
<b>6a</b>	Research Identify and assess points where main/busy roads cross the rights of way network	A	✓	Highways Agency Parish and Town Councils
<b>6b</b>	Research Identify lengths of highway verge, quiet lanes and the existing unclassified road network that could act as safe links between public rights of way	B	✓ + ♣ + £1,000	SMBC (Others)
<b>6c</b>	Research Identify places where new rights of way or permissive routes could be created	B, C	✓ + ♣	SMBC (Others)

		adjacent to roads to provide a safe link between public rights of way			
<b>6d</b>	Strategic aim	Carry out an audit and develop a strategy and procedures for improving crossings over busy roads.	B, C	<p>✓ + ↑ + £2,500</p>	Highways Agency SMBC (Others) Warwickshire County Council



**Theme 7: Procedures for producing and updating the Definitive Map and Statement are inadequate**

**Aim:** Develop and maintain an accurate and up to date definitive map & statement

**Link:** Council Objective 4 - Treating you as an individual  
 Priority 8 - To improve the customer experience by providing people with the information they require to make informed decisions on services provided

What will be done?		Priority	Resources	Partners
7a	Strategic aim Pursue the making of public path orders where they can be made in lieu of definitive map modification orders	B	✓ + ↑ + £1,500 each	SMBC (Others)
7b	Policy Develop a policy and procedure to ensure that the definitive map is updated in line with statutory guidance	C	✓	Local Access Forum

## 9. Implementation and monitoring

### 9.1 *Implementation*

- 9.1.1 Rights of Way Improvement Plans are intended to be aspirational. This plan therefore includes a number of proposals for improvements to the rights of way network that it will not be possible to implement immediately.
- 9.1.2 The preparation of this plan has been undertaken in a number of phases during which its content and focus has been refined in light of input and feedback from stakeholder groups, users of the network and members of the public. The final revision of the plan was undertaken in the Autumn of 2007 when a draft of the plan was published for consultation for a two month period.
- 9.1.3 In total over 400 questionnaires were sent as part of this consultation on the draft. Of this number, 70 responses were received feeding back on the plan generally but more specifically on the themes identified in the statement of action and its associated action plan.
- 9.1.4 The source of feedback was consistent with those received from the initial consultation undertaken in 2006/07. 66% of all those responding were male, and 59% were over 60 years of age. 59% of responses originated from individuals with the remaining 41% from stakeholder organisations such as Parish Councils, the Ramblers Association, the Local Access Forum and the National Farmers Union.
- 9.1.5 85.7% of those responding indicated that they felt the seven identified themes were appropriate whilst 12.9% of those responding felt that additional and/or modified themes were needed. The feed back to the plan in general has been very positive and we have received many constructive comments from both members of the public, user groups and stakeholders

- 9.1.6 The consultation process for the draft plan has helped to refine priorities within the action plan and has had a key role in determining priorities for implementation.
- 9.1.3 The action plan has been updated in light of the feedback received and a summary of the main issues raised has been provided in the appendix of this document. The detailed comments and feedback will where appropriate be used to assist in the implementation of many of the proposed actions, providing specific detail to ensure that they have the desired positive impact.
- 9.1.4 The Council will need to work in partnership with a range of bodies in order to deliver many of the proposed actions. Additional funding may be required and will be sought from both internal and external sources.

## 9.2 *Monitoring*

- 9.2.1 We will produce an annual report containing details of progress that has been made towards the objectives in the plan. The Local Access Forum will also monitor progress.
- 9.2.2 It is anticipated that as the Plan will eventually be incorporated into the LTP and reporting on delivery will be included within LTP Annual Progress Reports.
- 9.2.3 A review of the ROWIP will be carried out after five years in 2012.

## 10. Appendix

### *Glossary*

**ARU (Archive Research Unit)** - A team established as part of the Discovering Lost Ways project to research historic sources of evidence.

**BHS (British Horse Society)** – A membership-based charity promoting the interests of horse riders.

**BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic)** – A route available for use by motorized vehicles, but used mainly as a footpath or bridleway.

**BVPI 178 (Best Value Performance Indicator)** – A national indicator, set by government, to measure the ease of use of a rights of way network.

**BW (Bridleway)** – A route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

**CROWA (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000)**

**CTC (Cyclists Touring Club)** – The largest and longest established national cycling membership organisation.

**Definitive Map and Statement** – The legal record of public rights of way, showing their position, legal status and any limitations to their use.

**DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)**

**DLW (Discovering Lost Ways)** – A Natural England project to research unrecorded rights of way before the definitive map is closed to historic claims in 2026.

**DMMO (Definitive Map Modification Order)** – The legal process used to record a public right of way on the definitive map.

**FP (Footpath)** – A route for use by walkers.



**GREENWAYS** - A network of largely off-highway routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns, cities and the countryside. They are for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike or horseback, for commuting, play or leisure (e.g. the National Cycle Network, towpaths and National Trails).

**LAA (Local Area Agreement)** – An agreement between central and local government aiming to achieve local solutions that meet local needs, whilst also contributing to national priorities.

**LAF (Local Access Forum)** – A statutory body established under the CROW Act 2000 to provide strategic advice to authorities on the improvement of access to the countryside.

**LSP (Local Strategic Partnership)** – Non-statutory multi-agency partnerships promoting joined up working and responsible for development of the Community Plan.

**LTP (Local Transport plan)** – A document setting out a five-year strategy for the development of local, integrated transport, supported by a programme of transport improvements.

**PPO (Public Path Order)** – A legal process to change the existing path network (e.g. by diverting or extinguishing routes).

**PROW (Public Rights of Way)** – Footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways or byways open to all traffic.

**QUITE LANES** - Minor rural roads which are appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorised users. These roads will already have low levels of traffic travelling at low speeds (as defined by Natural England).

**RB (Restricted Byway)** – A new classification of public right of way that can be used by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers.

**ROWIP (Rights of Way Improvement Plan)** – Document detailing how local highway authorities will improve access to local rights of way network.

**PEGASUS CROSSING** - are similar to any other light-controlled crossing, but in addition to provision for pedestrians and cyclists (as at a toucan crossing) the pegasus crossing makes special provision for horse riders. From a drivers' point of view, the crossing works in the same way as ordinary traffic lights, but horses can be startled, so be careful. For riders, there is a 'high level' push button to operate the crossing.

*Interest groups consulted as part initial consultation phase (in alphabetical order)*

**A**

A Coventry Way Association  
Abbeyfield (Solihull) Society  
Advisory Council for Education of  
Romany and other Travellers (ACERT)  
Air Cadets 492 (Solihull) Squadron  
Ancient Monuments Society  
Arden Rambling Club

**B**

Badger Group (Warwickshire)  
Balsall Common Lions Club  
Balsall Common Village Residents  
Association  
Balsall Parish Council  
Baptist Church Centre Chelmsley Wood  
Barston Parish Council  
Bentley Heath Residents Association  
Berkswell and Balsall Common  
Luncheon Club for the Elderly  
Berkswell Parish Council

Berkswell Society  
Bickenhill Parish Council  
Billsmore Green Residents Association  
Bird Club West Midlands  
Birmingham and Catholic Youth Service  
Birmingham and District Theatre Guild  
Birmingham City Council  
Birmingham Fellowship Rambling Club  
Birmingham Rambling Club  
Branches Community Project  
British Horse Society  
British Horse Society  
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers  
Burton Green Residents Association

**C**

Castle Bromwich Hall Garden Trust  
Castle Bromwich Parish Council  
Castle Bromwich Ramblers  
Castle Bromwich Resident's Association  
Catherine-de-Barnes Residents  
Association  
Chartered Institute of Housing  
Cheswick Green Residents Association  
Children's Society

Commission for Racial Equality  
Community Psychology Services

**O**

Olton Baptist Church  
Olton Friary  
Olton Residents Association

**P**

Physically Disabled and Able-Bodied  
Prince's Trust Team Programme  
Project Kingfisher  
Push Bikes

**R**

Race Equality West Midlands  
RC Archdiocese of Birmingham  
ReCOM  
Regional Canoe Association  
Renewal Christian Centre  
River Cole and Chinn Brook Conservation  
Group  
RNIB Visual Impairment Service  
RSPB  
Rural and Sustainability Team

**S**

Sea Cadets  
Sea Rangers  
Seeds of Hope  
SENSE West  
Shirley Advance  
Shirley Baptist Church  
Shirley Chamber of Trade  
Shirley Lions Club  
Shirley Methodist Church  
Shirley Methodist Wednesday Day Centre for  
the Physically Handicapped  
Shirley Residents Association  
Shirley Rotary Club  
Smiths Wood Parish Council  
Solihull & Leamington Rail Users Assoc  
Solihull (Ulverley) Division Girl Guides  
Solihull (Volunteers) Sports Council  
Solihull (Widney) Division Girl Guides  
Solihull Action Through Advocacy  
Solihull and Leamington Rail Users  
Association  
Solihull Archaeological Group  
Solihull Area Health Authority



Community Transport Solihull  
Connexions Birmingham and Solihull  
Council For The Protection of Rural  
England  
Country Landowners Association  
Coventry Group Ramblers Association  
Coventry City Council  
Coventry HF Ramblers  
CPRE  
Cycle Touring Club

## D

D.I.A.L. Solihull  
Damson Wood Environmental Protection  
Association  
DEFRA  
Dialogue  
Dickens Heath Community Association  
Disabled People's Network - Solihull  
Dorridge & District Residents  
Association

## E

East Birmingham Ramblers

## F

Fordbridge Area Resident's Association  
Fordbridge Club for Young People  
Fordbridge Plus Neighbourhood  
Management Pathfinder  
Fordbridge Residents Association  
Fordbridge Town Council  
Fordbridge Youth and Community  
Theatre Company  
Friends of the Earth  
Friends, Families and Travellers

## G

Grand Union Canal Society  
Groundwork Birmingham and Solihull  
Guide Dogs for the Blind

## H

Hampton in Arden Parish Council  
Hampton-in-Arden Society  
Harwood Grove Residents Association  
Heart of England Lions Club  
Heart of England Way Association  
Help the Aged  
Hockley Heath Parish Council  
Hockley Heath Parish Walking Club  
Hockley Heath Residents Association

## I

Input Group

Solihull Business Club  
Solihull Carers Centre  
Solihull Chamber of Trade

Solihull Christian Fellowship  
Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness  
Solihull College  
Solihull Community Foundation  
Solihull Community Housing  
Solihull Conservation Volunteers  
Solihull Council for Voluntary Service  
Solihull Council for Voluntary Youth Service  
Solihull Cycle Steering Group  
Solihull Cycling Campaign

Solihull Cycling Club  
Solihull Discovery Walks  
Solihull Friends in Retirement  
Solihull King's Church  
Solihull Lions Club

Solihull Muslim Community Association  
Solihull Muslim Youth Association  
Solihull National Trust Volunteers  
Solihull Ramblers

Solihull Residents Association  
Solihull Residents Federation  
Solihull Rotary Club  
Solihull Round Table

Solihull Scout Association  
Solihull Shopmobility  
Solihull Society for the Physically Handicapped

Solihull Society of Arts  
Solihull Tenants and Leaseholder Forum  
Solihull World Wildlife Fund for Nature  
St Andrew's Church Centre  
St Barnabas Church  
St Leonard's Day Centre  
St Leonards Rambling Club  
St Leonard's Youth Group  
St Margaret's Young Communicant's Guild  
St Mary's House  
St Michael Stud Farm  
St Michael's Church  
St Peter's Community Project  
St Peter's Parish Church Youth Club  
St. Andrew's Rectory, Chelmsley Wood  
Sustrans

## T

The B@se  
The Banbury Club  
The Boy's Brigade



Institute of Directors  
Irish Travellers Movement in Britain

## **K**

Keep Shirley Alive  
Kenilworth – Berkswell Greenway Trust

Kenilworth Footpath Preservation Group  
Kingshurst Evangelical Church

Kingshurst Parish Council  
Knowle and Dorridge Lions Club  
Knowle and Dorridge Rotary Club  
Knowle and Dorridge Round Table  
Knowle Parish Church  
Knowle Ramblers  
Knowle Society

## **L**

Lawnswood Residents Association  
Lyndon Methodist Church

## **M**

Marston Green Lions Club  
Marston Green Residents Association

Massey Fergusson Fell Walking Club  
Meriden Parish Council

## **N**

National Association of Health Workers  
with Travellers  
National Association of Teachers and  
Travellers  
National Travellers Action Group  
Natural England  
Netherwood Cottage  
New Testament Church of God  
NFU  
North Solihull Business Forum  
North Solihull Community for Voluntary  
Services  
North Solihull Regeneration Partnership  
North Solihull Senior Citizens  
Convention  
North Solihull Voluntary and Community  
Alliance  
Northern Star Community Arts

The Children's Society  
The Generators  
The Georgian Society  
The Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition  
The Gypsy Council  
The Gypsy Council for Health, Education and  
Welfare  
The Religious Solihull Society of Friends  
The Society for the Protection of Ancient  
Monuments  
The Solihull Sports Club for the Disabled  
The Women's National Commission  
This Way Up  
Tidbury Green Residents Association  
Trail Riders Fellowship  
Triangle Residents Association

## **U**

United Reform Church

## **V**

Victorian Society

## **W**

Warwickshire and West Midlands (South  
Sector) Army Cadet Force  
Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs  
Warwickshire Clubs for Young People  
Warwickshire County Council  
Warwickshire Federation of Young Farmers  
Clubs  
Warwickshire Rural Community Council  
  
Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local  
Access Forum  
Warwickshire Wildlife Trust  
Wednesday Walking Club  
Wells Green & Lyndon Residents Association  
West Midlands Ambulance NHS Trust  
White House Residents Association  
Woodlands Residents Action Group

*Summary of feedback received as part of consultation of draft version of rights of way improvement plan*

**Theme 1 - Signage**

In total, 17 responses were received in support of the actions identified in theme 1

Specifically comments were made in support of the intention to develop a programme of installing fingerposts with destination and potentially distance information on the fingers (Action 1c).

In addition to supporting the proposed actions in theme 1, the following suggestions were made;

Consider the feasibility of developing range of waymarks tailored to the needs of individuals with visual impairments and to assist in the reporting of faults and obstructions. This suggestion has been integrated into the plan and linked with action point 4h.

Investigate feasibility of developing range of waymarks tailored to children. This could be linked to circular promoted walks on a treasure hunt theme. It may be possible to link this suggestion to the point above and although it has not been included, as a specific action will be considered when we look at actions to promote the network, identified in Theme 3.

Encourage use of warning signs on roads where horse and cycle use is common or crossing likely. This is particularly relevant to horse and cycle traffic.

**Theme 2 – Network Maintenance**

14 responses were specifically made in support of actions identified in theme 2.

10% of the responses received highlighted that increasing the frequency of the programme to control vegetation on routes should be treated as priority with multiple references being made to respondents encountering overhanging vegetation obstructing routes.

As important, respondents felt that a prime focus for the authority should be to continue taking enforcement action against instances of non-compliance of legislation. This course of action is supported by the authority and has been set out as a priority in the action plan under points 2G and 2I.

In addition to the enforcement responsibilities of the authority, a number of responses were received supporting action point 2e, which seeks to remove stiles where possible. Following feedback action point 2e has been linked to action point 4e which seeks to encourage landowners to remove stiles.



Action 2i, which looks to ensure that the rights of way network is not negatively effected by development has been supported by both the Warwickshire Rural Community Council and the Heart of England Way Association. Both organisations have highlighted the importance of ensuring that the network is retained and if possible improved as a result of proposed developments effecting the network. In light of their comments this action point has been strengthened.

### **Theme 3 – Promotion and Information Availability**

A general theme from the feedback received indicated that there was considerable support for the proposals outlined in theme 3. In total 25 responses were made in support of actions outlined in this section. In particular the development of circular routes centred on village locations and improving the quantity of jointly published promotional material were felt to be of particular importance and it was requested that this was priority.

Additionally it was requested that information should be made available predominately through leaflets with support from the internet rather than the other way round. This presents problems in relation to updating information and ensuring that content is up to date, however given the strength of feeling of respondees, this is felt to be of importance.

The National Farmers Union also highlighted that further information is needed to educate users and not just landowners on best practice. Further information was requested on walking with dogs and further promotion of the countryside code. It is expected that this promotion should be integrated into future walking literature and so has been integrated in to action 3a, 3b and 3e.

It was noted that the walks books produced by the borough (the blue and red booklets) were highlighted as good practice in a number of responses.

### **Theme 4 – Practical Accessibility**

In total 27 references were made in support of this theme. It was clear from the feedback received that people felt that the work that had already begun on improving the accessibility of the network for all classes of users should continue and be expanded in line with the proposals outlined with this section of the action plan.

In particular the installation programme to upgrade existing furniture, through the use of kissing gates was highlighted to be of significant importance. The use of gates has been highlighted in the proposed action plan under point 4e as a quick win. The support that has been shown for this course of action illustrates that the prioritisation of this issue is justified.

It is noted that this action should be linked to action 2h (information fact-sheet for landowners) which may assist in encouraging the exchange of stiles for

gates by clarifying the range of structures available and the advantages they offer over traditional wooden stiles.

The installation of gates will wherever possible follow the nationally recognised guidance on structures and accessibility known as 'Gaps, Gates and Stiles' as referenced in action 4a of the plan. This was supported in a number of responses including those from Berkswell and Balsall Parish Councils

It was highlighted in responses to the consultation that the health benefits of utilising the rights of way network, has not been significantly explored in the plan. It is clear that the network does offer many opportunities for exercise and healthy living and that improvements to surfaces and drainage of rights of way, particular on urban and village fringe locations may encourage more people to walk or cycle to work. In light of this feedback, further reference to improving surface conditions to encourage greater use of routes has been integrated into action 4h

Exploring the health benefits of the network links strongly with theme three of the action plan. It is envisaged that our work promoting the network and encouraging use will have an indirect health benefit. Additionally it is intended that we will continue to support the work of the Solihull Sports and Physical Activity Network as well as existing groups such as the Solihull Discovery Walks who promote the health benefits associated with walking and physical exercise.

### **Theme 5 – Creating Network Links**

In total 32 of the responses received indicated that they were in support of this theme.

Specific issues highlighted as a priority included action 5b and 5d which involve identifying opportunities to improve and expand the existing routes with a particular emphasis on providing links to create a more joined up and usable network. This course of action will be developed alongside actions identified in theme 4 where a requirement to improve surface conditions to encourage greater use of network by all users was highlighted.

Specific routes have been highlighted by the Solihull Cycling Steering Group, Berkswell Parish Council, Balsall Parish Council and a number of riders and riding groups in the borough. Where appropriate these suggested routes will be used as the basis to which to make the improvements highlighted in the various schemes within the action plan.

Following comments from a number of respondees including the Warwickshire Rural Community Council it has been recognised that further use of and reference to, where possible, be made to the opportunities that unclassified road and quiet lanes provide in rural areas to link sections of footpath, bridleway and byway together. These routes often provide a setting similar to that of a right of way where the lack of vehicular traffic competing for space



can create safe and inviting alternatives for Walkers, Cyclists, Horse Riders and Carriage Drivers over the traditional road network. These opportunities will be noted within the proposed improvements outlined in Themes 5 and 6 where creating links and crossing points to support the current network have been highlighted for attention. The point will be added specifically to point 6b which looks at opportunities provided by verges on the network and was also highlighted in responses as a supported priority.

It was highlighted in a number of responses that the Kenilworth Greenway and the access opportunities it provides in the Berkswell and Balsall Common area have not highlighted in the plan and should be. In light of the feedback it is intended that a new action to support the work of the Friends of Kenilworth Greenway and seek to formalise cycle and equestrian access onto the Greenway at Berkswell should be added to this theme.

It should be noted that in addition to the support received for this theme a number of responders indicated that they felt it was too specific and that funding for rights of way improvements should be spent on routes for walkers as these would benefit the biggest group of users.

We will continue to work to ensure that the entire network is open and accessible to all. A large percentage of funding made available annually for rights of way in the borough is and will continue to be spent on the footpath network. Improvements to public bridleways and surface conditions generally will benefit many users and will help to provide an integrated network, which meets the needs of all users. Consequently the actions highlighted in this theme have not been amended in response to this specific feedback

### **Theme 6 – Road Crossings**

10 of the responses received highlighted actions within theme 6 as a priority.

Of the highlighted actions, responses showed that action 6a and action 6b (identifying areas where road crossings were an issue and creating links through improvements in Highway verges) were highlighted as a priority.

In response to feedback requesting further tie-in between the public rights of way network and the opportunities offered for travel on foot, horse and cycle by unclassified roads and quiet lanes, action 6b in this theme has been expanded to include reference to these routes.

### **Theme 7 – Records**

6 references to supporting the actions highlighted in theme 7 were reported

It is noted that although the number of respondents highlighting this area of work as a priority was minimal, both the Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum and the Local Ramblers Association highlighted this element of work in their feedback as a priority. Following research into the history of the authority's definitive map and statement and the identified works

required in order to handle predicted future work loads it is suggested that these actions should remain as a priority for the borough.

